



European Bureau for Conscientious Objection

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OPEN LETTER

for the release of Turkish Cypriot activist Halil Karapaşaoğlu

To: President of the Republic of Turkey
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Cc: Prime Minister of the Republic of Turkey
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Brussels, 10 January 2012

Dear Mr. President,

On behalf of the European Bureau for Conscientious Objection, I am writing to you to express our grave concern about the case of Turkish Cypriot activist Halil Karapaşaoğlu and call for his immediate and unconditional release.

On 5 January 2012, Halil Karapaşaoğlu was sentenced to ten days confinement in military jail on the outskirts of the northern part of Nicosia after the closed hearing in a military court found him guilty of bringing the Turkish military into disrepute by writing an article in a Turkish Cypriot newspaper on claiming physical violence had been used against conscripts. He was also accused of travelling to the Greek Cypriot side while in the army. Karapaşaoğlu's lawyers said however that he had been on medical discharge when he wrote the article and travelled to the south of the island. Halil Karapaşaoğlu was arrested at the Ledra Checkpoint, while he was going to his work in the southern part of Cyprus on 28 December 2011, one day after publishing his article entitled "No to Violence Against Lokmaci Soldiers" about his experiences during his compulsory military service within the Nicosia Lokmaci Military Unit of the Turkish Cypriot Army, which is under the control of the Turkish Army and the Chief Commander of the Turkish Cypriot Army who is appointed directly by Ankara. Turkish Cypriot police blocked traffic leading to the military court and prevented the lawyer and relatives of Halil Karapaşaoğlu, as well as supporters and journalists from attending his trial.

The European Bureau for Conscientious Objection calls on you to withdraw all charges against Halil Karapaşaoğlu, release him and provide effective remedy to him because his human rights and fundamental freedoms have been violated; namely the right to freedom of expression and the right to a fair and public hearing by a competent, independent and impartial tribunal established by law. Furthermore, we call on you to thoroughly investigate all the allegations of abuse within the Turkish and Turkish Cypriot militaries and bring those responsible to justice; as in the case of 21-year-old Uğur Kantar, the Turkish conscript serving in the northern part of Cyprus who died after being allegedly tortured to death in a military jail in October 2011.

Yours sincerely,

Friedhelm Schneider
President of the European Bureau for Conscientious Objection

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.