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Greece

Solidarity with the hunger striker Dimitris Koufodinas!

- News from around the world -

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Dimitris Koufodinas is serving 11 times life sentence plus 25 years after he was convicted as a member of the "Revolutionary Organization November 17th" (17N). The 17N was active in Greece from 1975 to 2002 when it was dismantled after a failed attack. It first appeared with the shooting of the American CIA chief for Southeast Europe. Since then, breaking up the 17N has been a fundamental US demand, with great pressure on all Greek governments. In 1989 the politician and journalist Pavlos Bakogiannis, brother-in-law of the current Prime Minister and father of the present-day Mayor of Athens, fell victim to the organization.

Dimitris Koufodinas surrendered in 2002 after the arrest of several members of the 17N. He declared that he was a member of the organization and he assumed political responsibility for its actions. He did not defend himself nor did he testify against any of his co-defendants. This attitude earned him respect in parts of the Greek society.

From 2002, Dimitris Koufodinas was permanently detained in a special underground wing of the Korydallos prison (Athens) until he was transferred to the Volos agricultural detention facility in 2018.

Although he had been entitled to temporary prison leaves since 2010, he was granted the first one in 2017 (and five more times thereafter).

However, the granting of prison leave for Koufodinas was intensely and systematically opposed by certain television media as well as politicians who spoke out and intervened against him with public statements demanding the end of his prison leaves. Among them was the current Prime Minister and members of his family. There were also strong interventions from the American embassy.

As a result of this polemic, since the spring of 2019, Koufodinas' temporary prison leave has been denied on grounds of his political beliefs and his refusal to express remorse – something that is not a reason for refusing prison leave under Greek law. The matter reached the Supreme Court (Areios Pagos), which ruled that the rejection of Koufodinas' relevant applications was not covered by the law. However, the Volos court responsible for granting leave did not change its opinion, and so from 2019 all temporary release requests have been refused.

The president of the now ruling New Democracy Party, Kyriakos Mitsotakis, had publicly promised that if he came to power, he would exclude this particular prisoner from prison leaves and serving his sentence in agricultural prisons. Indeed, in December 2020, Law 4760/2020 was published, containing a provision according to which those convicted of "terrorist" crimes are excluded from custody leave and from serving their sentences in agricultural prisons.

At that time (and until today) the only convict of this category who was in an agricultural prison was Koufodinas. During the legislative debate in Parliament, Dimitris Koufodinas was personally named as the addressee of this law.

On December 23, 2020, Koufontinas was suddenly transferred from the agricultural prison to Domokos prison, in the manner that resembles more to a kidnapping (without notice, without being able to contact his family and without having time to pack his personal belongings and say goodbye).

In Domokos, he is locked together with two other prisoners in a suffocating small cell, in which he has to endure, without having space and time for himself, the smoking and the other needs of his fellow inmates.

Solidarity with the hunger striker Dimitris Koufodinas!

Dimitris Koufontinas, now 63 years old, is experiencing a dramatic deterioration in his detention conditions, with catastrophic consequences for his personality as well as his mental and physical health (the latter has been weakened because of the hunger strikes to which he had to proceed in the past).

It is noteworthy that this transfer to Domokos prison violated even the provisions of the aforementioned spiteful and "anti-him-only" law, as he should have been returned to Korydallos, where he had been held for the previous 16 years, a prison near the home of his family.

The ministry issued a written confirmation with false claims. Accordingly, he was moved to Korydallos and then with a new decision to Domokos, but he was driven straight away to Domokos. The reasons given for the transfer there are also unfounded and false.

The general context suggests that the transfer was made out of revenge and under pressure from the US embassy. Members of the current administration had previously announced and committed to worsening the conditions of this particular prisoner. The violations of the law, even of the one legislated merely to worsen the terms of Koufodina's serving his sentence, are an unprecedented case of arbitrary interference in the judicial system for reasons of personal vengeance, by a politically powerful family.

After the deliberately inaccurate confirmation of the Ministry, Dimitris Koufontinas decided to protest against all these methods and to demand to be transferred to Korydallos, as provided for in the recent law, and to go on hunger strike. He is already on the 10th day of the strike, he has lost almost 20% of his weight, he has already symptoms of acidosis (drop in the blood pH value), fainting spells and problems standing and moving without help. On January 16 he was transferred to the Lamia hospital but since he refuses to be treated there he was brought back to Domokos the same day.

The current demand is for Dimitris Koufontinas to be transferred to Korydallos prison as well as to end the arbitrary interventions – legal and factual – against him, and his systematically discriminatory treatment.

Athens, January 17, 2021

Please sign

We stand in solidarity with the political prisoner Dimitris Koufodinas, who has been on a hunger-strike since January 8, 2021, and whose health is now in critical condition.

We demand:

- that he be transferred to Korydallos prison
- a stop to all arbitrary legal and factual interventions against him
- a stop to all discriminatory treatment against him

Send signatures to: spithas@otenet.gr

PS:

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