

During the current GCOMS, the German peace tax group (Netzwerk Friedenssteuer e.V.) is encouraging its members to undertake a minor, very specifically German activity: to write letters to their respective tax offices, in which they explain why they are sending €4.30. They link this symbolic payment (the strange amount is explained in the text which follows) with a heartfelt plea to the tax office to find a way in which they can maintain their freedom of conscience when paying taxes, and also asking the tax office to support the political struggle towards legislation allowing tax payers to elect to have their money used for civilian purposes only (Zivilsteuergesetz).

This is the model letter for supporters to use or adapt:

LETTER:

(Sender's address:)

(Tax Office's address:)

(Date:)

Taxation and Freedom of Conscience

Explanation of the transfer of €4.30 to the tax office
individual's taxation reference number

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen

My conscience is deeply offended by the fact that I am being forced to help finance the military, armaments and war through my taxes. Wars have always been the worst form of injustice, brutality and destruction. Military means do not serve peace in the world (as quoted in the introduction to our German constitution, and as can be felt in the spirit of that constitution), and the commandment not to kill (sixth commandment of the Old Testament) is ignored.

From now on I will transfer to you, my tax office, once a month/quarter/year (delete as appropriate) the symbolic amount of €4.30.

With this amount I refer to Article 4, paragraph 3 of our constitution. Alongside the general freedom of conscience, religion and general view of the world, and the option to refuse participation in a war, using weapons, this Article still lacks the option of refusal to perform military service **through taxes**, thus forcing me to support the military throughout my entire life.

Our constitution lacks arrangements for the relief of the consciences of tax payers, which should be provided by the option to choose between taxes being used **exclusively for civilian purposes**, but alternatively also for military ones.

With this letter I am addressing you, my local tax office, as my direct partner in fiscal matters, and I urge you with all the power I can muster to swing into action to relieve my conscience. Alas, referring to our basic human rights is not something actually mentioned in the rules concerning the payment of taxes. However, you might use your leeway - namely the "considerable hardship" clause - to recognise this constant burden on our consciences, by implementing the rules in a way close to the desires of the citizens.

I also request that you make use of your expertise in the field by supporting a legal arrangement towards enabling taxes to be used for civilian, non-military purposes, thus putting in place the choices that our constitution demands.

If you repay my symbolic payment, I will interpret this as your not taking my concern seriously. In that case I would like to suggest that we meet to discuss how I can proceed further in this ethical dilemma.

Yours sincerely

You can find the draft for legislation enabling military taxes to be routed towards civilian purposes here:

www.friedenssteuer.de/aktuell/downloads/Öffentliche-Downloads/Zivilsteuergesetz---Entwurf-und-Gutachten

The model letter can be downloaded from: www.friedenssteuer.de/aktuel/mitmachen

LEAFLET

Taxation - Freedom of Conscience - Democracy

Regularly, e.g. once a quarter, we send the tax office €4.30 - together with a heartfelt plea that they support us in our conscientious dilemma concerning the payment of taxes.

Background: Article 4, paragraph 1 of our constitution guarantees the right to freedom of religion and belief, and of conscience. Paragraph 3 adds that nobody can be forced to serve, in violation of his or her conscience, to use weapons in a war. However, all citizens are forced, for life, to pay taxes for the military and for armaments - even if that goes against their consciences!

We wish to change that. We demand legislation according to which tax payers - all of us! - can indicate whether our taxes may be used, like up to now, for any purposes, or **only for civilian** purposes.

It is with this aim in mind that the Network Peace Tax has had draft legislation prepared by legal specialists for a law enabling taxes to be used for civilian purposes only, as well as statements as to the feasibility of such legislation, and the fact that such legislation conforms to our constitution.

We request of our Members of Parliament that they discuss such legislation to make possible civilian taxes, and to pass it. Then the use of our taxes can, in this important aspect - the use of military violence and the involvement in wars - if conscience demands it, be left to the individual's choice.

Tax offices enjoy a certain leeway. With repeated payments of €4.30, a figure intended to remind of Article 4, paragraph 3, they are to be encouraged to use this leeway in favour of the freedom of conscience of its “customers”. We also hope they will appeal to the legislators that a solution be found that conforms to the constitution and spares citizens serious conflicts of conscience.

Write to your tax office, e.g. when you have to submit your next tax return!

Please write to us, letting us know to which tax office you have written, so we can keep an eye on further developments.

A model letter is printed on the reverse of this leaflet, and it can also be downloaded from:
www.friedenssteuer.de/aktuell/mitmachen

Basic Ideas concerning Legislation for Civilian Taxes (Zivilsteuergesetz)

Legislation for Civilian Taxes would force the government to institute an independent, special account “National Military Holdings”, which would be administered by the Ministry of Defence. Out of this account all expenses for equipment and activities of military staff, including research, infrastructure, pensions etc. would be paid for.

These “National Military Holdings” would be financed exclusively through the taxes paid by “general” tax payers.

People liable to pay taxes are to be allowed the right to direct their taxes exclusively into the civilian budgets.

New Page:

Tackling the Tax Offices from 2018 on, against the obligation of having to finance the military, armaments and wars with one’s own tax contributions

Invitation from the Network Peace Tax (Netzwerk Friedenssteuer e.V.)

NO MONEY FOR WAR