



European Bureau for Conscientious Objection

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

Turkish Protestant pastor declares his conscientious objection to military service

EBCO calls Turkey to implement without delay its human right obligations for conscientious objectors

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Kerem Koç, Protestant pastor living in Antalya, declared his conscientious objection to military service on 12 November 2012. In his letter to the Turkish military authorities he stated: "I cannot support an institution in which militarist world views and politics are sovereign, and where hatred leads brother to kill brother over race, religion, or language. For this reason, I will not be part of any armed force. Human beings are created in God's image, and are more important than any geopolitical boundaries or notions of ethnic territory. I believe people should live together in peace. "

Since he announced his objection Kerem Koç and his family have become a target for cursing and threats from nationalistic circles. Kerem who received his military call-up by 15 November underlines his readiness to perform a civilian alternative service that is compatible with his conscience.

Reminding the repressive treatment of Turkish conscientious objectors in the past and taking note of the difficult situation of Kerem Koç, EBCO urges once more the Turkish government to comply with its human right obligations for conscientious objectors. *"Turkey is required to implement immediately the jurisdiction of the European Court of Human Rights and to enact a legislation providing for a liberal right to conscientious objection and a non-discriminatory alternative service"*, Friedhelm Schneider, EBCO's President, said today. He added: *"For a candidate country of the European Union which is the Nobel Peace Prize Laureate 2012 Turkey's permanent violation of the human right of conscientious objection to military service is absolutely inadmissible and should no longer be ignored by the international political agenda."*

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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.