



European Bureau for Conscientious Objection

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

The northern Cyprus Spring?

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Last Friday 4/1/2019, EBCO reported on the sentence handed down to Turkish-Cypriot conscientious objector Halil Karapaşaoğlu by the Military Court in the self-styled "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus", and on the massive public support he received, with a crowd of well over a hundred waiting to cheer him as he emerged from the court.

Things have subsequently moved rapidly in northern Cyprus.

After the trial on Thursday the President and General Secretary of the Press Workers Trade Union announced that they would henceforth refuse to perform reserve service; on Friday they received the endorsement of the Trade Union as a whole.

Friday lunchtime Murat Kanatli and Derek Brett did a 45-minute live interview with the Kanal SIM TV station (see the [link](#) on the [ebco facebook page](#)). Five hours later, as activists gathered at the Press Workers Trade Union to discuss strategy, they were able to watch the Prime Minister sitting at exactly the same table telling a different interviewer that the Draft Amendment to the Military Service Act which would allow alternative service for conscientious objectors was ready and would be put before Parliament on Monday 7th.

On Saturday morning, the people of Nicosia woke to see a wall bearing a new graffito by CRS depicting Halil with two doves one carrying an olive branch signifying peace and the other a pencil signifying poetry...

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.



On Monday lunchtime, a large crowd bearing banners in support of conscientious objection, peace flags, and posters of Halil gathered outside the Parliament Building. The Draft Amendment was duly submitted to Parliament on Monday afternoon and it was published on the Parliament's website yesterday. This means that it has also been sent to the official gazette for publication. It will go to the parliamentary committee in 20 days. The president of the relevant parliamentary committee told members of the Initiative for Conscientious Objection in Cyprus that the Initiative will also be invited to attend the parliamentary committee meetings.

EBCO will be co-ordinating with the Initiative for Conscientious Objection in Cyprus in examining and commenting on the text of the Draft Amendment, and of course we will monitor its passage through Parliament and its practical implementation. The text as it stands is not perfect, but at first reading it certainly does not include all of the weaknesses which had been rumoured (some of which might have made it worse than nothing!).

Meanwhile, unless and until their convictions are retrospectively overturned, the cases of Murat Kanatli and Haluk Selam Tufanli at the European Court of Human Rights will continue, to be joined eventually, if necessary, by that of Halil Karapaşaoğlu.

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