



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 / www.ebco-beoc.org



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

EBCO condemns the arrest and prosecution of Greek CO Nikos Karanikas

Brussels, 21 February 2013

On Wednesday 20th February 42years old conscientious objector Nikos Karanikas was arrested for draft evasion, again, but without an arrest warrant. The charges against him are insubordination which started 17 years ago in January 1996!

He will be brought in front of the military court of Thessaloniki on Friday the 22nd. Yannis Glarnetzis, EBCO's representative will be present during the trial as an observer.

" A few months after the European Union received the Nobel Peace Prize its member state Greece is moving backwards in the field of human rights. We strongly condemn the Greek practice of criminalisation of conscientious objectors", EBCO's President Friedhelm Schneider said today.

Nikos Karanikas, a conscientious objector on ideological grounds, was first arrested in August 1995 for draft evasion and in his first trial he was sentenced by Thessaloniki's Court Martial to 4 years imprisonment on October 1995. Two months later (December 1995) the Second Decree Thessaloniki's Court Martial sentenced him to one year imprisonment, suspend for three years. As a result he was set free by the military jail but on his release he was given an order to present himself at a military unit because, according to the Greek law after his arrest he was considered a soldier. In 2000 and after the first law on CO was activated (1997) he applied for CO status in order to fulfill civilian service but the Conscription Office of Veroia refused even to take his application, because he had "served" in the army meaning that the time he was imprisoned is counted as military service. In 2000 he was acquitted from the desertion accuse.

Nikos Karanikas is an activist, a member of the Association of Greek Conscientious Objectors and a member of SYRIZA (Coalition of Radical Left), the biggest opposition party in Greece. This unprecedented incident is another example of the violation of basic human rights which Greece is constantly ignoring. We must note that in the case of Ercep v Turkey, decided just weeks earlier, the European Court of Human Rights had found a similar situation to constitute a violation of Article 6 of the European Convention – right of fair trial.

EBCO press contacts:

Alexia Tsouni, EBCO's Coordinator, +32 485 313 436.

Angelos Nikolopoulos, EBCO's Secretary General, +30 698 850 9211.

Note:

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

EBCO calls for statements and actions of solidarity with Greek conscientious objector Nikos Karanikas.

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