



Joint statement concerning the body examining applications for conscientious objector status in Greece

21 May 2025

The above-named international organisations strongly endorse the appeal on behalf of A.A.¹ against the rejection by the Deputy Minister of National Defence, following a negative recommendation by the Special Committee, of his application to perform alternative service as a conscientious objector. As reported, this rejection seems to have been made without considering the core question of whether he qualified on the basis of conscientious objection to being party to the use of lethal force - the specific basis on which the UN Human Rights Committee derived a right of conscientious objection to military service from the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion guaranteed by Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and subsequently found such a right to be inherent in this freedom. [General Comment 22, para 11; Yeong et al v Republic of Korea and subsequent Views].

At the same time, we wish to express our disappointment that Greece has not yet taken any action to implement the recommendation of the UN Human Rights Committee that it “should also consider placing the assessment of applications for conscientious objector status under the full control of civilian authorities” (Concluding Observations 2024, para 29), and our extreme disquiet at the revision of Special Committee’s membership in December 2024, which calls further into question the independence and impartiality of the Committee, rendering suspect any rejections which it issues.

Specifically, we are very concerned about the reappointment of **Ms. Anna Kantzia**, as Chair of the Committee, and by the appointment as a “civilian” member of **Mr. Christos Pezirkianidis**, Assistant Professor at the Department of Psychology of Panteion University.

Mr. Pezirkiandis retired only in April 2024 as a professional officer with the rank of Captain in the Greek Armed Forces.² It also appears that he continues to serve on projects with a capacity related to the Centre for Aviation Medicine of the Hellenic Air Force.³ Another document presents him as receiving payments from the armed forces,

¹ Date of application: 16 September 2024. Date of examination: 10 February 2025. Date of rejection: 22 April 2025.

² Number of certificate of deletion from the Record of Human Resources of the Greek State: 1082791236/17.4.2024. Information cited in Government’s Gazette, vol. C, No 2389, dated 9 August 2024.

³ E.g. <https://diavgeia.gov.gr/doc/6%CE%A39%CE%9F469%CE%927%CE%9E-%CE%A3%CE%A45?inline=true>, dated 6 March 2025.

while serving in the Special Committee.⁴ The conflict of interest is so blatant that it should have disqualified him from appointment as a civilian member of the Committee, as his participation undermines its impartiality.

Ms. Kantzia, before her first appointment as regular Chair of the Special Committee she had represented the Ministry of Defence in a legal case against a conscientious objector before the Council of State, the supreme administrative court (which found for the objector).⁵ Whereas a professional lawyer should not of course be judged on the basis of every client he or she has represented, nevertheless such a direct link to the Ministry of National Defence is not appropriate for the supposedly impartial Chair of a committee examining applications for conscientious objector status.

We call on the Greek Government to take immediate action to implement the Human Rights Committee's recommendation, to place the assessment of applications for conscientious objector status under the full control of civilian authorities, and that until a Special Committee meeting this criterion is in place consideration of all applications to perform alternative service be held over, and any outstanding rejections be not implemented if notice is given of an intention to appeal to the reconstituted Committee.

Connection e.V.

Conscience and Peace Tax International

European Bureau for Conscientious Objection

War Resisters' International

⁴ <https://diavgeia.gov.gr/doc/9%CE%A68%CE%916-%CE%92%CE%A3%CE%A9?inline=true>

⁵ Council of State, Judgement [A2962/2017](#).