



## P R E S S   R E L E A S E

### Public event with conscientious objectors from Israel, Iran and Europe

Athens, 28 May 2012

With the opportunity of the International Day of Conscientious Objectors (15 May), the European Bureau for Conscientious Objection (EBCO) participated in the public discussion organised by the Greek Section of Amnesty International entitled "Conscientious Objectors: Israel - Iran - Europe" on Friday 25 May 2012 in Athens (cultural center @Rouf).

#### Speakers:

- Sahar Vardi, Israeli conscientious objector and activist
- Kusha Bahrami, Iranian conscientious objector refugee
- Angelos Nikolopoulos, Greek conscientious objector, General Secretary of EBCO

#### About the speakers:

Sahar Vardi, 21 years old, is an Israeli peace activist from Jerusalem. For over 7 years she is involved in several groups against the occupation of Palestine, such as [New Profile](#), [Anarchists Against The Wall](#), [Taayush](#) and many others. In August 2008 she refused to serve the mandatory military service. She sent a letter to the Ministry of Defence, declaring her refusal, and she wrote: "*I realise that the soldier at the checkpoint is not responsible for the wretched policy of the oppressor towards civilians, I am unable to relieve that soldier of responsibility for his conduct ... I mean the human responsibility of not causing another human being to suffer.*" Sahar Vardi has been convicted 6 times: 3 times to short imprisonments, and the rest to detention in a military base.

Kusha Bahrami, 30 years old, is an Iranian conscientious objector who was forced to enlist for the compulsory military service (without the right to civilian service) in 2004. He refused to bear arm and he fled abroad as a refugee. He was detained for 8 months in Turkey and 3 months in Greece, where his application for political asylum is still pending. He is a board member of the Greek Section of Amnesty International.

Angelos Nikolopoulos, 29 years old, is a Greek conscientious objector who has served the punitive civilian service in a Training Center for Social Support and Training for Persons with Disabilities. He is a member of the Association of Greek Conscientious Objectors and Secretary General of the European Bureau for Conscientious Objection.

The European Bureau for Conscientious Objection wishes to thank the Greek Section of Amnesty International for organising this interesting event and all the speakers and participants for their presence and contribution.

Please see below for photos from the event:

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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.



From left to right: Kusha Bahrami, Sahar Vardi, Angelos Nikolopoulos

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