



# European Bureau for Conscientious Objection



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## P R E S S   R E L E A S E

### 10 December - International Human Rights Day

#### **Turkey, Cyprus and Greece must drop the charges against conscientious objectors Halil Savda, Murat Kanatli and Gerasimos Koroneos respectively**

Brussels, 7 December 2011

On the occasion of the International Human Rights Day on 10 December 2011, the European Bureau for Conscientious Objection calls for solidarity with Turkish conscientious objector **Halil Savda**, Turkish-Cypriot conscientious objector **Murat Kanatli** and Greek conscientious objector **Gerasimos Koroneos** and demands the immediate and unconditional end of their persecution.

Yesterday, December 6, **Halil Savda**, was arrested by the police at the Ataturk Airport in Istanbul, Turkey, presumably because of the charges he faces under Article 318 of the Turkish Penal Code which criminalises "*alienating the public from military service*". Halil Savda has repeatedly supported conscientious objectors in public and has written articles, given interviews and made speeches against military service. He is also the registered owner of the Savaş Karşıtları (War Resisters) website in Turkey. He was recently sentenced to 100 days in prison for his peaceful activities. Before being declared "unfit" for military service, Halil Savda had been arrested several times for refusing to perform the compulsory military service, and had been detained for around 17 months in total. Murat Kanatli from Cyprus, EBCO Board Member, follows the case.

Tomorrow, December 8, **Murat Kanatli** faces trial by the Military Court in Lefkosa ("northern" Nicosia, Cyprus) on charges of insubordination. Murat Kanatli, now an EBCO Board member, declared his conscientious objection on ideological grounds in 2009 and has since refused each year to participate in the annual compulsory military exercises in the northern part of Cyprus. On 14<sup>th</sup> June 2011 he was summoned to appear in court on charges relating to his refusal in 2009. The case was successively postponed to July 5<sup>th</sup>, July 26<sup>th</sup>, September 29<sup>th</sup>, October 25<sup>th</sup>, November 24<sup>th</sup> and now to tomorrow, December 8<sup>th</sup>. Peter Dörflinger from Switzerland, EBCO Board Member, will be present as an international observer and to demonstrate international solidarity with Murat Kanatli. EBCO representatives Gerd Greune from Germany, Derek Brett from U.K. and Claude Verrel from France were in the Court to support Murat Kanatli in September, October and November, respectively.

Next Tuesday, December 13, **Gerasimos Koroneos** faces trial by the Military Court of Ioannina, Greece, on charges of insubordination. Gerasimos Koroneos, a conscientious objector on ideological grounds, is a total objector and refused to serve both the military and the civilian service in 2008. He is now to be tried for this in front of a military court, although he is a civilian and has never been enlisted in the army. Just two weeks ago, on 22<sup>nd</sup> November, in the case of Ercep v Turkey, the European Court of Human Rights found a similar situation to be a breach of Article 6 (right to a fair trial) of the European Convention on Human Rights. If convicted Gerasimos Koroneos faces an administrative fine of 6000 Euros and a suspended sentence of up to two years imprisonment. Angelos Nikolopoulos from Greece, General Secretary of EBCO, will be present to support Gerasimos Koroneos.

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EBCO was founded in 1979 as an umbrella structure for national associations of conscientious objectors to promote the right to conscientious objection to preparations for, and participation in, war and any other type of military activity as a fundamental human right. EBCO enjoys participatory status with the Council of Europe since 1998 and is a member of its Conference of International Non-Governmental Organisations since 2005. EBCO provides expertise and legal opinions on behalf of the Directorate General of Human Rights and Legal Affairs of the Council of Europe. EBCO is also involved in drawing up the annual report of the Committee on Civil Liberties of the European Parliament on the application by the Member States of its resolutions on conscientious objection and civilian service, as determined in the "Bandrés Molet & Bindi Resolution" of 1994.

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*"Yes, I repeat my 'do not do your military service' call... I emphasize clearly and without a 'but' or without making categorizations of 'just-unjust' or 'clean-dirty' that all wars and armed organisations are bad and dirty."*

Halil Savda, press release supporting two Israeli conscientious objectors in front of Israel's embassy in Istanbul, Turkey 1 August 2006. He was sentenced to six months in prison for this press release.

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*"If there was a war in Cyprus, I would not take sides. Who are our enemies? Is it anyone who is on the other side of the barbed wire? Are our enemies the friends that we drink coffee with every day in Ledra Street?"*

Murat Kanatli, press conference in front of the Military Court of Nicosia (northern part), Cyprus, 14 June 2011.

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*"I wish neither to enlist in the army, nor to have any touch with this structure of the authoritative system. I don't wish any alternative service, not even to appear before you for some kind of exemption."*

Gerasimos Koroneos, declaration of total objection, Greece, October 2009.

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