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Solidarity with the 3 conscientious objectors who refused to be examined by the Conscience Examination Committee

On Monday 12 of December, a few days after the anniversary marking 30 years from the first declaration of refusal to enlist on ideological grounds of Mihalis Maragkakis, three new conscientious objectors proceeded to an unprecedented, as for Greece, massive refusal to be examined by the Conscience Examination Committee.

Specifically, the 3 conscientious objectors, responding to the Call to boycott the Conscience Examination Committee, issued by the Association of Greek Conscientious Objectors (AGCO), they reported to the Ministry of National Defence. Upon their arrival, the 3 conscientious objectors stated to the Ministry's employee who was escorting them, that they have a common stance, and therefore they wanted to enter altogether in the room in order to declare orally the reasons for holding this stance and to collectively present their protest. When she passed this information to the president of the Committee, Mr. Theodoros Raptis, member of the State's Legal Council, who was entering in the same time, he responded that these things will not be discussed in the corridor, without showing the minimum interest to know what exactly the three objectors had asked for.

Although it was obvious that this was not a common examination, the people of the Ministry of Defence and of the Conscience Examination Committee who are in charge, after a new demand of the 3 objectors to collectively appear before the committee, they refused to allow them and called them to enter separately, saying that the interview is personal, as the records should be kept separately - something which was finally proved to be a pretext, since the same committee later refused to keep anything from the objectors' oral statements in the records, if they refuse to be examined.

The first conscientious objector, who was called in, submitted an official stamped document of the Association of Greek Conscientious Objectors with the Call to boycott the Conscience Examination Committee and declared that responding to it he refuses to be examined by this problematic committee. The next two objectors, stating that they, too, respond to the AGCO's call, they also submitted their own "Common declaration of conscientious objection and refusal of examination by the Conscience Examination Committee". It is illustrative of the committee's hostility that it emphatically refused to accept any oral statement of the third objector, when he refused to be examined but attempted to justify his stance.

It is stressed that although the cases of the 3 conscientious objectors are each one at a different stage, this was not the first time to report to the Committee for none of the 3 of them.

The Association of Greek Conscientious Objectors denounces:

- The attempt to isolate and separate the 3 conscientious objectors as an attempt to break their spirit and to negate the collective character of their protest.
- The fact that the president of the Conscience Examination Committee, member of the State's Legal Council, stated that nothing of what was said during the successive protest of the 3 conscientious objectors will not be written in the records, although it was obvious that a member of the Committee was keeping records of anything that was said.
- The fact that the president of the Conscience Examination Committee tried to prevent some of the conscientious objectors to explain the reasons of their stance or to read their personal declaration.
- The fact that the 3rd objector was falsely told that his common declaration with the 2nd one, had been already read before the Committee by that one.
- The direct threat of the president to press charges against one of the conscientious objectors when he denounced that in a previous examination of him, after which he had been rejected, the records had been manipulated.
- But also the hostile behaviour of the president in general, not only during this, but also during other sessions as well. It is indicative how easily the president throws accusations against the objectors who are examined and their supporters for [allegedly] "committing criminal offences", like in the previous session when he deemed as a criminal offence the certificate submitted by an objector, that he had worked as a volunteer in a cultural center, because it was not clear in it that the center had been closed down since then. As a result he "kicked out" the examinee, who was later called once again to report to the committee without any explanation about why he has suffered this military-style harassment of being put out twice.

We will not tolerate any manipulation of the records about what was said during the protest of the 3 conscientious objectors. We will not tolerate any arbitrary rejection of the 3 conscientious objectors because of their completely lawful protest. We remind that according to the legislationⁱ they didn't even have to report to the Committee, and even if they hadn't report, their applications should have been examined. Nevertheless, these conscientious objectors reported and, to the extent that they were permitted, they explained, orally and in writing, the reasons why they refuse to answer to the Committee's questions. Their stance had been completely lawful, on the contrary what is illegal according to international law is this Conscience Examination Committee.

As it has been analyzed in detailed and documented in the call for boycott, the current procedure of examination, the particular Conscience Examination Committee and the fact that the final decision is taken by the (Deputy) Minister of National Defence, violate all international human rights standards and have been condemned by all the international and domestic institutional human rights bodies.

We call for the 3 conscientious objectors to be recognized as such.

We call on the rest of the conscientious objectors due to be examined, to hold the same strong stance before this unacceptable Conscience Examination Committee.

Solidarity with the 3 conscientious objectors who refused to be examined by the Conscience Examination Committee.

Abolish the examination of objectors and the Conscience Examination Committee!

The right to conscientious objection is inalienable!

Not even one hour in the army!
Association of Greek Conscientious Objectors

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- i Decision of the Minister of National Defence Φ.420/79/81978/Σ.300/21-12-2005, (Government's Gazette B, 1854/29-12-2005), article 3, para. 5.