

Greek police collude with fascist Golden Dawn group

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Greek police are ever-more openly colluding with the fascist Golden Dawn (*Chrysi Avgi*).

On an almost daily basis, Golden Dawn members and their supporters go on a rampage in the capital Athens and other towns around the country, attacking immigrants and political opponents with impunity.

Some of these attacks, often led by some of the party's 18 parliamentary deputies, have been filmed and photographed. Police have not only turned a blind eye, but have encouraged or participated in the attacks.

Reports attest to the fact that the police have referred citizens asking for assistance to the fascists. The *Guardian* newspaper recently reported on "mounting evidence that Athenians are being openly directed by police to seek help from the neo-Nazi group".

It quoted "one victim of crime, an eloquent US-trained civil servant," who "told the *Guardian* of her family's shock at being referred to the party when her mother recently called the police following an incident involving Albanian immigrants in their downtown apartment block. 'They immediately said if it's an issue with immigrants go to Golden Dawn,' said the 38-year-old, who, fearing for her job and safety, spoke only on condition of anonymity."

Active police support was critical to Golden Dawn making a breakthrough in the June general election. According to *To Vima*, 50 percent of police officers voted for Golden Dawn. Many police officers, particularly within the riot control department, are Golden Dawn members.

The racism exploited by Golden Dawn is whipped up by the government and the police. In August the coalition government led by Prime Minister Antonis Samaras began a mass round-up of immigrants, mobilising 4,500 officers. Many of the 1,400 people lifted off the streets were singled out entirely on the

basis of their skin colour and for "foreign"-looking appearance.

Last week, police reported that 2,135 unregistered migrants were sent to their home countries between August and September. A total of 1,259 were deported by the Aliens Bureau, with most coming from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Albania.

During the election campaign, Samaras scapegoated immigrants for the economic catastrophe being imposed by the Greek bourgeoisie and the European Union, referring to undocumented workers in Greece as an "unarmed invasion". The government has added more security to prevent entry into the country across its border with Turkey.

This was the backdrop against which on September 7 Golden Dawn parliamentary deputy Giorgos Germanis led 40 of his party's thugs on a rampage through a night market in Rafina, northwest of Athens. They demanded that dark-skinned merchants show their permits and destroyed a number of their stalls. Germanis bragged, "We told the police and then we did what Golden Dawn must do."

Another Golden Dawn MP, Panayiotis Iliopoulos, has also been linked to the attack.

After a public outcry, the police chief on duty at Rafina's main police headquarters has been suspended.

Another attack took place in Missolonghi, in western Greece. Led by deputy Costas Barbarousis, Golden Dawn members smashed fruit and vegetable market stalls owned by immigrants. A police officer reportedly took part in the attack and has been suspended pending an investigation.

Last year, a former police minister confirmed that Golden Dawn regularly collude with the police, admitting the fascists had carried out "joint actions and assisted Greek police."

One anti-racism campaigner told the *Financial Times* this month, “We get reports their members [Golden Dawn] are involved in protection rackets, sometimes in collusion with the police.”

In June, Egyptian fishermen were severely beaten in Perama, outside Piraeus. One of the victims stated that one of the assailants wore a Golden Dawn T-shirt. Just hours earlier, Golden Dawn MP Ioannis Lagos had stated in a speech, “Egyptian fishermen will be held accountable by the Golden Dawn and by the Greek people for their activity.”

Despite laws against inciting racial violence, Lagos escaped prosecution.

These are just a handful of the hundreds of racist attacks this year, which have nearly doubled from the same period last year. Some have resulted in killings.

The media have played a central role in bolstering Golden Dawn. Since the election, the fascists have been regularly feted on TV and radio shows, with party deputies becoming permanent fixtures.

An important element in this promotion is the attempt to oppose the development of working class opposition to the government’s unprecedented austerity measures. One columnist from the right-wing daily *Kathimerini* stated, “Those of us believing in democracy owe a big ‘thank you’ to Golden Dawn,” adding: “it is an opportunity for legality to confront the quasi-legitimate violence of the left.”

On September 10, Public Order Minister Nikos Dendias was forced to announce that Greek police would withdraw state bodyguards granted to Golden Dawn MPs. After the attack on the Rafina market, Dendias called on the authorities to file charges against the two MPs. While a police statement agreed it would carry out the instruction, it noted that guards would continue to protect party leader Nikos Michaloliakos and Golden Dawn’s offices.

Dendias’ move is at most a thin cover for an on-going relationship between Golden Dawn and the police and the top echelons of the state.

Dendias has publicly stated that the problem of immigration is greater than Greece’s financial problems, while Samaras said this month that those coming to Greece from Africa, South Asia and now Syria create “major distress”. Asked about close ties between Golden Dawn and the police, he said of the latter, “I’m very happy with the way they’ve done

their job.”

It is not only the conservative New Democracy led by Samaras that is legitimising assaults on immigrant workers and youth. It is aided and abetted by its coalition partners, the social democratic PASOK and DIMAR, the Democratic Left party, which split from the bourgeois “left” SYRIZA coalition in 2010.

In scenes reminiscent of the Nazi occupation of Greece, the coalition decided last month to transport a group of 400 immigrants into a disused military camp on the outskirts of Corinth. Golden Dawn members in the city whipped up an anti-immigrant hysteria, with Michaloliakos asking demagogically, “Why should Greek taxpayers subsidise a fully-catered stay in a holiday camp for people we don’t want?”

Fully aware of the atrocious and inhuman conditions that faced the immigrants, the PASOK mayor of the city, Alexandros Pnevmatikos, also registered his party’s protest at their arrival. He immediately ordered the camp’s water supply cut off for several hours as a reprisal.

Pnevmatikos stated, “It was unacceptable for the ministry to send all these people here without even discussing it with the city authorities,” adding: “There’s a big backlash in the city because of fears of a mass escape by immigrants trying to get to the port and on to a ship for Italy ... They shouldn’t be staying here.”



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