



European Bureau for Conscientious Objection

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

May 15th, International Conscientious Objection Day: Even more crucial to protect this human right in wartime

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Unfortunately, May 15th, International Conscientious Objection Day, finds Europe still in wartime, more than one year after the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine. **Every day more and more people are dying, families are suffering, resources are spent for military purposes instead of social purposes, ecological damage is expanding, and the nuclear threat is increasing.**

At the same time, hopefully, **more and more inspiring voices from civil society worldwide are calling for peace now** (<https://www.ifor.org/news/2022/2/25/no-war-voices-for-peace-from-civil-society-worldwide>), and just recently the **Brussels Activist Peace Forum**, hosted by **Clare Daly MEP & Mick Wallace MEP**, which brought together participants from 11 countries, including EBCO, on May 13th, as well as the international **#ObjectWarCampaign** ([Russia, Belarus, Ukraine: Protection and asylum for deserters and conscientious objectors to military service](#)), jointly launched by the European Bureau for Conscientious Objection - **EBCO**, the International Fellowship of Reconciliation - **IFOR**, War Resisters' International - **WRI**, and **Connection e.V.** in 2022.

"Conscientious objection is a tangible contribution to peace; therefore, the protection of this human right is even more crucial in wartime. However, this is not the case in the ongoing war in Ukraine, where not only Russia and Ukraine blatantly violate this right, but also the European Union turns a blind eye, as documented in our Annual Report, just published on May 12th. **We urge EU to work for peace, invest in diplomacy and negotiations, call for human rights protection and grant asylum and visas to those who object the war"**, EBCO's President Alexia Tsouni stated today.

"The right to conscientious objection to military service is inherent in the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, guaranteed under Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which is non-derogable even in a time of public emergency, as stated in Article 4(2) of ICCPR", EBCO's Vice-President Sam Biesemans added.

"EBCO strongly condemns the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and calls on all soldiers not to participate in hostilities and on all recruits to refuse military service. EBCO denounces all the cases of forced and even violent recruitment to the armies of both sides, as well as all the cases of persecution of conscientious objectors, deserters and non-violent anti-war protesters", EBCO's Vice-President Merve Arkun added.

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. EBCO enjoys participatory status with the Council of Europe since 1998 and is a member of its Conference of International Non-Governmental Organisations since 2005. EBCO is entitled to lodge collective complaints concerning the European Social Charter of the Council of Europe since 2021. EBCO provides expertise and legal opinions on behalf of the Directorate General of Human Rights and Legal Affairs of the Council of Europe. EBCO 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. EBCO is a full member of the European Youth Forum since 1995.

[EBCO calls Russia](#) to immediately and unconditionally release all those hundreds of soldiers and mobilised civilians who object to engage in the war and are illegally detained in a number of centres in Russian-controlled areas of Ukraine. Russian authorities are reportedly using threats, psychological abuse and torture to force those detained to return to the front.

[EBCO calls Ukraine](#) to immediately reverse the suspension of the human right to conscientious objection, release Christian pacifist conscientious objector [Vitaly Alekseenko](#) (imprisoned in the Kolomyiska Correctional Colony No. 41) and honourably discharge Christian pacifist conscientious objector Andrii Vyshnevetsky (held at frontline unit of the Armed Forces of Ukraine), as well as acquit all conscientious objectors, including Christian pacifists Mykhailo Yavorsky and Hennadii Tomniuk. Also, EBCO calls Ukraine to lift the prohibition to all men in age from 18 to 60 from leaving the country and other conscription enforcement practices incompatible with human rights obligations of Ukraine, including arbitrary detentions of conscripts and imposition of military registration as prerequisite of legality of any civil relations such as education, employment, marriage, social security, registration of the place of residence, etc.

Both Russia and Ukraine should safeguard the right to conscientious objection to military service, including in wartime, fully complying with the European and international standards, amongst others the standards set by the European Court of Human Rights.

MORE INFORMATION:

EBCO's Press Release and Annual Report on Conscientious Objection to Military Service in Europe 2022/23, covering the region of **Council of Europe** (CoE) as well as **Russia** (former CoE member state) and **Belarus** (candidate CoE member state): <https://ebco-beoc.org/node/565>

Focus on the situation in **Russia** - independent report by the "Russian Movement of Conscientious Objectors" (frequently updated): <https://ebco-beoc.org/node/566>

Focus on the situation in **Ukraine** - independent report by the "Ukrainian Pacifist Movement" (frequently updated): <https://ebco-beoc.org/node/567>

Focus on the situation in **Belarus** - independent report by the Belarusian Human Rights Center "Our House" (frequently updated): <https://ebco-beoc.org/node/568>

Statement by the **Brussels Activist Peace Forum**, hosted by **Clare Daly MEP & Mick Wallace MEP** on May 13th, and **interview of Clare Daly MEP** in support of the human right to conscientious objection in wartime and in solidarity with the conscientious objectors of the war in Ukraine (video): <https://ebco-beoc.org/node/569>

#ObjectWarCampaign appeal to the European Parliament and petition to uphold the right to asylum to conscientious objectors and deserters from Russia, Belarus and Ukraine by hosting states (open for signatures): <https://you.wemove.eu/campaigns/russia-belarus-ukraine-protection-and-asylum-for-deserters-and-conscientious-objectors-to-military-service>

#ObjectWarCampaign video from EBCO General Assembly and parallel actions in Athens, Greece, on April 22nd: <https://youtu.be/3G7JmSiXrY>

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