

Murder trial implicates leadership of fascist Golden Dawn in Greece

By Robert Stevens
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The mother of slain anti-fascist hip-hop musician Pavlos Fyssas testified last week in the trial of members of Greece's fascist Golden Dawn (Chrysi Avgi) party, who stand accused of having carried out her son's murder.

Top Golden Dawn figures, including leader Nikos Michaloliakos, are accused of being part of a criminal organisation. Their trial is being held at a purpose-built court in Korydallos Prison, Piraeus, where Michaloliakos and five other Golden Dawn parliamentary deputies have been in custody since late 2013.

Fyssas was surrounded by a group of Golden Dawn members and stabbed to death on September 2013, at a café in Keratsini, near Piraeus. Golden Dawn member Giorgos Roupakias is charged with the murder.

On October 6, Fyssas' mother, Magda, described Roupakias as "a trained killer." Roupakias arrived in a car at the café with three other people, but dozens of Golden Dawn members and supporters were already there, she explained. "They cornered [Pavlos] and then the murderer came and stabbed him. He got out of the car and stabbed him twice in the heart."

She believed Golden Dawn parliamentary deputy Yiannis Lagos played a central role in her son's murder. "Lagos gave the order. He gave the OK," Magda said, adding that Michaloliakos had "the ultimate responsibility."

The same day as Magda gave her testimony, the *Efimerida ton Syntakton* newspaper posted a video showing Giorgos Patelis, the leader of Golden Dawn's Nikaia branch, telling a crowd of party supporters about a planned attack at an upcoming fair. In the video, which was not allowed to be heard in court, he states that before the attack can go ahead the order had to come from Lagos.

On the night of Fyssas's murder, Patelis spoke on the telephone with Lagos.

In the video, whose origin and date are not yet known, Patelis tells Golden Dawn supporters to be ready for an attack at a fair on August 15. He states, "Certain people will get a message on the 15th of the month. ... If I get the OK from Lagos. If I don't, we don't do it". Patelis adds, "Whatever they tell us, we must do it."

Describing what will happen, Patelis says, "A group of 20-30 people will leave from here fully loaded... Nothing will be left standing, nothing! Anything that moves gets slaughtered."

On the second day of her testimony, Magda Fyssas revealed how Roupakias was treated with kid gloves after being arrested following the murder. She said that Roupakias told police as he was being taken into a police car, "Okay guys, I'm one of your own."

When he was asked if he too was a police officer, Roupakias replied, "I am from Golden Dawn."

Magda said she had inside information that when Roupakias was in the police station he was so familiar with the surroundings that police officers mistook him for an employee. When news came through that her son had died in the attack, Roupakias requested he be taken to another part of the police station. She said officers told him to walk up to the third floor on his own: "That is how familiar the environment was to him."

Golden Dawn is brazen about the murder of Pavlos Fyssas. Just prior to September's general election, Michaloliakos stated that the party "assumes political responsibility" for Fyssas's murder.

Golden Dawn has been built up by the state in recent years to provide shock battalions to be hurled against the working class. It placed third in the most recent election, winning 18 seats in the 300-seat parliament

with 7 percent of the vote, up slightly from 6.3 percent in January. Overall, it won 379,581 votes, down from 388,387 in January.

Golden Dawn does not have extensive support in Athens and the main urban centres. But as mass austerity has ravaged Greece's population, it has been able to win a response from layers of the middle class and lumpen workers and youth. Recently it has been exploiting opposition to the arrival of refugees fleeing war and persecution, increasing its vote in Greece's eastern islands including the third largest, Lesbos. But even on the island of Symi, which has only 2,000 permanent residents but has received 5,500 refugees since March, its vote only climbed from 6.5 to 10.7 percent.

Golden Dawn is clearly not a mass party, but the threat it poses to the working class is real and growing. As the trial of its members reveals, Golden Dawn has extensive ties to the state.

Last year, Panayiotis Baltakos, then cabinet secretary of Greece's main conservative party, New Democracy, was forced to resign following leaked footage of a conversation between himself and Golden Dawn MP Ilias Kasiadiaris. Baltakos was a confidante of then Prime Minister Antonis Samaras and effectively the number two figure in his government.

Golden Dawn also has well-known ties to the police, especially its riot squad. When the party first won seats in parliament in 2012, election data revealed that close to 50 percent of police officers voted for the party.

At the height of Greece's financial and political crisis in 2012, Golden Dawn's members and supporters went on the rampage on an almost daily basis in Athens and other cities. The police turned a blind eye, as immigrants and political opponents were assaulted. A number of the assaults were even led by some of its parliamentary deputies.

Golden Dawn's ties reach into the highest echelons of the state. In 2014, retired Lieutenant General Eleftherios Synadinos, who once commanded the army's Special Forces, and Georgios Epiteios, a former director at the European Union Military Staff, stood as European Parliament candidates for the party.

According to their Golden Dawn biographies, Epiteios served as a staff officer at the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe—the central command of NATO military forces. He served on

NATO's International Military Staff and was director of the department of crisis response and current operations of the European Union Military Staff.

The fact that a party whose leader proclaims his admiration for the military dictatorship that ruled Greece from 1967 to 1974 is now the third-largest political movement in the country is the direct result of Syriza's betrayal of the mass movement against austerity. It is this that has enabled Golden Dawn to pose as the only party committed to opposing austerity.

In his comments on Golden Dawn's vote, Kasiadiaris said the party would only be strengthened because of the social consequences of the further savage austerity that Syriza must impose. The Greek people "have not experienced the worst effects of the memorandum [bailout accord] or illegal immigration," he said. "When that happens, you will see, Golden Dawn will have a radical increase in support."

Syriza has refused to in any way oppose anti-immigrant chauvinism. Instead, immediately on taking office in January it entered into a pre-agreed coalition with the xenophobic Independent Greeks (ANEL). It resumed the coalition after September's election, despite ANEL winning just 3.69 percent (200,423 votes).

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