



EUROMIL aisbl

*(European Organisation of
Military Associations)*

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Input of EUROMIL

"Twentieth anniversary and promotion of the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms"

About EUROMIL

The European Organisation of Military Associations (EUROMIL) is an umbrella organisation composed of 34 military associations and trade unions from 23 countries. It is the main Europe-wide forum for cooperation among professional military associations on issues of common concern. EUROMIL strives to secure and advance the human rights, fundamental freedoms and socio-professional interests of military personnel of all ranks in Europe and promotes the concept of "Citizen in Uniform". As such, a soldier is entitled to the same rights and obligations as any other citizen. EUROMIL particularly calls for recognition of the right of servicemen and -women to form and join trade unions and independent associations and for their inclusion in a regular social dialogue by the authorities. The organisation is an ECOSOC-accredited NGO.

Military associations are human rights defenders

On the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the UN Declaration on human rights defenders, the European Organisation of Military Associations (EUROMIL) would like to draw attention to the specific situation of military associations as human rights defenders and call on the United Nations to ensure that their particular case is not being overlooked by its offices, departments and specialized agencies, as well as by the its member states and other relevant stakeholders.

Civil society is key for functioning democracies and necessary for the protection of human rights. But to function, civil society organisations and their representatives also need their rights to be protected. All over the world, the space for civil society has been shrinking in recent years, and military personnel are not spared by this negative trend. In several European and other countries, their right to freedom of association and associated rights, such as the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and the right to freedom of expression, are unduly restricted. This negatively affects their protection, moral and loyalty as well as progress towards democratic armed forces.

EUROMIL is worried about the witch hunt it observed against the representatives of some of its member associations and is particularly concerned about the



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succession of disciplinary proceedings, detentions and other intimidating and repressive measures taken against them in the last years.

Recommendations

EUROMIL recalls that the right to freedom of association and related rights are intrinsic to democratic societies and expressly recognized in all major international and regional human rights instruments. Governments should therefore ensure that the personnel of their armed forces are treated as "Citizens in Uniform" and are able to fully exercise their human rights and fundamental freedoms, both in legislation and in practice. Military personnel should be allowed to establish and join associations to represent their interests, make their voice heard and be engaged in a constructive dialogue with the military and political authorities without facing pressure and unfounded obstacles.

EUROMIL congratulates the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders for the work undertaken in protecting human rights defenders and ensuring that their voice is being heard. The organisation nevertheless thinks that there is always room for improvement and welcomes any further initiative aiming at highlighting and disseminating best practices, while at the same time clearly identifying sensitive situations and providing support to those in need.

EUROMIL thus calls on the United Nations to take into consideration military personnel as a professional category that deserves specific attention and recalls that international standards and legislations should apply to all human beings, including those wearing uniforms.

EUROMIL particularly refers to recommendations made in two important documents adopted at European level, namely the Recommendation CM/Rec (2010)4 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on "Human rights of members of the armed forces" (articles I, J and K on the rights to freedom of expression, to have access to relevant information and to freedoms of peaceful assembly and of association with others) and the OSCE/ODIHR and DCAF "Handbook on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of Armed Forces Personnel" (chapters 8 and 9 on civil and political rights and military unions and associations).

For any further information, please contact the EUROMIL Office by email euromil@euromil.org or phone: +32.2.626.06.80