



# European Bureau for Conscientious Objection

35 Van Elewyck street, 1050 Brussels, Belgium  
Tel: +32 2 648 5220, Fax: +32 2 648 6988  
[ebco@ebco-beoc.org](mailto:ebco@ebco-beoc.org) / [www.ebco-beoc.org](http://www.ebco-beoc.org)



## P R E S S   R E L E A S E

### EBCO deeply regrets the conviction of Greek conscientious objector Menelaos Exioglou by military court

Brussels, 18 December 2012

EBCO deeply regrets the conviction of **young Greek conscientious objector Menelaos Exioglou** to **4-month-imprisonment sentence suspended for one year**, on charges of **insubordination** by the **military court** of Larisa, Greece, today, 18 December 2012. **EBCO's Secretary General Angelos Nikolopoulos** testified in defense of Menelaos Exioglou. Apart from the penal conviction, EBCO also regrets the **6,000 Euros administrative fine** which is imposed for each insubordination in Greece. What is more, EBCO regrets that the Greek military court rejected the request of the defense to deem itself incompetent to try a civilian. A similar request was accepted on 8 December 2011 by a Military Court in Lefkosa ("northern" Nicosia, Cyprus) in the case of **Turkish-Cypriot conscientious objector Murat Kanatli**. EBCO had welcomed that judgment of the Military Court in Lefkosa which accepted to withdraw from judging the case of Murat Kanatli and to refer it to the Constitutional Court.

EBCO reiterates its call on the Greek authorities to take urgent action to stop the persecution of Greek conscientious objectors, and to fulfil the international obligations of Greece by fully respecting their human rights, both in law and in practice. *"We strongly condemn the **Greek practice of criminalisation of young conscientious objectors**. It's high time Greece respects the European and international standards. It's just unacceptable that young Greek people have to face prosecution and prison sentences just because of their conscience, and it's even more unacceptable that they have to appear before military courts, although they are civilians."*, **EBCO's President Friedhelm Schneider** said today, reminding the Nobel Peace Prize obligations to be fulfilled by the European Union member states.

29-year-old Menelaos Exioglou is a total objector. He was called-up for military service in August 2010 and refused to serve both the compulsory military service and the substitute civilian service, which is still punitive and discriminatory against conscientious objectors in Greece.

In 1997, Greece was by 19 years the last of the then members of the European Union to accept conscientious objection to military service and make a substitute civilian service available for conscientious objectors by Law 2510/1997. Law 3421/2005 and Law 3883/2010 have amended some of the provisions of Law 2510/1997, but in many aspects the law still falls far short of international standards.

EBCO's detailed concerns on Greece are analysed in its [Submission to the UN Universal Periodic Review 11<sup>th</sup> session of the UPR Working Group, May 2011, on Greece](#) and in its recent [Report to the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs of the European Parliament, September 2012](#).

**EBCO press contact:** Angelos Nikolopoulos, EBCO's Secretary General, +30 698 850 9211.

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.