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AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL TO ATTEND TRIAL IN GREECE

A delegate from Amnesty International will attend the appeal hearing of Nikos Karanikas, a conscientious objector, at Thessaloniki Military Court on 19 December 1995.

On 25 August 1995 Nikos Karanikas was arrested from his home in Alexandria village near Thessaloniki for refusing to serve compulsory military service on political and philosophical grounds. He was sentenced to four years' imprisonment on 5 October 1995, despite the Prosecutor's recommendations for a three-year sentence, for "insubordination in a period of general mobilization".

Amnesty International considers Nikos Karanikas to be a prisoner of conscience and appeals for his immediate and unconditional release.

"Everyone should have the right to refuse to perform armed service for reasons of conscience or profound conviction arising from religious, ethical, moral, humanitarian, philosophical, political or similar motives," Amnesty International said.

The human rights organization is also urging the Greek Government to introduce a completely civilian alternative service of non-punitive length for conscientious objectors to military service, in line with international standards and recommendations.

The right to refuse military service for reasons of conscience is inherent in the notion of freedom of thought, conscience and religion as laid down in a number of international human rights instruments, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Amnesty International is reiterating its call for the immediate release of about 350 conscientious objectors to military service on religious, political or philosophical grounds who are currently serving prison sentences of up to four years and eight months.

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