



# European Bureau for Conscientious Objection

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## P R E S S   R E L E A S E

### EBCO strongly condemns the persecution of Greek conscientious objector Nikos Krontiras

Brussels, 13 November 2013

EBCO urges Greece to immediately drop all the charges against Greek conscientious objector Nikos Krontiras and urgently comply with its human rights obligations. This case is another example of the violation of fundamental human rights in Greece and the increasing persecution of Greek conscientious objectors by the military authorities.

46-year-old Nikos Krontiras, a civilian, is called to appear before a military court on 14 November 2013 charged with "insubordination" (draft evasion) for the period 1987-2011, even though he is now over the age for military service. Nikos Krontiras is a total objector who refused to serve in the armed forces on ideological grounds in 1996, at a time when the right to conscientious objection was still not recognised in Greece.

On behalf of the European Bureau for Conscientious Objection Menelaos Exioglou will testify in defence of Nikos Krontiras at the Military Court in Thessaloniki.

*"We are shocked to observe that Greek conscientious objectors are anew confronted with a wave of systematic persecution by military authorities. This unacceptable treatment of conscientious objectors in Greece continues to be in violation of international human rights standards and the political guidelines of the European Union. It is particularly distressing that this should be happening just as Greece is about to assume the presidency of the European Union, which has hitherto played such a positive role in the international campaign for the full recognition of the right of conscientious objection to military service."*, Friedhelm Schneider, EBCO's President stated today.

EBCO notes that the European Court of Human Rights has explicitly recognised that the right to conscientious objection to military service is protected by the Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights, on freedom of thought, conscience and religion (case of *Bayatyan v. Armenia*, application no. 23459/03, decision 01/06/2011).

Furthermore, a conscientious objector, like any other civilian, should never be tried by a military court. This was explicitly ruled by the European Court of Human Rights: it represents a violation of the right to a fair trial (Article 6 of the European Convention on Human Rights) (case of *Ercep v. Turkey*, application no. 43965/04, judgement 22/11/2011 and case of *Feti Demirtaş v. Turkey*, application no. 5260/07, judgment 17/01/2012, where the principle of not trying a civilian before a military court was extended to the situation of a person who had been incorporated in the military against his will).

Details of the unacceptable treatment of conscientious objectors in Greece are documented in the recently published annual report of EBCO, entitled "[Conscientious objection to military service in Europe 2013](#)". At present no Greek conscientious objector is imprisoned, although the threat is there, but the repeated call-ups and prosecutions for their continued refusal of military service on grounds of conscience are not in accordance with international standards, and the financial penalties suffered are a considerable burden.

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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.