

Crackdown on Golden Dawn in Greece

By Christoph Dreier
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Over the weekend, the Greek government took concerted action against leaders of the fascist Golden Dawn party, the first time such measures have been taken against a political party since the end of the military dictatorship in 1974.

Eighteen leading members of Golden Dawn, including the chairman of the party, Nikos Michaloliakos, were arrested and charged with forming a criminal association. In a raid on Michaloliakos' house, three illegal firearms were confiscated as well as 40,000 euros (\$54,000) in cash. Thirty other Golden Dawn members were also arrested.

The charges follow the murder of the anti-fascist hip hop artist Pavlos Fyssas by a Golden Dawn thug. Two high-ranking police officials resigned last week because of their cooperation with the fascists, and others were suspended from service until further notice or removed to other posts. Also on Saturday, a law was passed to withdraw state financing from parties whose deputies are being prosecuted.

Golden Dawn's 18 parliamentary deputies have threatened to resign en masse, which would trigger new elections in the affected districts and further increase political tensions. Hundreds of Golden Dawn supporters gathered at the party's offices to protest the raids. The well-connected Elite Soldiers Reserve Association (KEED) called for a military coup last Wednesday, implicitly supporting the fascists.

The action against Golden Dawn takes place in the midst of a deep political crisis. The government is finding it increasingly difficult to impose the cuts and mass layoffs dictated by the European Union against the resistance of the population, and there is deep popular anger at Golden Dawn after the murder of Fyssas.

Thousands are demonstrating daily against fascist terror and social attacks. Nine universities have closed their doors in protest against the elimination of 37

percent of all administrative staff. School pupils have occupied 200 schools. The unions are finding it more difficult to limit strikes or sell them out.

On Saturday, the Greek daily *Kathimerini* reported that most of Greece's mayors are refusing to send their budget plans to the central government, as stipulated in a new law.

The "troika"—the European Union (EU), the European Central Bank (ECB), and the International Monetary Fund (IMF)—are currently back in Athens, demanding more austerity measures and layoffs. In ruling circles, the fear is growing that mass resistance to social cuts and opposition to fascist violence will have revolutionary implications.

A debate is raging inside the ruling elite over whether to curb Golden Dawn's activities in an attempt to calm the situation. Sections of the army and of the police—which have financed and built up Golden Dawn over the last five years as a spearhead in the struggle against the working class—are discussing a military coup.

Another section is concerned about the risk of destabilising the situation by openly using the fascists at the present time. The mass protests after Fyssas' murder indicated that an overt alliance with Golden Dawn would intensify social conflicts.

The government has therefore decided to "rein in" Golden Dawn, as security minister Nikos Dendias of the conservative New Democracy (ND) put it. Some leading figures will be put behind bars, for a time at least, though wider networks of leading officials in the police and security services that are sympathetic to Golden Dawn will remain.

This manoeuvre has nothing to do with defending democracy. On the contrary, the state will seize upon the precedent set by measures against Golden Dawn, including a possible ban on the party, to prepare stepped-up attacks on the democratic rights of the

entire population, above all, the working class.

Representatives of ND have repeatedly insisted that state action is directed against “both extremes,” meaning that it will also ultimately apply to left-wing organisations.

Several anti-fascist demonstrations have been brutally attacked or forbidden by the police in recent weeks.

The ruling class is united on the use of state repression to suppress the social opposition of the workers. Striking workers have already been placed under martial law and forced back to work three times this year by means of police violence. Bans on the right to assembly and attacks on demonstrations are part of daily life.

The largest opposition party, the Coalition of the Radical Left (SYRIZA), is playing the central role in seeking to stabilise the situation while in practice supporting austerity measures. The party supports the EU and has pledged support for repaying state debts to the banks, while calling for renegotiation of Greece’s bailout terms.

The party has responded to the state action against Golden Dawn by placing itself fully behind the state apparatus and the government. In an interview with the television channel Skai, SYRIZA leader Alexis Tsipras praised the police, with its close ties to Golden Dawn, as a democratic force.

“The intervention shows that our democracy is standing firm and it is healthy,” he said. “Even if some are trying to take us back again to the 1960s, there is opposition which will prevent this.”

Tsipras also renewed his appeal to New Democracy to sit down with SYRIZA to discuss joint action against Golden Dawn.

The party has already shown itself to be a force for “stability” and indicated that it is ready to enter the government in order to help impose the austerity measures. A government involving SYRIZA would continue the social attacks and implement them through state attacks on the working class. It would serve as a transition to more brutal forms of authoritarian forms of rule.

In order to defend their social and democratic rights, workers must intervene in political events independently of all the bourgeois parties and the state apparatus. They must fight the fascists as well as the

attacks of the government with their own methods. Independent defence committees should be formed and preparations made for a general strike.

Above all, what is required is the political independence of the working class from all bourgeois parties and politicians, including the pseudo-left tendencies such as SYRIZA, which do everything in their power to disarm the workers and subordinate them to the state and the political representatives of the ruling class.

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