

Athens mayor bans fascist demonstration

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On Thursday, police intervened on the orders of Athens Mayor Giorgos Kaminis to prevent supporters of the Greek fascist party Golden Dawn (CA) from carrying out a planned food distribution in Syntagma Square.

Some weeks ago, the fascists announced they would distribute candles, potatoes and lamb “to Greeks only” on the eve of Orthodox Easter. Similar racist actions have already taken place in recent months and are part of the political strategy of the extreme-right party. A year ago, a similar food distribution took place on Syntagma Square.

Kaminis used the fact that the action had not been officially registered to prohibit it at the last moment. He ordered the police to evict the fascists as they were gathering on Parliament Square. Police used tear gas to disperse the crowd.

The members of the CA retreated to the party’s nearby headquarters where they were able to freely distribute food and propagate their vile propaganda. Those seeking food had first to identify themselves as Greeks in order to qualify for rations.

Immediately after the police action in Syntagma Square, CA Deputy Giorgos Yermenis and other CA members threatened Kaminis and tried to physically assault him. Yermenis is alleged to have pulled a gun. Kaminis’s bodyguard managed to repel the attack, but a 12-year-old girl was injured in the head by Yermenis.

Such brutal attacks by the fascists are now a regular feature of Greek political life. Members of Golden Dawn, which features a modified swastika as its emblem and openly espouses Nazi positions, systematically carry out attacks on the organization’s political opponents, homosexuals and immigrants. A political struggle against these forces has assumed the utmost urgency.

The evacuation of Syntagma Square by the police, however, does nothing to contribute to such a struggle.

Rather, it serves to strengthen the state apparatus and undermine democratic rights, in turn reinforcing reactionary social tendencies.

The ban on the fascist meeting in Syntagma Square will be used as a precedent to repress anyone opposing government policy. “Syntagma Square will no longer be used by anybody to hand out food”, the mayor said. “This place belongs to the inhabitants of Athens. Only the City Council can decide how it is used.”

Kaminis’s statements illustrate the logic of his approach. He uses the fascists to enforce the government’s right to arbitrarily decide who can demonstrate and who will be banned. The iconic Syntagma Square in the middle of Athens and in front of the parliament building has been the site of numerous demonstrations involving hundreds of thousands of workers protesting against the social cuts of the government and the European Union. The government’s action sets the stage for state action to prevent such mass demonstrations.

This year alone, striking workers in Greece have been placed under martial law and forced back to work by the police on numerous occasions. Government-backed provocateurs are used to dissolve mass demonstrations and attack participants on a regular basis. And for nearly a year, tens of thousands of immigrants have been hunted down by police and interned in special camps awaiting possible deportation.

This development of the state towards authoritarian forms of rule goes hand-in-hand with the growth of the fascist forces. Both are based on the enormous intensification of social conflicts in Greece. Wage cuts averaging 40 percent, an unemployment rate of more than 27 percent and the dismantling of the country’s education and health systems are incompatible with democratic rights. The aggressiveness with which the European financial elite is proceeding against the population of the continent is fueling open forms of

dictatorship in Greece.

This is why the fascist CA has been systematically built up in recent years by the state. Numerous reports indicate the close level of cooperation between the fascists and the police. Police not only look the other way when immigrants are mistreated by the fascists, they are known to have called upon citizens to contact the fascists and have tortured political opponents of the CA in their prison cells. According to polls, around 60 percent of police officers voted for the CA in the elections held in June last year.

The process of systematically encouraging the fascists has been continued by the current government, a coalition of the conservative New Democracy party, the social democratic PASOK and the Democratic Left (DIMAR, a split off from SYRIZA). As an independent candidate supported by both PASOK and DIMAR, Kaminis has close links to the government and the governor of Athens. These forces have no interest in a genuine fight against the fascists.

The fact that the CA is able to raise its head and propagate its racist filth in the center of Athens is primarily due to the policies of the unions and pseudo-left parties, which have systematically sabotaged any serious struggle by workers against the government's social attacks. The unions have sought to dissipate resistance with a series of harmless one-day protest strikes. The Coalition of the Radical Left (SYRIZA), the largest opposition party, staunchly defends the European Union (EU) and guarantees the banks it will repay their loans.

It is their agreement with the policy of making workers pay for the crisis which explains why the unions, SYRIZA and the Communist Party (KKE) refuse to take up a serious struggle against Golden Dawn and its thugs. They fear an independent movement of the workers far more than the fascist gangs. A few weeks ago, SYRIZA joined an alliance with the right-wing and ultra-nationalist party, the Independent Greeks (Anel).

These parties speak on behalf of a prosperous layer of bureaucrats and petty-bourgeois who are extremely hostile to the interests of the working class and are shifting ever further to the right as the crisis worsens.

The struggle against the fascists must be linked to the fight against social attacks and be based on an independent mobilisation of the working class.

Workers' committees in neighborhoods must be established to undertake the defence of political meetings and immigrants against both the fascist thugs and the police.

This must be the first step in building a revolutionary workers party, armed with a socialist perspective, that unites workers across all borders in the fight against social attacks.



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