



European Bureau for Conscientious Objection

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

EBCO visits Cyprus for the court hearing of conscientious objector Murat Kanatli and calls for the end of his persecution

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The European Bureau for Conscientious Objection calls for the immediate and unconditional end of the persecution of Turkish Cypriot conscientious objector Murat Kanatli, whose court hearing will take place tomorrow at the military court in Nicosia (northern part), Cyprus. Claude Verrel, French Board Member of the European Bureau for Conscientious Objection, will be present at the military court to defend Murat Kanatli, call for the end of his persecution and express the international solidarity with him.

Murat Kanatli, an EBCO Board member, declared his conscientious objection in 2009 and has refused to participate in the annual, compulsory military exercises in the northern part of Cyprus. His first court hearing in the military court was scheduled for June 14th 2011.

On that day, he had announced that his goal is for the human resources of war to dry up and that personally he will not participate in any war, so it is meaningless to participate in any preparation for war. *"If there was a war in Cyprus, I would not take sides. Who are our enemies? Is it anyone who is on the other side of the barbed wire? Are our enemies the friends that we drink coffee with every day in Ledra Street?"*

The case has been postponed first to July 5th, July 26th, September 29th and then to October 25th. The next hearing is tomorrow, November 24th.

Meanwhile, yesterday the European Court of Human Rights held, unanimously, that there had been a violation of Article 9 (right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion) of the European Convention on Human Rights and, a violation of Article 6 (right to a fair trial) of the Convention in the case Erçep v. Turkey (application no. 43965/04), which concerned the refusal by the applicant, a Jehovah's Witness and conscientious objector, to perform military service for reasons of conscience.

The Court had recently reviewed its case-law concerning conscientious objectors, in its Grand Chamber judgment in Bayatyan v. Armenia. In that judgment it had noted that Article 9 did not explicitly refer to a right to conscientious objection. However, it considered that opposition to military service, where it was motivated by a serious and insurmountable conflict between the obligation to serve in the army and a person's conscience, constituted a conviction or belief of sufficient importance to attract the guarantees of Article 9.

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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.