



human rights *first*

American ideals. Universal values.

May 6, 2015

The Honorable David D. Pearce, U.S. Ambassador to Greece
Embassy of the United States of America
91 Vasilissis Sophias Avenue 101 60
Athens, Greece

Dear Ambassador Pearce:

I write to urge you to send observers from the U.S. Embassy to the upcoming trial of Golden Dawn in order to encourage transparency, a fair trial, and adherence to the rule of law, as well as to advance justice for victims of hate-motivated violence.

Human Rights First and many other organizations have documented an alarming rise in violent xenophobia, anti-Semitism, and homophobia in Greece, spurred in large part by the actions of Golden Dawn. The groundbreaking trial of Golden Dawn leaders and members – for their criminal acts of murder and violent attacks rather than the party's ideology – is a turning point for Greece in its efforts to confront racism and political extremism. Golden Dawn represents perhaps the most extreme political response to the financial and migration crises sweeping Europe. A successful trial will be an important step in rejecting violence and racial superiority as responses to those problems.

In order to be successful, the trial must abide by European fair trial standards and demonstrate that freedom of speech and political ideology are not at issue. While the indictment focuses on alleged violent attacks, the defendants have made an effort to portray the prosecution as politically motivated, a view shared by some portion of the Greek public.

If the trial is to have a lasting impact, both Greece and the international community must see it as a fair and credible prosecution. International attention to the trial will help set the expectation that the Greek government will uphold fair trial standards, as well as underline the importance of justice being served for the victims of violence. International monitoring will also highlight evidence of how organized and dangerous Golden Dawn has become, including evidence of how the racist ideology of the Nazis from 70 years ago was translated into concrete action on the streets of Greece and the halls of the Parliament in the 21st Century. Given that Golden Dawn maintains popularity in the Greek electorate, with members serving in both National and European Parliaments, the evidence presented in this trial deserves as widespread dissemination as possible. Moreover, an alleged attack on a prosecution witness by Golden Dawn supporters outside the courtroom on the first day of the proceedings is a reminder of the trial's divisiveness.

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As you have said, the United States has a strong interest in the future of Greece. An expression of concern by the United States regarding the Golden Dawn trial is not interference in internal Greek affairs. Democratic values such as adherence to the rule of law and checks on abuse of power are at stake in this trial. Anything less than a full and fair proceeding may undermine the Greek public's belief in those values, something that is already being debated in the context of the economic crisis. These are core American interests, and the United States has a strong stake in the conduct and outcome of the trial.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. We would be happy to provide you or your staff further information.

Sincerely,



Tad Stahnke

Vice President, Research and Analysis

cc: Victoria Nuland, Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs
Tom Malinowski, Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor
Stephen Pomper, National Security Council