



# European Bureau for Conscientious Objection

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## O P E N L E T T E R

To: Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights, [hotline@ombudsman.gov.ua](mailto:hotline@ombudsman.gov.ua)

Subject: EBCO calls for the dropping of all charges against Ruslan Kotsaba and the prosecution of the inciters of hatred and violence

Brussels, 6 October 2021

Dear Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights,

On behalf of the European Bureau for Conscientious Objection, I am writing to you to call for the immediate and unconditional end of the criminal prosecution against Ukrainian journalist, pacifist and conscientious objector Ruslan Kotsaba, simply because he publicly expressed his pacifist views. We consider his case a clear politically motivated persecution, in violation of his rights to freedom of expression and freedom of thought, conscience and religion, guaranteed under Articles 18 and 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and Articles 9 and 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

Moreover we were shocked by the far-right attacks against Ruslan Kotsaba on the day of his retrial, on January 22<sup>nd</sup> 2021, placing his life under threat, and on June 25<sup>th</sup> 2021 when his eye was severely injured by far-right assault with the brilliant green dye (zelenka). However, the police did not arrest any of the attackers and took no measures to stop political violence and pressure on the court. We therefore urge you to ensure that inciters of hatred and violence are arrested and held accountable.

We express our solidarity with Ruslan Kotsaba and we urge you to safeguard that all pacifists in Ukraine, including the activists of our member organisation Ukrainian Pacifist Movement, are able to freely express their opinions and continue their non-violent activity. We also urge you to safeguard the right to conscientious objection to military service, according to the European and international standards, amongst others the standards set by the European Court of Human Rights.

Sincerely yours,

Alexia Tsouni  
EBCO President

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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.