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Greece

Refugees held hostage to war-mongers and nationalisms

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The events taking place on the Greek-Turkish borders are very worrying. Following the closure of the borders decreed by Greek Prime Minister Mitsotakis, applauded by the European Union, those who try to cross into Greece are violently driven back (with at least one death, possibly following a Greek shooting, and a child drowning under the eyes of the Coast Guard).

At the same time, extreme measures are taken against the refugees: the suspension for one month of the procedures for examining the right to asylum, the decision to return to the “country of origin” all migrants who arrived in recent days without refugee status, with the construction of two specific camps near airports. This Sunday, the announcement of the cessation of the payment of financial aid to refugees, and the announcement of the project of closed centres on deserted islands.

If the army and the police are in action to “defend the borders” against what far-right ministers call “the invasion of illegal immigrants”, the nationalist and racist climate has also permitted the organization of pseudo border guard patrols on the islands and along the Evros river, supported by Greek and foreign fascist thugs attacking migrants and people in solidarity, or torching places for refugees. German Nazis who identify with Hitler’s massacres against the Greek population are protected by the police against anti-fascists. As a result of the climate of nationalist hysteria encouraged by the mainstream media, two polls indicating that 90% of Greeks approve of the government’s hard line.

Unhealthy climate and contradictions on the right

We know the two causes of this outbreak, against the backdrop of a fortress Europe: Erdogan’s Machiavellian decision to suspend the infamous 2016 treaty with the EU aimed at locking up 3-4 million refugees in Turkey, and the exasperation of refugees confined in overcrowded and unsanitary camps on some Greek islands (more than 20,000 in Moria – Lesbos, for 3,000 places) as well as the inhabitants of these islands where the government wishes to keep these refugees, with the project of closed camps on the island, rather than letting the refugees go to the continent. In recent months, island anger has increased, with demands for transfers to the continent and the rejection of closed camps. A confused situation resulted, conducive to fascist infiltrations with attacks on refugees and NGOs. But we also see attempts to make demands common to islanders and refugees. Hence the contradictions on the right, the president of the region opposing the government that sent the riot police to Lesbos clubbing everyone ... and being repelled. In this very tense situation, the left is debating whether or not to go to island rallies: a good part think they should, precisely to fight against racism driven by minority fascists on an island with democratic traditions like Lesbos.

A European anti-racist response!

The current unsavoury climate is starting to generate a reaction: even on the right, some are worried that Mitsotakis will allow local and European fascists and the militias to act (on Sunday, one of the latter allegedly shot a police officer mistaken for a migrant!) . An appeal was made by 66 NGOs, denouncing the illegal measures, demanding respect for the rights of refugees, the protection of people in solidarity and free settlement in Europe. And, while the

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leadership of Syriza calls for a return to the 2016 agreement, the anti-capitalist left launched an initial national response, with on Thursday a large demonstration in Athens (not far from 10,000), and marches in eight other cities of the country, with a call from the youth of Syriza to mobilize. The main demand is for the immediate opening of European borders, which must be a priority objective for the entire European left. This could be translated, for the municipal elections in France, by the demand "Immediate installation of refugees in the municipality"?

Athens 11 March 2020

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