

Brutal police provocation at Greek protest over fascist murder of rapper

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Sixty-four people were arrested after clashes with police September 18, at a demonstration held to mark one year since rapper Pavlos Fyssas, also known as Killah P, was murdered by Golden Dawn member Giorgos Roupakias. The demonstration was held in Keratsini, the working class suburb of Piraeus where Fyssas was murdered.

According to demonstrators who spoke to the Greek daily *I Efimerida Ton Syntakton (Ef.Syn.)*, the violence was initiated by police provocateurs who had infiltrated the demonstration. The newspaper reported that “demonstrators removed a police ID from a person who had his face covered and was causing damage at the Keratsini Citizens’ Assistance Centre.”

According to *Ef.Syn.*, “moving alongside the marching demonstrators were isolated hooded people who were breaking the windows of bank branches, mobile phone shops and the Citizens’ Assistance Centre. The intervention of the police followed shortly... as squads of riot police unleashed a fierce attack, deploying beatings and tear gas, and splitting the demonstration into three large groups.”

Police make up a significant section of Golden Dawn’s supporters, with over 50 percent of officers in Athens reportedly voting for the neo-Nazi party in the 2012 general elections.

Speaking to the SYRIZA (Coalition of the Radical Left) radio station, Sto Kokkino, Keratsini Mayor Christos Vrettakos stated that “30 black clad undercover cops were beating up people, while police looked on”, adding, “Fascism in uniform struck today. They [meaning the government] have to round them up, otherwise we will do it.”

Vrettakos was elected mayor in the recent municipal elections and his campaign was officially endorsed by SYRIZA.

For all the bluster, this rhetoric is consistent with SYRIZA’s overall policy of presenting police brutality as the work of a few bad apples that need to be purged. In fact, SYRIZA supported the government’s initiative to strengthen the repressive state apparatus under the guise of clamping down on Golden Dawn as a criminal organisation.

Over a fortnight ago, SYRIZA released a policy statement on police reform. While calling for the abolition of the riot police and “banning the use of special forces to repress popular mobilisations”, SYRIZA is proposing that riot police be transferred into Greece’s regular police stations, while at the same time “creat[ing] special services to tackle crises (natural disasters, extreme criminality and violence)”.

In other words, the most reactionary units of the Greek police are to be integrated into the regular police. Furthermore, the purposefully vague references to “extreme criminality and violence” could easily include civil unrest outside the controlled framework of “popular mobilisations”, i.e., the series of toothless strikes and rallies that have been called by the trade union bureaucracy in the last five years in order for workers to let off steam while austerity measures were passed through parliament.

The violent repression of the demonstration coincided with new revelations made by *Ef.Syn.* of links between Golden Dawn and the ruling New Democracy party through Prime Minister Antonis Samaras’ former chief-of-staff, Panayiotis Baltakos. In its article, the newspaper revealed a series of text messages from February 2013 that were sent by Theodoros Zoubos, a Golden Dawn parliamentary worker, to Golden Dawn MP Ilias Kasidiaris. In the text messages, Zoubos is conveying to Kasidiaris Baltakos’ instructions on how Golden Dawn MPs should vote in order to facilitate the

passage of certain pieces of legislation. According to *Ef.Syn.*, Baltakos had regular contact with Zoubos given that his own parliamentary office was opposite the one allocated to Golden Dawn MPs.

One of the pieces of legislation in question was an amendment tabled by 85 New Democracy MPs to change the law in order to allow only Greeks by descent to enter military academies. The amendment was eventually withdrawn after the 85 MPs decided to resubmit it in a new bill, which would be endorsed by all coalition partners.

Baltakos confirmed that he was mobilising Golden Dawn's votes and vaguely cited "national reasons" for doing so. According to *Ef.Syn.*, he indirectly implied that Prime Minister Antonis Samaras was fully aware of what was going on.

Baltakos' contacts with Golden Dawn originally emerged last April after Golden Dawn MP Ilias Kasidiaris leaked a video which shows Baltakos briefing Kasidiaris on the government's clampdown on Golden Dawn, following the murder of Fyssas. The leaked video led to Baltakos' resignation.

The government has yet to issue a comment on the *Ef.Syn.* revelations or on the events that took place in Keratsini. In order to implement its austerity measures, the government has repeatedly resorted to repressive measures. In July, a strike against the privatisation of the Public Power Corporation was broken, as workers were issued civil mobilisation orders which placed them under martial law and forced them to return to work. Civil mobilisation orders have also been issued repeatedly since 2009 by successive governments, in order to break strikes that were a threat to government policy.

SYRIZA leader Alexis Tsipras chose to mark the anniversary of Pavlos Fyssas' murder by meeting with Pope Francis at the Vatican. Proclaiming Francis as "the pontiff of the poor," he stated, "We come from different ideological starting points, but we meet on [the matter] of pan-human values."

Pope Francis is a reactionary figure directly implicated in the crimes of Argentina's ruling junta during the mid 70s and early 80s. He heads an institution whose cordial relations with fascism in the inter-war years are well documented.

Tsipras' visit to the Vatican is the latest in many such initiatives, through which he aims to convince the

global financial aristocracy that a SYRIZA government will pursue the same austerity policies as previous Greek governments. In January 2013 he visited the United States and spoke at the Brookings Institute in Washington and also met with David Lipton, the deputy managing director at the International Monetary Fund.

How far Tsipras has come in being accepted by the ruling elites of Europe and the US was underscored by a comment made by Niels Kadritzke, editor of the German version of *Le Monde diplomatique*, who said, "Tsipras is no longer a bogey man" and "no one in Berlin is scared anymore that Tsipras will overturn the table, at which they will sit with a left-wing government, in order to discuss the Greek crisis and plans to exit from it."



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