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## 142<sup>nd</sup> session of the Human Rights Committee

### Greece

Formal briefing - October 21<sup>st</sup>, 2024

Speaker: Zaira Zafarana

Thank you Madam Chair.

We would like to address Freedom of conscience and religious belief and particularly the items mentioned in point 20 of the List of Issues, concerning conscientious objection to military service.<sup>1</sup>

In Greece there are several violations of the right to conscientious objection and of other human rights of conscientious objectors. Since 2015, violations and failures to comply with international human rights law and standards have been highlighted by various UN and European human rights bodies.

The alternative to military service is still punitive and discriminatory in terms of its nature, cost, and duration.

Conscientious objectors performing alternative service are either entitled food and housing, without any wage or otherwise receive a monthly “wage”, of € 223.53.

There is also the issue of the location of the alternative service which consists of services of public benefit in areas other than the *entire region* of residence.

The decision on applications for the recognition of conscientious objectors is taken by the Minister of National Defence, after a non-binding recommendation by a five-membered Special Committee with military participation. There is, thus, a lack of independence from the military and the government and therefore of impartiality.

There is a persistent discrimination based on different grounds of objection which has been already observed by this Committee, the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or belief, the OHCHR and the Ombudsman who identified a discrimination between those applicants citing religious grounds and those citing ideological grounds.

Finally, conscientious objectors who are not recognised or do not perform or conclude the punitive alternative service face punishment as “insubordinate”. It has also been reported repetitive punishment in violation of the *ne bis in idem* principle.

In conclusion, we would like to draw the Committee’s attention to the lack of effective remedy and the still not implementation of the views of the Committee in the *Petromelidis v. Greece* case.

Thank you.

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<sup>1</sup> Connection e.V. information submitted to the Committee for the session are available at

[https://tinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=INT%2FCCPR%2FCSS%2FGRC%2F59913&Lang=en](https://tinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=INT%2FCCPR%2FCSS%2FGRC%2F59913&Lang=en)