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Greek police torture anti-fascist protesters

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Demonstrators protesting against the fascist *Chrysi Avgi* (Golden Dawn) party were beaten and tortured after their arrest by Greek police at a demonstration on September 30.

According to the victims, the police used techniques similar to the torture practised in prisons such as Abu Ghraib. Prisoners were beaten, filmed naked and had their skin burned. This was reported on Tuesday by Britain's *Guardian* newspaper, which published photographs of the protesters' wounds.

On Sunday September 30, some 15 young people gathered in the Athens district of Aghios Panteleimon, together with about 150 like-minded protesters who arrived on motor bikes to protest an attack on a Tanzanian community centre. Several members of Golden Dawn appeared on the scene.

Shortly afterwards, scuffles broke out, a large number of police officers stormed into the demonstration from nearby streets and arrested some of the protesters. According to the protesters' lawyer, they were arrested for "disturbing the peace with covered faces"—that is, they were wearing motorcycle helmets.

Many of those affected said that they were maltreated by police officers at the station who insulted them, hit and spat on them, as well as using them as ashtrays. They were kept awake the entire night, and for 19 hours received neither food nor drink, nor allowed contact with legal representatives. Some reported how their skin was burned using a cigarette lighter.

Police officers filmed them and threatened they would post the pictures on the Internet and give their addresses to the fascists of Golden Dawn.

Two of the women affected complained of sexual insults and violence; one of the men reported that the police had violently splayed his legs and kicked him in the testicles. Another reported that despite an open head wound, he was refused any medical care for hours and was further beaten.

The next day, when a solidarity demonstration for the detainees took place, there were numerous arrests. A group of 25 protesters told the *Guardian* that they were beaten at the police station and forced to strip naked, bend over and open up their buttocks. They said that many other officers and detainees were also present at this time.

One of the victims said, "He did whatever he wanted with us—slapped us, hit us, told us not

to look at him, not to sit cross-legged. Other officers who came by did nothing."

One of the victim's lawyers, Charis Ladis, said that violence at police stations had previously been an exception. "This case shows that a page has been turned. Until now there was an assumption that someone who was arrested, even violently, would be safe in custody. But these young people have all said they lived through an interminable dark night."

The reports are certainly not an exception, but express the reality of the ever closer collaboration between the police and Golden Dawn, which received 6.9 percent of the vote at the last elections, entering parliament for the first time.

Not only did a large number of police officers vote for this party, but they have covered up for the party's brutal attacks on immigrants and political opponents. There have been many reports of police officers telling people making complaints about alleged criminal activities by immigrants to speak directly to Golden Dawn representatives, who were supposedly responsible for dealing with "problems with immigrants".

For months, the Greek government has not only been building up the fascist party in this way but has also encouraged xenophobia. In August, the authorities mobilised 4,500 police officers for a mass anti-immigrant raid.

The witch-hunting and persecution of immigrants continues to this day. The aim is to track down so-called illegal immigrants and deport them. The minister responsible for homeland security, Nikos Dendias, is consciously encouraging xenophobia to divert attention away from the social attacks being carried out by the government. He has stated Greece's "immigrant problem" is bigger than its financial problems.

The use of torture in Greek prisons is no accident. Police are using force to terrorize the population and break up any expression of popular opposition to the reactionary austerity policies of the European Union (EU).

The fact the government has gone from encouraging and covering up for the fascists to torturing political opponents is a clear warning to the entire European working class. Such scenes were last witnessed in Europe after the colonels' coup in Greece, or under the fascist dictatorships in Spain and Portugal.

They show how far the social conflict has advanced. The government is prepared not only to mobilise the police, but the most backward and depraved layers of society to break the resistance of the working class to the austerity diktats of the EU. While the first blows are aimed at immigrants and anti-fascist protesters, they will be turned next against all Greek workers who dare to oppose social barbarism.

The Greek government is working with the full support of the EU, which has not only encouraged and welcomed the actions against immigrants, but also tolerates the growing police violence and the cooperation with the fascists. Not a single representative of the EU or a European government has so far made a statement about the torture of the protesters. The actions of the Greek police are being accepted in silence.

The images showing the mistreated demonstrators reveal the true face of the EU, which is the most important instrument of the financial elite to destroy the social gains of the working class across the continent. These social attacks, which are most advanced in Greece, are incompatible with democratic rights. The events in Athens demonstrate that the

EU elite is quite prepared to encourage fascist gangs against workers rather than make any concessions.

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