

# Greek workers demonstrate against mass sackings, fascist violence

Katerina Selin and Christoph Dreier  
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Thousands of Greek public service workers began a nationwide general strike on Wednesday. Rallies and demonstrations were held in all major cities, with public sector and private sector workers protesting together against the austerity measures of the Greek government and the European Union (EU).

Demonstrators reacted with shock when they learned of the death of 34-year-old musician Pavlos Fyssas. He was killed in the Athens suburb of Keratsini by a member of the fascist Golden Dawn early Wednesday morning. The march in Athens moved spontaneously toward the offices of the Golden Dawn. Participants held banners and placards declaring “No to layoffs” and “Fight the Golden Dawn killers”.

Further spontaneous demonstrations against the fascist terror took place in the evening in more than two dozen cities. The police reacted very aggressively to the protests. In Athens, they dispersed the crowd using tear gas. In Thessaloniki, they prevented protesters from demonstrating outside the office of the Golden Dawn. On Monday, police had already attacked protesting school caretakers.

The 48-hour general strike had been called by the public service union, ADEDY. Many professions participated in the walkout. The transport system was largely shut down when rail and tram employees went on strike for four hours. There was also reduced service in the metro system.

Employees of the Greek telecommunications company OTE, run by German Telekom, and employees of the utility company DEI, which is threatened with privatisation, demonstrated alongside insurance clerks and employment agency workers. Judicial officers, lawyers and journalists also took part. Doctors and nurses had already begun strike action on Tuesday.

Thousands of teachers, lecturers, students, administrators and school caretakers stopped work on Monday, declaring a five-day strike only three days after the start of the school year. Tens of thousands demonstrated on Monday in Athens, Thessaloniki and Ioannina to Chania and Samos against the job cuts plan of the government.

On Tuesday, the teachers’ union (OLME) said strike participation was running at 90 percent. Students occupied 10 schools in the regions of Attica and Argolida, in solidarity with teachers.

On Tuesday, it was announced that 1,929 employees will be laid off in nine ministries. They are among the 15,000 officers in the public service to be terminated by the end of 2014. In addition, 25,000 workers will be transferred into a mobility pool and will lose their jobs if no other job is found for them in the public service in the coming year. By the end of this year, a further 4,000 state employees are likely to join the ranks of the unemployed.

The massive cuts to universities are leading to the collapse of the educational system, university presidents warned on Tuesday. A total of 1,765 employees in the administration will be required to join the mobility pool, although the universities are already understaffed and need 2,500 new employees. The rectors and managers of the universities have refused to provide the Ministry of Education with a list of the names of employees to be laid off and have threatened to close down the universities indefinitely if the cuts are implemented.

The health sector is also being called upon to accept further austerity measures. Eight hospitals in Athens and Thessaloniki are to be transformed into so-called health centres and lose 1,618 employees, who will be transferred. Already, 40 percent of Greek workers are

no longer eligible for health care.

Next week, the troika of the European Central Bank ( ECB), European Commission and International Monetary Fund (IMF ) returns to Athens to negotiate even more cuts with the government.

The large protests this week demonstrate the broad social opposition against these plans. They are part of a growing wave of resistance throughout Europe. The government responds in turn with violence and authoritarian measures, and are able to rely on the support of the unions.

In May of this year, the government placed teachers under martial law and declared their strike to be illegal. Although teachers overwhelmingly voted to to defy the government, the OLME union quickly called off the labour dispute.

This time around, the union is also making every effort to end the strike. OLME chairman Themis Kotsifakis has already announced a dialogue with Education Minister Constantinos Arvanitopoulos. The pair met at the beginning of this month for a confidential exchange of views.



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