



European Bureau for Conscientious Objection

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

International Conscientious Objection Day: EBCO highlights the courageous struggle of conscientious objectors and activists in Turkey

Brussels, 15 May 2021

On the occasion of the International Conscientious Objection Day on 15 May 2021, the European Bureau for Conscientious Objection (EBCO) red-flags the **grave human rights violations that conscientious objectors to military service and activists continue to undergo in Turkey.**

"Turkey is the only member state in the Council of Europe that has not recognised the right to conscientious objection to military service, or at least indicated the intention of making civilian service available, and keeps prosecuting conscientious objectors and activists. We stand in solidarity with them and we honor their courageous struggle today, on the International Conscientious Objection Day", EBCO's President Alexia Tsouni stated.

EBCO's Vice-President Sam Biesemans added: ***"Turkey continues to ignore the judgements which the European Court of Human Rights has pronounced since 2006 in favour of Turkish conscientious objectors. Many different penalties are imposed on those who refuse to perform military service. As a result, conscientious objectors face ongoing arrest warrants; a life-long cycle of prosecutions and imprisonment, and a situation of "civil death" which excludes them from social, cultural and economic life."***

"I am one of the female conscientious objectors in Turkey. My justification for clarifying conscientious objection is also directly related to the denial of gender roles and the rejection of male dominance in social life. Although women are not subjected to conscription in Turkey, we experience the effects of military service and violent culture in different ways. And so we explain our conscientious objections. We also face the risk of being prosecuted because of our conscientious objection statements or actions we participate in", EBCO's Vice-President Merve Arkun concluded.

NOTES:

You can watch the interview of Merve Arkun entitled **"Conscientious objection: anti-war action and rejection of male-dominated codes"** here: https://youtu.be/a_pm5cQ5tjg

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.

You can learn more and join the **campaign of War Resisters' International, Conscientious Objection Association (Turkey) and Connection e.V.** here: <https://wri-irg.org/en/programmes/rrtk/co-action-alert/2021/solidarity-cos-turkey-international-conscientious-objection>

You can find more information in **EBCO's Annual Report on Conscientious Objection to military service in Europe 2020** here: <https://ebco-beoc.org/node/491>

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