

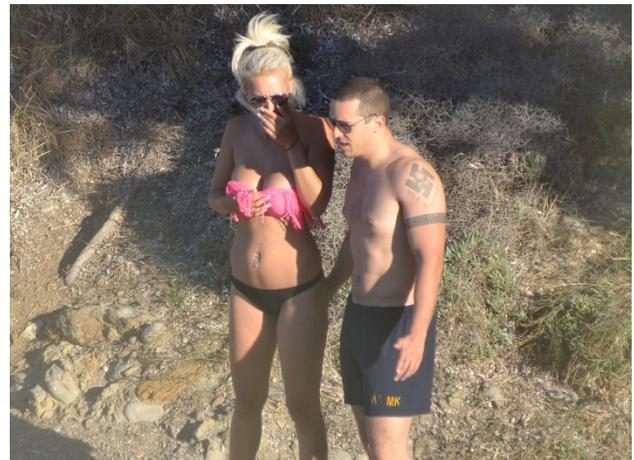
The Greek Elections and Human Rights

Golden Dawn, a Greek neo-Nazi party that is under criminal investigation, has vowed to run candidates in local and European Parliament elections later this month. On May 18, Greeks will vote in local elections, in which a Golden Dawn candidate sporting swastika tattoos, who has been charged in the criminal case, is running for mayor of Athens. Two retired Greek army generals have also said they will stand as Golden Dawn candidates for the European Parliament. A court is expected to rule on who can run.

Prior to Greece's financial collapse, Golden Dawn was a fringe party that won 0.2% of the vote in 2010. But its popularity has soared during the deepest recession in Greek memory. The party is also known for giving out free food for the needy— but only to Greek citizens who are not Jews or people of color. Golden Dawn's rise echoes a trend of increased support other neo-fascist and far-right parties across the European continent. Hungary's far-right Jobbik party won 21% of the votes in April elections, while the French Front National won more than a dozen mayoral races in March. Golden Dawn won more than 7% of the Greek vote 2012, and polls suggest that it may do even better in 2014, perhaps winning seats in the European Parliament for the first time.

Farther Right than the Far Right

Golden Dawn is antisemitic, racist, xenophobic, homophobic and violent. The group was founded in 1987 by Nikolaos Michaloliakos, who is still referred to by party members as "the Fuhrer." He has been jailed since the murder of a Greek rap musician inspired a government raid on the Golden Dawn leadership last year. Most of Golden Dawn's 16 members of parliament are now under investigation for criminal offenses, ranging from violent attacks on migrants, weapons possession, attempted homicides, and at least two murders. Golden Dawn members deny all charges, and Michaloliakos calls himself a political prisoner



Golden Dawn candidate for mayor of Athens Ilias Kasidiaris. (Photo credit: newspaper Proto Thema)

The Prosecution of Golden Dawn

In September 2013, the Greek authorities arrested Michaloliakos and four other Golden Dawn parliamentarians on charges of leading a criminal organization, with the intention to commit murder, arson and other crimes. Twenty-six other party officials were also arrested during those raids, and the Greek Parliament eventually lifted the immunity of the Golden Dawn lawmakers so that they could face criminal charges.

The ongoing investigation is being led by two special magistrates, who have warned that delays by the Greek parliament in lifting the immunity of the Golden Dawn legislators so that they may be prosecuted could result in suspects going free. Meanwhile, there is mounting evidence that Golden Dawn enjoyed support from elements within the Greek police, army, conservative business interests, and the Church. Moreover, the police are alleged to have been involved with some of the neo-Nazi violence. Some victims claim police have refused to allow them to file reports on attacks by Golden Dawn, or have beaten or refused medical care to victims of attacks who sought their protection.

Other Alleged Antisemitic Candidates

The Greek Jewish community has also protested the inclusion of a Holocaust denier as a candidate for office in Athens on a coalition list headed by the New Democracy Party, led by Prime Minister Antonis Samaras. In a statement, two leading Jewish organizations said that candidate Thanos Plevris had never repudiated a book written by his father. They called the book "a monument to antisemitism and hatred."

Attacks against Migrants and Refugees



A migrant worker shows scars left by Golden Dawn attackers. (Photo credit: MdM archives)

Greece is a major gateway for undocumented migrants and asylum-seekers. An estimated 90% of Europe's illegal immigrants arrive through Greece.

With the onset of the recession, their presence has become a political flashpoint.

The Racist Violence Recording Network documented 166 violent racist incidents in 2013, with a total of 320 victims. Of these, 22 were instances of violence against LGBT persons, and one was an attack against a rights defender; the remainder of attacks was against immigrants or refugees. Hate crimes are vastly underreported, as many victims distrust the police, or fear deportation. Prosecutions are rare.

This month, however, two Greeks were sentenced to life in prison for the 2013 murder of Shehzad Luqman, a Pakistani migrant who was fatally stabbed while riding his bicycle to work. The convicted attackers denied they were

Golden Dawn members, but party leaflets as well as knives and truncheons were found in their home.

Human rights groups have alleged that migrants and refugees picked up by Greek authorities are being held for prolonged periods of time in detention centers under grossly substandard conditions. European authorities have also objected to alleged incidents in which migrants in boats have been pushed away from landing on Greek shores, and drowned.

Despite these problems, many refugees who succeed in entering Greece attempt to stay, in part because anyone granted refugee status in one European Union country is not permitted to apply for residency or asylum in any other E.U. country.

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