

MAY - JULY 2021

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# CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION BULLETIN - IV

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- Updates on conscientious  
objection to military service

- Human right violations of  
people subject to compulsory  
military service

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**Vicdani Ret Derneği**  
Conscientious Objection Association

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# WHAT'S IN THE BULLETIN THIS MONTH

In the fourth issue of the Bulletin of Conscientious Objection, you may find information about the applications that we've received in May, June and July of 2021, the two-month up-to-date information on the violations of rights experienced by conscientious objectors in Turkey, up-to-date information on the judiciary cases followed by VR-DER (Conscientious Objection Association), and the conscientious objection declarations made in May and June.

You may contact us via our website and our social media accounts to get more information about the monitoring work carried out by VR-DER.

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# VR-DER'S MAY-JULY AGENDA

May 14, 2021

International Solidarity Webinar

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VR-DER participated in the International Solidarity webinar, organized by WRI, QUNO and IFOR, as part of the May 15th International Conscientious Objectors' Day events, in which the right to conscientious objection in Turkey was discussed.

In this webinar, conscientious objectors in Turkey shared their experiences, and the awareness campaign that is carried out by the Conscientious Objection Association is explained to the participants.

May 15, 2021

VR-DER: "Stop the War in Palestine!"

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VR-DER released a statement protesting the attacks of the State of Israel against Palestine on May 15th, International Conscientious Objectors' Day.

In this statement, the attack of the Israeli State on the Palestinian territories is criticized and a call for peace is expressed: "This is our call to all people, not only to Israel or any other states! Let's exhaust the human resources of the war, let's stop the wars in Palestine and anywhere in the world."

June 9, 2021

## “Abolish Frontex, End the EU Border Regime”

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The “Abolish Frontex” campaign, of which the Conscientious Objection Association is also a signatory, has started.

The campaign launched by more than 50 groups from Europe and North Africa demands the elimination of structures and policies that cause violence and death, and calls to build a system that guarantees justice and security for all. For detailed information about the campaign: <https://abolishfrontex.org/>



June 22, 2021

## VR-DER participated Pride Week Opening Event in Antalya

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The Conscientious Objection Association has participated in the first event of the 7th Antalya Pride Week which is held between 21-27 June. The right to conscientious objection was discussed at the “Farewell to Arms” event co-organized by the BİZ Association, the Conscientious Objection Association and the Peoples' Democratic Congress. In this event, Conscientious Objection Association Co-Chair Atty. Gökhan Soysal talked about the right to conscientious objection and oppression inflicted on the objectors in Turkey. Atty. Ahmet Çevik gave a speech on the domination that militarism tries to implement over sexual identity and sexual orientations, and also informed the participants about the “pink motion” process.



July 5, 2021

## Report Published: “Conscientious Objection to Military Service in Turkey”

The “Conscientious Objection to Military Service in Turkey” report, prepared by the Conscientious Objection Association with the support of the Etkiniz EU Program, has been published. This report, which was prepared by interviewing 18 conscientious objectors and lawyers working in the field, discusses the litigation processes related to the “civil death” experienced by conscientious objectors and basic human rights violations, and also recommends solutions.



You may access via this link.

July 7, 2021

## Webinar: “Conscientious Objection in Turkey and in Exile”

War Resisters International, Connection e.V. and L'Union Pacifiste de France organized a webinar to cover the right to conscientious objection in Turkey, and the experiences of conscientious objectors living in Turkey and abroad (exiled from Turkey). In this webinar, Merve Arkun from the Conscientious Objection Association gave information about the general situation of conscientious objectors in Turkey, conscientious objector Seyda Can Yılmaz, Onur Erden and Beran Mehmet İşçi shared their experiences.

In this webinar, Semih Sapmaz from WRI and Rudi Friedrich from Connection e.V also gave information about the “Conscientious Objection in Turkey” booklet, in which the experiences of conscientious objectors who sought asylum in Europe were shared.

# APPLICATIONS TO VR-DER

In May-July, new applications were made to VR-DER to request information. In a 3-month period, 35 people sent e-mails to the association and requested information on various topics.

Among these applications, the number of people who wanted to get information about the right to conscientious objection was quite high. Plus, there were people seeking counsel regarding administrative fines due to draft evaders, evaders and conscripts who wanted to receive information about conscientious objection, and people who requested information about the asylum process because they did not want to perform compulsory military service.

*\*"Draft evader" and "evader" and expressions are used because the persons in question are legally defined as such.*

%3 Those who request information about right to asylum

%3 Those seeking legal support

%6 Administrative fines

%8 Draft evaders

%9 Association membership

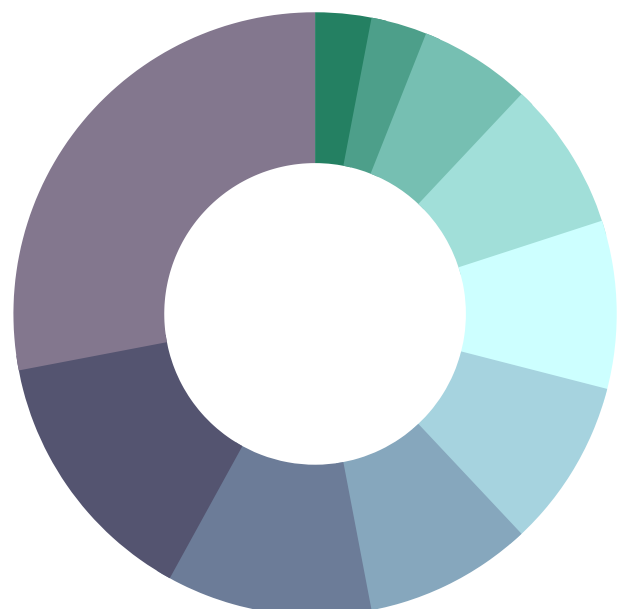
%9 Those who request information about "non suitable for military service report"

%9 Deserters

%11 Evaders

%14 Conscientious objection declarations

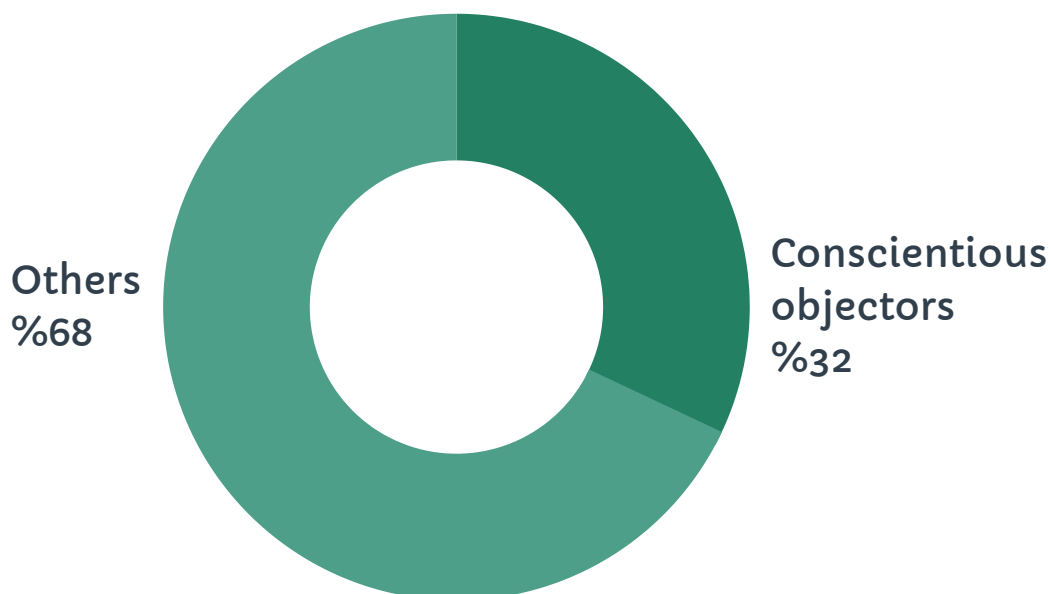
%28 Those who request information about the right to conscientious objection



# HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS OF PEOPLE SUBJECT TO COMPULSORY MILITARY SERVICE

The application form, which we published upon the due diligence of the violations of rights suffered by those who are obliged to do their compulsory military service, was filled out by 19 people in the time period covering May-July 2021. With the answers given to the form filled by conscientious objectors, draft evaders, evaders and conscripts, different types of right violations were identified over the course of 3 months. Among those who filled out the form, there were many people who could not get a declared job, their freedom of travel was restricted, they could not work in public institutions and were exposed to other rights violations. Among these applicants, the majority had not yet declared their conscientious objection.

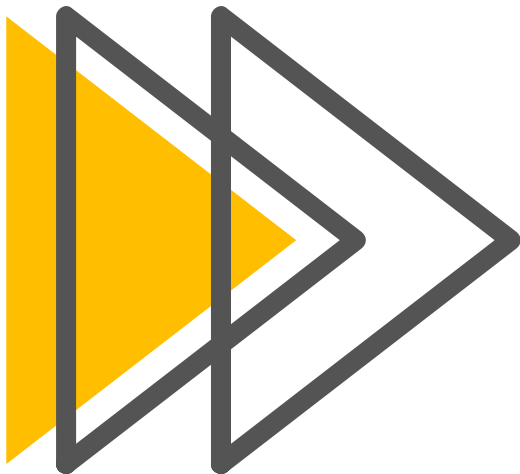
In addition, 15 of the applicants stated that they did not apply to any official institution due to their conscientious objection declarations; 4 applicants stated that they applied to official authorities such as the Military Service Branch or the Ministry of National Defense.



# ADMINISTRATIVE FINES

Fifteen of the 19 applicants who filled out the form in the period covering May-July stated that they did not apply to an official institution due to their conscientious objection declarations; 4 applicants stated that they applied to official authorities such as the recruitment offices or the Ministry of National Defense.

11 of the applicants who filled out the form were asked “Have you ever objected to the administrative fines imposed on you?”. While 6 of the applicants who answered the question stated that they did not object to the administrative fine imposed on them on the grounds that they were draft evaders or evaders, 5 applicants stated that they did not know how to object to the administrative fines.



3 people who filled out the form stated that an administrative fine was imposed on them on charges of being a draft evaders or evaders, and were fined approximately 53.000 TL in total.



# WHICH VIOLATIONS OF RIGHTS ARE PERSONS SUBJECT TO COMPULSORY MILITARY SERVICE EXPOSED TO?



\* Violations of rights cited by 17 applicants.

\*\*The applicants stated that they were subjected to more than one violation.

The answers given to the following question “*Which rights have you been violated due to being a military obligation?*” clearly show the diversity of violations experienced by the applicants. Most of the 17 people who answered the question stated that they were exposed to more than one violation.

The most common violation of rights faced because of not doing compulsory military service was stated as not being able to work with social security, 13 people stated that they could not work with social security. 6 people stated that their freedom of travel was restricted, 5 people stated that they could not work in official institutions, and 4 people said that they could not vote.

## THE CASES FOLLOWED BY VR-DER

During the period of May-July, VR-DER continued to provide legal counseling to conscientious objectors. One of the ongoing cases of a conscientious objector with the accusation of evading (bakaya) has been concluded with acquittal. The sentences of two conscientious objectors, for evading (bakaya), were appealed. The Association has also started to follow the case of another conscientious objector. In addition, two individual applications have been made to the Constitutional Court regarding the cases of two conscientious objectors within the scope of the right to conscientious objection.

The association has filed two different lawsuits with the purpose of demanding the right of conscientious objection as a "plaintiff" for conscientious objectors, speaking in legal terms, rather than simply standing in "defense" against the fines imposed by the administrative and judicial mechanisms against conscientious objectors. In this context, an administrative process has also been initiated for a conscientious objector who is over the age of 41 - the military service age specified in the Recruitment Law, and an application has been made to the Recruitment Office. The Recruitment Office has rejected the request of conscientious objection but has not made any statement regarding the age limit of 41. This decision has been appealed. According to their response, a lawsuit will be filed in the Administrative Court.

In another case, a lawsuit has been filed in the Tax Court regarding a fine imposed on another conscientious objector and the cancellation of the fine has been requested based on the right to conscientious objection.

# CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION DECLARATIONS

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May 1, 2021

İbrahim Aslan declared his conscientious objection with the text below he sent to the Conscientious Objection Association.

*"... I refuse to fight and hold a gun, seeing the damage that war has done to people both psychologically and physically.*

*I believe that all problems can be solved through diplomacy without military order.*

*That's why I wholeheartedly believe that this world will become more liveable for humanity if young minds hold pens instead of guns, and on May 1st, World Workers' Day, I express that I stand on the side of labour, equality and freedom, and reject the military system with my conscience."*



May 3, 2021

Sinan Bulgay announced his conscientious objection with the text below he sent to the Conscientious Objection Association.

*"... I cannot forgive myself for the rest of my life if I take up arms against my own people or even unintentionally help those who take up arms. Those who left me stateless cannot impose compulsory military service on me because "I owe this to my homeland". Taking the risk of "civil death", I reject conscription - not only with my conscience but also my reason..."*



May 15, 2021

Oğuzhan Şahin announced his conscientious objection with the text he sent to the Conscientious Objection Association.

*"I consider it a conscientious duty to stay away from the networks of domination within which the state maintains its power and which I insisted on not being a part throughout my life, and to stay away from the military service which orders killing. I refuse to be a soldier who takes orders and gives orders within the politics of war of the Republic of Turkey extending from Turkey to Kurdistan, Syria, Ukraine and all geographies it tries to be involved in..."*



June 7, 2021

Servet Tan announced his conscientious objection with the text he sent to the Conscientious Objection Association.

*"... I don't want to wear the tainted uniform of the state. I don't find it ethical to kill people. Wars can bring nothing but fear, death and misery to people. My will and conscience do not accept being a part of this system. I reject militarism, I reject military service. War causes traumas for individuals and society that continue for years, forcing societies to migrate. I don't want to be a part of this dirty war, it is not my war..."*





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