



**European
Bureau for
Conscientious
Objection**



ASEISTAKIELTÄYTYJÄLIITTO

I N V I T A T I O N

Event on conscientious objectors and deserters from Russia's war of aggression on Monday 5 September 2022, 10-11am, in Helsinki, Finland

Brussels, 25 August 2022

WHAT: Meeting for the press and decision-makers by the European Bureau for Conscientious Objection (EBCO) and The Union of Conscientious Objectors (AKL) in Helsinki Central Library Oodi and as a stream on September 5 10-11am.

The peace organisations are calling on European governments to provide human rights protection to conscientious objectors in the war of aggression launched by Russia. European Council President Charles Michel has also [urged](#) EU countries to find ways to offer asylum to Russian deserters who refuse to go to war.

A lawyer from the Russian Movement of Conscientious Objectors (MCO), will be present at the event to explain the situation of conscientious objectors in his country and his work to help Russian conscientious objectors and deserters. And do Ukrainian men have the option of refusing to fight? The Executive Secretary of the Ukrainian Pacifist Movement (UPM) answers the questions from Kiev.

WHERE: Helsinki Central Library Oodi, The Aura room, 2nd floor, Töölönlahdenkatu 4 and as a stream at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCmSX7uBsAdr3VqRhCY1uE5Q>

WHEN: Monday September 5 2022, 10-11am

EBCO, together with four other organisations, addressed an [appeal](#) to the European Parliament and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) calling on European governments to provide human rights protection to Russian conscientious objectors and deserters who refuse to fight in Russia's war of aggression, not forgetting Belarusian and Ukrainian conscientious objectors. The appeal is supported by around 60 other peace, human rights and refugee organisations from all over Europe.

In the context of the wars that broke up in Yugoslavia, the European Parliament and PACE signed resolutions recognising the protection of conscientious objectors. Peace organisations are calling for a similar agreement to protect conscientious objectors and deserters from the war of aggression launched by Russia against Ukraine. The appeal will be presented in Helsinki by EBCO President **Alexia Tsouni**.

Alexander Belik, lawyer of the Russian Movement of Conscientious Objectors (Движение сознательных отказчиков от военной службы), will be present at the event. He will talk about the situation of Russian conscientious objectors and war resisters and the work of the movement he represents. Belik provides advice and legal support to Russian conscientious objectors from Tallinn, supported by the Finnish Union of Conscientious Objectors.

Yurii Sheliashenko of the Ukrainian Pacifist Movement (Український Рух Пацифістів) talks remotely about the situation of conscientious objectors in Ukraine after the Russian attack.

Derek Brett, on behalf of EBCO, will briefly introduce the latest EBCO Annual Report on conscientious objection to military service in Europe and refer to the relevant European and international standards.

The press conference will be moderated by **Sam Biesemans**, Vice-President of EBCO.

All speakers will also be available for meetings and interviews after the event. The language of the event will be English.

Contact and interview requests: Alexia Tsouni, EBCO President, ebco@ebco-beoc.org, +306974461210, and **Esa Noresvuo**, EBCO Secretary General, esa.noresvuo@akl-web.fi, +358408362786.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

EBCO's appeal and draft resolution are available at <https://ebco-beoc.org/node/534>

The **European Bureau for Conscientious Objection** (EBCO) is an umbrella organisation of conscientious objectors' movements, founded in 1979, which lobbies Council of Europe member states for full recognition of the right to conscientious objection to military service. It publishes an annual report on the implementation of the right to conscientious objection in Europe. <https://ebco-beoc.org>

The **Russian Movement of Conscientious Objectors** (MCO) is a coalition of civil activists founded in 2014 to help conscripts avoid joining the military through legal means. The movement remains active in Russia despite the repression of civil society. <https://stoparmy.org>

The **Ukrainian Pacifist Movement** (UPM) is a peace organisation founded in 2019. <https://www.facebook.com/peaceukraine>

The **Union of Conscientious Objectors** (AKL) is a peace organisation for young people and an advocacy group for conscientious objectors, founded in 1974. It is a Finnish member organisation of EBCO. <https://akl-web.fi>