



European Bureau for Conscientious Objection

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

EBCO's campaign to end military courts judging civilians

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The European Bureau for Conscientious Objection denounces the continuing trials of civilians and conscientious objectors before military courts. Recent cases in Egypt, Greece and Turkey have demonstrated that military courts do not respect the rule of law nor international conventions on human rights. EBCO invites human rights organisations to join an international campaign to stop military courts judging civilians.

EBCO reminds of the recent landmark decision in the case of conscientious objector **Yunus Ercep v Turkey** (case no 43965/04). On 22 November 2011 the European Court of Human Rights found that Turkey violated Article 6 (right to a fair trial) of the European Convention on Human Rights, because a civilian was tried by a military court.

Therefore EBCO calls on governments and parliaments to put an end to military courts judging civilians, to order the military to drop all charges and sentences against civilians, to release civilians immediately and unconditionally from imprisonment and to make sure that the right to freedom of opinion, expression, thought, conscience and religion is fully respected by the military.

EBCO denounces the continuing imprisonment of Egyptian activist **Maikel Nabil Sanad** who is still detained in El-Marg prison. He was arrested by the military police on 28 March 2011 at his home in Cairo because he published a blog post on the role of the Egyptian military during and after the revolution. He was sentenced to three years' imprisonment on 10 April 2011 on charges of "insulting the People's Assembly, the Shura Council or any State Authority, or the Army or the Courts" and "spreading false information" (articles 184 and 102 of the Egyptian penal code, respectively) in an unfair fast-track trial in a military court in absence of his lawyer, family and friends. On 23 August 2011 Maikel Nabil Sanad began a hunger strike in protest against his continued unjust imprisonment. On 11 October 2011, the military appeal court declared the original sentence of 10 April 2011 "null and void", but failed to release Maikel Nabil Sanad. Following a re-trial on 14 December 2011 Maikel Nabil Sanad was sentenced to two years' imprisonment by a military court. On 18 December 2011 Maikel Nabil Sanad escalated his hunger strike and he is now drinking only water. EBCO's Board Member **Murat Kanatli** from Cyprus was present as international observer and to demonstrate international solidarity with Maikel Nabil Sanad in October 2011. One month before his imprisonment, on 25 February 2011, **Maikel Nabil Sanad**, Leader of the "No for Compulsory Military Service Movement (Egypt)", and EBCO's President **Gerd Greune** from Germany, met in El-Tahrir square in Cairo, and issued a joint statement to support the results of the Egyptian Revolution to pave the way for a peaceful transition to civilian rule.

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.

EBCO denounces the conviction of Greek conscientious objector **Gerasimos Koroneos** by the Military Court of Ioannina to a six months' imprisonment suspended for three years, on charges of insubordination, on 13 December 2011. EBCO's General Secretary **Angelos Nikolopoulos** from Greece was present to demonstrate EBCO's solidarity with Gerasimos Koroneos.

EBCO welcomes the recent decision in the case of the Turkish-Cypriot conscientious objector **Murat Kanatli** when on 8 December 2011 a Military Court in Lefkosa ("northern" Nicosia, Cyprus) accepted to withdraw from judging his case and to refer it to the Constitutional Court. EBCO Board member **Murat Kanatli**, declared his conscientious objection in 2009 and has since refused each year to participate in the annual compulsory military exercises in the northern part of Cyprus. On 14th June 2011 he was summoned to appear in court on charges relating to his refusal in 2009. The case was successively postponed to July 5th, July 26th, September 29th, October 25th, November 24th and December 8th. EBCO's President **Gerd Greune** from Germany, EBCO's Special Representative to the UN **Derek Brett** from U.K., EBCO's Board Member **Claude Verrel** from France, and EBCO's Board Member **Piet Dörflinger** from Switzerland were present as international observers in September, October, November and December, respectively.

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