



European Bureau for Conscientious Objection

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

EBCO expresses deep concern on Russia on May 15th, International Day on Conscientious Objection

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On the occasion of the **International Day on Conscientious Objection** on May 15th, the **European Bureau for Conscientious Objection** (EBCO) expresses its deep concern over the criminal prosecution of Nikita Konev, a Russian pacifist charged with draft dodging.

Nikita Konev from Kirovsk, Murmansk region, grew up in a family of Jehovah's Witnesses. In 2011, he applied for substitution of the military conscript service by alternative civilian service to the Kirovsk military commissariat, which should have transmitted the application to the call up commission.

According to the NGO Soldiers' Mothers of St. Petersburg, the commission has not received the application, and on 22 November 2011 they issued a decision to call up Konev.

Konev contested the commission's decision in court twice. The case has never been opened.

At the same time, the military commissariat charged Konev with evading military service. Eventually, the criminal case against him was opened in late April 2012 according to Article 328, part 1 of the Criminal Code (evading military service). In the conclusion of the case it is indicated that the offence started at 04:30 on 26 March 2012, when Konev received the call up notification.

Konev complained against the decision to the court. His complaint suspended the commission's decision. In a tête-à-tête talk with Konev the state investigator stressed that he should have gone to perform military service first and, if the court would have approved his application, he would have been dismissed from the army and been able to perform civilian service.

Persecution of the pacifist and conscientious objector Nikita Konev takes place in the year of 20th anniversary of the recognition of the right to conscientious objection in the Russian (at that time – Soviet) Constitution (1992). The law on alternative civilian service came to force in 2004; since then thousands of Russian conscientious objectors have been performing civilian service.

EBCO calls the Russian government to stop the prosecution of conscientious objectors and abolish the compulsory military service.

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EBCO was founded in Brussels in 1979 as an umbrella structure for national associations of conscientious objectors in the European countries 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. It enjoys participatory status with the Council of Europe since 1998 and is a member of its Conference of International Non-Governmental Organisations since 2005. It provides expertise and legal opinions on behalf of the Directorate General of Human Rights and Legal Affairs of the Council of Europe. It is involved in drawing up the annual report of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs 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. It is a full member of the European Youth Forum since 1995.