



European Bureau for Conscientious Objection

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

EBCO welcomes the European Court of Human Rights judgment in favour of Turkish conscientious objector Halil Savda

Brussels, 12 June 2012

In today's Chamber II judgment in the case *Savda v. Turkey* (application no. 42730/05), the European Court of Human Rights held, unanimously, that there had been violations of Article 3 (degrading treatment), 6 (fair trial) and 9 (freedom of thought, conscience and religion) of the European Convention on Human Rights.

The case concerned the failure to recognise the right to conscientious objection, which would enable refusals to carry out military service to be legitimised in Turkey. The Court reiterated that the system of compulsory military service in force in Turkey allowed for no exceptions on grounds of conscience and resulted in heavy criminal sanctions being imposed on those who refused to comply. Such a system failed to strike a proper balance between the general interest of society and that of conscientious objectors. The penalties, sanctions, convictions and prosecutions imposed on conscientious objectors, when no measures were provided to take account of the requirements of their consciences and convictions, could not be regarded as necessary in a democratic society.

"EBCO welcomes today's European Court of Human Rights judgment in favour of Turkish conscientious objector Halil Savda. It is high time Turkey stopped treating conscientious objectors as criminals. EBCO urges Turkey to comply with this judgement immediately, by ceasing the persecution of conscientious objectors and providing for the right to conscientious objection to military service in full accordance with European and international human right standards."
Friedhelm Schneider, EBCO's President, said today.

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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.