Outrage in Greece after police kill unarmed, autistic 20-year-old in Argos

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There has been a huge outcry in Greece following the fatal shooting of an unarmed 20 year man, Theodoris Zavradinos Karampampas, by police in the early hours of July 8 in the town of Argos in the Peloponnese region in southern Greece.

On July 15, thousands of mainly young people marched in Athens to protest the killing. They carried a banner reading "From Argos to Aspropyrgos—We live through the war here every day." This linked the police killing with the increasing number of deaths of workers in factories. On July 9, explosions and a fire tore through an industrial vehicle workshop in Aspropyrgos, west of Athens, killing a 54-year-old worker, and injuring 11 people. On July 27, an explosion at a vinegar plant in Examilia, Corinth, killing a 67-year-old worker and injured another.

The shooting took place following a police pursuit after Karampampas failed to stop for a traffic check. Karampampas eventually tried to escape on foot after his car was boxed in by police vehicles. Two officers shot him in the head while he was trying to climb over a wall. He was declared brain dead a day later and died in intensive care on July 11.

Speaking on *Mega Channel* the day after the shooting, Karampampas' mother revealed that her son was autistic with an assessed disability of 89 percent. She explained that the police tried to stop her son's car after he was coming back from a nighttime swim and that he got scared because he didn't have his driver's licence with him. His fear was magnified by the fact that he had been the victim of police violence the previous year. "That's why he got scared, panicked, and tried to get away. Because he no longer trusted them," she added.

The two officers involved were arrested shortly afterwards and remain in custody pending a trial. Their defence follows a familiar pattern seen in previous police killings, claiming that they only fired warning shots in the air and that they didn't have visual contact with the victim, all of which has been contradicted by evidence reported in the media.

In its online edition, Greek daily *I Efimerida Ton Syntakton* (*The Newspaper of the Editors*) published drone footage of the wall Karampampas attempted to climb that shows the bullet holes from the officers' firearms while a forensic investigation discovered 13 cartridges on the scene of the shooting. A news report on *Mega Channel* broadcast CCTV footage from near the location of the shooting in which at least 21 shots could be heard being fired. After Karampampas fell to the ground one of the officers can be heard shouting "The Turk has fallen down, call an ambulance". Karampampas wasn't Turkish and this was shouted as derogatory language and ethnic slurs are par for the course in the Greek police force, underscoring the fascistic sensibilities that permeate it.

On July 25, a peaceful protest march against the killing of Karampampas through the town of Argos attended by hundreds of people was brutally attacked by riot police with batons, tear gas and stun grenades.

Speaking to Open TV, Antonis Rellas, a member of disability activist group *Mideniki Anohi (*"Zero Tolerance"), said that police had behaved provocatively from the outset: "When we lifted a photograph of Thodoris [outside the town hall] two riot policemen started to laugh while pointing at us and at the photograph."

There are no official statistics of people who have died at the hands of the police, but there have been several high-profile cases of police killings in the last few years. In 2021, Roma teenager Nikos Sambanis was fatally shot following a police pursuit. The

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following year another Roma teenager, Kostas Fragkoulis, was shot after he fled a petrol station without paying a €20 euro fuel bill. In 2024, Muhammad Kamran Ashiq, a 37-year-old Pakistani migrant, died in in an Athens police station under suspicious circumstances. Human rights organisations called for an independent investigation into his death.

Much of the political and media narrative has focussed on the fact that Theodoris was disabled. Racism and bigotry do mean that certain groups are disproportionately affected by police violence. However, police violence affects all sections of the working class. Calls for sensitivity training and reform only serve to conceal the real role the police play in capitalist society as "armed bodies of men" who impose the class rule of the bourgeoisie.

Riot police attacking protests and strike rallies has long been a feature in Greece and has intensified over the last decade and a half of successive rounds of austerity imposed at the behest of the European Union and the International Monetary Fund. To facilitate this brutality, successive rounds of draconian legislation have passed. In 2020, a law passed by the New Democracy conservative government severely curtailed the right to protest. In 2023, the government's new labour law effectively criminalised picketing.

An Amnesty International report released in June raised concerns about police violence on demonstrations, which is "underpinned by protest legislation that fails to comply with international and regional standards, and a persistent culture of impunity for abuses by law enforcement officials policing demonstrations." A report released by the Greek Ombudsman the same month reported a 53 percent rise in police complaints in 2025. Two out of three of these complaints were not properly investigated.

The Association of Imprisoned and Exiled Resistance Fighters (SFEA)—who resisted the seven-year military junta that ruled Greece from 1967-74—released a statement that "police violence in our country is no longer an 'isolated incident' but part of so-called 'normality'… in the name of 'law and order' those in power have politically propped up the forces of repression, by legalising impunity and the police into a state within a state."

In a July 13 Facebook post, the mayor of Argos Yiannis Maltezos—of the ruling New Democracy—described the two policemen as "family men" who are "going through an extremely difficult ordeal". Their pre-trial detention was "unnecessary", he insisted. Maltezos attempted to shift the blame onto Karampampas' "serious behavioural problems," while asking his mother "what did you do to prevent this from happening?"

The backlash over Maltezos' provocative language prompted the Citizens' Protection Minister Michalis Chrysochoidis to take a more restrained stance. In an interview with Skai Radio that same day he said, "The police's mission is to arrest murderers, not to kill children," adding that "the police officers did not act properly. They exceeded the limits, and a human life was lost."

Chrysochoidis' conciliatory tone is an expression of the nervousness that pervades Greece's ruling class, conscious that it is sitting on a social powder keg. It was a police shooting in December 2008 that sparked the biggest civil unrest the country since the fall of the military junta. after 15-year-old Alexandros Grigoropoulos was shot dead in the Exarchia district of Athens. Today Greece is more polarised than ever, with the past three years witnessing repeated waves of strikes over wages, living and working conditions as well as the mass movement for justice for the Tempi rail crash victims.

There is a long history of police killers receiving kid glove treatment by the Greek courts. In last year's trial over the December 2022 police killing of Kostas Frankgoulis, the court accepted the police officer's claim that he was only aiming at the vehicle's tyres and that the bullet in the teenage boy's head was the result of "an accidental discharge caused by vibrations". The charge was then reduced from a felony to a misdemeanour and the officer received a three year suspended sentence.

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