

Protesters speak out at global demonstrations for justice over Greek Tempi rail crash

Our reporters
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Last Friday's huge protests in Greece to demand justice for the 57 victims of the 2023 Tempi rail crash were supported internationally by demonstrations on every inhabited continent.

At least 112 were held, including in Berlin, Germany; Paris, France; Madrid and Barcelona in Spain; London, Edinburgh and Manchester in the UK; Rio de Janeiro in Brazil; New York and Boston in the US; and Sydney, Australia. An online map was viewed more than 1.9 million times.

World Socialist Web Site reporters spoke to participants in the global protests in Berlin, London and Manchester.

In **Berlin**, hundreds protested at the Greek embassy despite pouring rain. Many brought homemade placards. One indicted Greece's main political parties for the disaster: "Syriza, PASOK, ND [New Democracy]—Tempi has a history."

Christos said the mass response over Tempi expressed social tensions that had been suppressed and building up for years. "The real cause of it [the protests] is that the people in Greece have had difficulties over the last 10, 15 years, and they've had enough of governments and it's time to react." He concluded "In the whole of Europe and the whole world, the situation is falling apart. The few are becoming richer and the rest are becoming poorer... We don't have democracy anymore. We have capitalism."

George said, "We want justice. We hope people learn about the government and all their actions that were totally unforgettable. We are really happy there are these big demonstrations for people to see."

Asked what he thought the reasons were for the crash, he said, "The government for sure. They haven't put in all the systems for the security. Also, the train was carrying some fuels that were illegal."

Tasos commented, "They knew everything, that something is wrong. They knew everything. We want justice. They tried to cover-up everything, but they cannot because we know the truth. And we are here to show them what is the truth. They don't care about you. 57 people died and they don't care."

Athina told our reporters, "It's a beautiful country with bad governments. And you don't know who to choose because the one is as bad as the other."

She continued, "They [Greeks] are protesting all over the world. And I hope something is going to change this time."

Christina, another Berlin protester, stressed that the eruption of anger is not just about Tempi, but the whole economic crisis in Greece. She immigrated to Germany some years ago because she

couldn't find work as a teacher: "But for eight years we have seen no change. Every time I come to Greece, I see friends and family who are disappointed, worried and angry, trying to make ends meet every month. We lack infrastructure in Greece. The hospitals are in a tragic state, as are the schools and all that."

In Germany the situation is getting worse, as well, she added. Addressing German workers and youth, she urged them not to wait but to resist rising prices and the deterioration of the healthcare system. Her demand: "All the funds for the people, because we are the power."

Eleni brought a picture to the Berlin demonstration she had painted herself, inspired by Edvard Munch's famous painting "The Scream". It shows the train crash and the dead young people, demanding "Justice" for the victims.

In **London**, around 3,000 protested outside the embassy, completely filling the street.

Elena attended because "We're Greeks and we have felt the austerity and the crisis in our skins in the past 15 years now. Spending has been cut for anything that's important for the everyday life of the people, starting with pensions, salaries. Everything's getting more expensive... They're not giving any money for public hospitals that were model institutions.

"This is all in the name of paying crisis debt and saving the banking system. All this, we feel, is the cherry on the pie. This terrible train accident was the last drop of this terrible glass of injustice: 57 people died and 50 of them were between 17 and 23 years of age. Finally, people started waking up and asking what's going on here..."

"The government is responsible and is covering up for the rich people of Greece. The wagons of the opposite-coming commercial train contained some [flammable] gas that shouldn't have been inside that wagon..."

"We need to declare new elections. But I don't know who we can vote for; not PASOK or Syriza [Coalition of the Radical Left, who privatised the state railway in 2017]. We need to kick them out. They need to know that the people know, feel, understand their lies. It is high time that people wake up."

Evangelios attended "to protest the coverup about the accident that happened two years ago. The two trains collided but there was a huge explosion and no one can explain why this happened. It's not due to natural causes—they collided but the explosion happened from some kind of material that the cargo train was carrying. But the government's trying to cover up and say that nothing illegal or

nothing flammable was on that cargo train.

“But that’s not the truth because a lot of specialists they found evidence in the debris of some kind of flammable materials. A lot of people say that something illegal was there and a big businessman was behind that.

“The two trains collided because they had no telematic system that would know where the train is and auto-brake the trains. They’re trying to accuse the drivers of the trains but we know that a lot of accidents happen due to human error and the systems should be there in order to avoid human error causes in general. They spent the money somewhere and they didn’t invest in the train and the railway, so this was the outcome.”

Asked who he held responsible, Evangelios replied, “It’s all the governments from the last 20 years! The last three governments, they have responsibility. We’re talking about like 15 years, almost 20 years and we had another government before that and they didn’t invest too.

“This is the Greek railway that they [Syriza government] sold [in 2017] for 50 million euros, it’s nothing, they sold it for free. But their excuse was ‘We’re under a financial crisis and under International Monetary Fund supervision and we have no money’. And now people are killed because of this underfunding, so what’s the excuse? Nothing.”

Despina said, “There is a big injustice in this case, and what they [the New Democracy government] tried to do is hide all the evidence. We are here for us; we are here for our kids. We left Greece because of the [austerity] crisis. We are here for a better life.”

Asked who she felt was responsible for the Tempi deaths, Despina said, “It’s the European Union. It’s the austerity in Greece. The trains were privatised and they were not public anymore.”

Speaking about previous PASOK, ND and Syriza governments, she said, “I think that these three governments are responsible, but I don’t think that the responsibility is equal among them. Syriza was only there for a few years during the crisis but I think they have responsibilities, because the people supported them but didn’t accept these austerity measures.”

Another protester, also named **Despina**, said, “There is an issue with the railway system in Greece in general. The privatisation of it is a key problem. We also know about the UK when it was privatised. It ended up with terrible problems.

“In Greece there is a deliberate effort to not build and support a good, modern, safe railway system because we have a lot of investors in the roads. There are big construction companies which take the big public works, the roads as well, and they profit a lot from the tolls.”

Sky attended the protest with **Petra**. Sky said, “People are really disappointed in the Greek government because it’s their fault this incident happened. Because if they had taken the right precautions, the trains would have worked in the right way, so this incident would never have happened...”

“But then the mother of the young girl who lost her life there became the voice of hope and the voice of revolution and really inspired Greeks in Greece and worldwide. She said, ‘No, I’m gonna fight for my daughter.’ And then obviously other people,

other victims, and other parents of victims as well became united.

“I think it’s like a revolutionary movement the way it inspired people. Greeks have had enough of the government and we demand an answer to this injustice.”

Petra responded, “I think there is a huge wave of neoliberalism that has covered everything globally, I’m not just talking about Greece. Nowadays, we are going through a very crucial moment. What is happening in Greece, I think that same phenomenon you can see pretty much everywhere in Europe. Look at the governments, the elections, the far-right that’s rising up.

“Since 2009, we’ve been facing a huge financial crisis. In reality, this crisis never finished... People are extremely tired of that; they’re really pissed off.

Petra concluded that with Tempi, “It was like the cherry on top; people said, ‘Enough, we can’t take anymore’. This is the major thing that triggered so many people. And I said myself, ‘We need to change things’.”

Thomas said he attended “after I saw what was happening in Greece, with so many people protesting for the same reason.

“I think it needs some real systematic change...We need real change, not just parties asking for our votes and then being in power for three or even six years, and then just bring on a new one. Not just switching between the two political parties we’ve had in Greece for the last 40 years or so.”

Outside the Greek consulate in **Manchester** where hundreds attended, hospitality worker **Katerina** said, “I have come here today for the people who died in the Tempi train crash.”

Speaking about the government cover-up she said, “A lot of information came to the public after a year and a half, we were unaware... I think if the train had not been carrying illegal fuel all those people could have been alive.”

She added, “The government is hiding the truth and we do not support that. Our prime minister should be impeached and should be punished and put in jail along with his parliament and everyone in there involved. They are trying to hide the evidence of why those people died, and for what reason. It was for no reason other than for the rich to get richer.”

In **Edinburgh** hundreds attended a rally in the city centre.

The homemade placards brought included the slogan: “Justice for the death at Tempi and Pylos.” Pylos is a reference to the terrible deaths of more than 600 refugees who perished when their boat sank off the Greek coast on June 14, 2023. Another placard read, “Justice will not be given by the murderers. The people will give justice”.



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