



European Bureau for Conscientious Objection



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P R E S S R E L E A S E

No more military courts for conscientious objectors

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The European Bureau for Conscientious Objection welcomes the recent landmark decision on the case of the Turkish-Cypriot conscientious objector **Murat Kanatli**. On December 8 the Military Court in Lefkosa ("northern" Nicosia, Cyprus) accepted the demand of Murat Kanatli to refer his case to the Constitutional Court on the basis of the freedom of thought and expression. EBCO considers that this is a step in the right direction because the military courts have indeed no authority over civilians; therefore they have nothing to do with conscientious objectors anyway. EBCO calls on the Military Court of Ioannina, Greece, to deem itself incompetent on the case of conscientious objector **Gerasimos Koroneos** in his trial tomorrow. For both **Murat Kanatli** and **Gerasimos Koroneos** EBCO demands the immediate and unconditional end of their persecution.

Murat Kanatli, 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 14th June 2011 he was summoned to appear in court on charges relating to his refusal in 2009. The case was successively postponed to July 5th, July 26th, September 29th, October 25th, November 24th and December 8th. **Piet Dörflinger** from Switzerland, EBCO Board Member, was 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.

Gerasimos Koroneos faces trial by the Military Court of Ioannina, Greece, on December 13 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 recently, on 22nd 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 demonstrate international solidarity and 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.