



European Bureau for Conscientious Objection

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

21 September - International Day of Peace

Conscientious objection to military service: a tangible contribution to peace

Brussels, 21 September 2018

On the occasion of the International Day of Peace on 21 September 2018, the European Bureau for Conscientious Objection (EBCO) emphasizes that conscientious objection to military service is as well a basic human right as a tangible contribution to peace; it is a concrete act of rejecting war and violence, and promoting peace and universal human values.

In this direction "*EBCO welcomes the recent United Nations (UN) report which calls for advancement of youth rights, including the right to conscientious objection to military service*", EBCO President Friedhelm Schneider stated today.

The report on youth and human rights which was published by the United Nations Human Rights Office (OHCHR) ahead of the 39th Session of the UN Human Rights Council, is based on a broad range of input from over 95 stakeholders, including the European Youth Forum and its Member Organisations (including EBCO). The report identifies many areas where young people have difficulties to exercise their rights, particularly:

- participating in politics and public decision-making;
- gaining access to decent jobs when transitioning from education to the labour market;
- sexual and reproductive health rights;
- their right to conscientious objection to military service.

The report also outlines some of the challenges faced by youth in vulnerable situations, including young migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees as well as youth with disabilities, highlighting the need to address multiple discrimination against young people.

The report provides four recommendations to the UN Human Rights Council for measures to effectively advance the rights of young people. Based on the recommendations, EBCO shares the position of the European Youth Forum which strongly supports the creation of a Special Procedure, such as an Independent Expert or a Special Rapporteur on youth, under the auspices of the Council. An independent human rights expert with the mandate to report and advise on human rights as they relate to youth would build on the work carried out so far and provide a key focal point within the UN system for young people's rights.

Martina Lanza, EBCO's delegate to the European Youth Forum, stated: "*We call on young people all over Europe to join us in our struggle against war, violence and compulsory military service. Let's all work for peace united by demanding from our governments to invest in education, research, employment, health and culture, rather than conscription and military*".

Read more: <https://www.youthforum.org/un-report-calls-advancement-youth-rights>

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.