



European Bureau for Conscientious Objection

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E B C O P R E S S R E L E A S E

EBCO General Assembly and parallel action in Nicosia, Cyprus

Brussels, 1 November 2023

The [European Bureau for Conscientious Objection \(EBCO\)](#) held its General Assembly in Nicosia, Cyprus, on 28 October 2023, organised as a hybrid meeting both in person in the buffer zone, in the [Home for Cooperation](#), and online, kindly hosted by the [Initiative for Conscientious Objection in Cyprus](#). The General Assembly of EBCO was attended by representatives of its member organisations from **Belgium, Cyprus, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Italy, Russia, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, and the United Kingdom**.

*"We came together to discuss the current challenges, especially given the ongoing Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, and organise our actions towards protection of all conscientious objectors, deserters and non-violent anti-war protestors from **Russia, Ukraine and Belarus**. We also discussed about the violations of the rights of conscientious objectors in **Cyprus**, as well as the failure of **Turkey** to implement the relevant judgments of the European Court of Human Rights, and the failure of **Greece** to comply with the decision of the UN Human Rights Committee on the appeal of Petromelidis. Last but not least, we expressed our solidarity with the conscientious objectors in Israel and our clear position against all the violence in the conflict, indiscriminate killings and destruction. And we urged for an immediate ceasefire and negotiations to achieve a just and lasting peace in Ukraine, in Palestine, and in all the conflict areas worldwide",* EBCO's President Alexia Tsouni stated today.

The right to conscientious objection to military service is inherent in the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, guaranteed under Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which is **non-derogable even in a time of public emergency**, as stated in Article 4(2) of ICCPR.

EBCO is currently running the following joint international campaigns:

- [#ObjectWarCampaign](#): Protection and asylum for all deserters and conscientious objectors to military service from **Russia, Belarus, Ukraine**.
- the appeal to the European Commission and the European Parliament about necessary measures for the **international protection of Russian conscientious objectors, deserters and those who surrendered or were captured**, also promoted by the [Movement of Conscientious Objectors to military service in Russia](#).
- the campaign to **drop all charges against Yurii Sheliazhenko**, Executive Secretary of the [Ukrainian Pacifist Movement](#), who is under partial house arrest since 15/08/2023.
- #protection4olga campaign: **Protection and asylum for Olga Karatch**, director of the Belarusian organisation "[Our House](#)" in Lithuania, whose application for political asylum was rejected by the Lithuanian authorities on 18/08/2023.



As a parallel action, a [presentation](#) of the book of Greek conscientious objector Michalis Maragkakis was co-organised by [EBCO](#), the [Association of Greek Conscientious Objectors](#) and the [Initiative for Conscientious Objection in Cyprus](#) on 27/10/2023 at the [Social Space Kaymakkin](#). The moderator of the discussion was Gina Chappa, EBCO board member in Cyprus, while the speakers of the panel were Greek conscientious objectors Michalis Maragkakis, Lazaros Petromelidis and Theodoris Diamantidis.



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The [European Bureau for Conscientious Objection \(EBCO\)](#) 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. 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 is entitled to lodge collective complaints concerning the European Social Charter of the Council of Europe since 2021. 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 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. EBCO is a full member of the European Youth Forum since 1995.
