

<https://npa31.org/spip.php?article5927>



Greece

Against the Repression in Greece

- IV Online magazine - 2019 - IV529 - February 2019 -

Publication date: Sunday 3 February 2019

Copyright © International Viewpoint - online socialist magazine - All rights reserved

In 2015 the international left invested its hopes in Syriza and its promise of a break with austerity. Today, it must call out the repression of social movements in Greece by Alexis Tsipras's government.

One of the myths spread by the Greek government and its supporters abroad is that, unlike its predecessors, it does not resort to repression in the face of opposition and resistance to its policies. It is true that the Syriza government has never had to deal with mass mobilizations comparable in scale and duration to those that marked the country from 2010 to 2012.

Yet though social resistance to bailout policies has been considerably weakened by the loss of morale after Alexis Tsipras's capitulation to the troika of European institutions in the summer of 2015, it certainly has not disappeared. Particularly important has been the resistance against the auction sales of foreclosed homes. These auctions are a very sensitive issue for Greek society, but also a crucial demand by the banks that have imposed their priorities on successive governments. [\[1\]](#)

Resistance against the auctions policy has faced increasing repression from the Greek state and public authorities. At present dozens of people across the country are facing prosecution for actions they have taken against auction sales. Their numbers have increased significantly since December 2017, when the government passed a law specifically targeting these actions.

The escalation of repression became blatant in September 2018, when five well-known activists in the anti-auction movement were summoned by a special section of the security services, the so-called Department for the Protection of the State and Democratic Polity. The activists summoned included Panagiotis Lafazanis, the secretary of the left-wing Popular Unity party and former minister of energy in the first Syriza government, as well as Leonidas and Elias Papadopoulos, spokespersons of the I Won't Pay network.

Despite hypocritical statements issued by government and Syriza officials expressing concern over the persecution of Lafazanis, this was an obvious display of authoritarianism. Moreover, it was far from an isolated event. Only a few days ago, in early December, three more members of the anti-auction movement, including the well-known activists Thanasis Gounaris, and Avgi Voutsina, received summons to appear in front of the same department of the security services.

This repressive spiral must necessarily raise concerns about the fate of democratic rights and civil liberties in Greece — concerns today spreading among wide circles of the European and international left as well as in social movements and among left-wing intellectuals. This concern is reflected in the following open letter, which has been published in international media. The signatories include Jean-Luc Mélenchon and the entire parliamentary group of La France Insoumise: MPs and MEPs from Spain's Podemos; Germany's Left Party and Portugal's Left Bloc. Signatories also include emblematic personalities of the international left, such as Noam Chomsky, Tariq Ali, Alain Badiou, and Frédéric Lordon.

Their protest is important in helping the European and international left come to terms with the real character of Alexis Tsipras's government.

The Greek crisis is no longer headline news, but the Greek people continue to suffer from the relentless austerity

Against the Repression in Greece

imposed for more than eight years. Those who oppose bailout policies are facing escalating repression. Actions opposing the foreclosure of properties are especially targeted. During the last two years, the Syriza government, complying with the dictates of the lenders to Greece, have intensified tremendously the pressure on home owners to help private banks collect on loans. Special legislation was adopted in December 2017 potentially imposing penalties of up to six months of prison for those opposing foreclosures. Furthermore, the government has moved auction procedures away from courtrooms to an electronic platform activated by solicitors within the closed doors of their offices.

Since the start of the year dozens of activists across the country have faced charges and several trials are already in progress. Among them, Panagiotis Lafazanis, former minister of energy in the first Syriza government and now secretary of the political party Popular Unity; as well as Elias and Leonidas Papadopoulos, both of whom are founding figures of the I Won't Pay campaign and Elias Smilios, municipal councilor in the region of Thessaloniki.

It is the first time since the fall of the dictatorship that the leader of a democratic political party has faced persecution for political activities. Moreover, the charges against these activists have been initiated by a special branch of the security services, the Department for the Protection of the State and of the Democratic Polity, which has no record of action against the fascist Golden Dawn or other far-right activists. These activists face potential prison sentences up to eight and half years.

This is a critical moment for democracy and civil liberties in Greece. We demand that the charges against all the activists of the movement against auction sales be dropped. We express our solidarity to all those in Greece who face repression for their action in defense of social rights.

Organizations, Trade Unions and Associations

CUP (Popular Unity Candidacy), Catalonia

Co.Bas Trade Union, Spain

The parliamentary group of France Insoumise

Habita Association for the Right to Housing and to the City, Portugal

Observatory on Debt in Globalization, Spain

Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca (PAH); Procés Constituent, Catalonia

Sindicat de Llogaters i Llogateres (Union for the Defense of Tenants), Spain

Witten Tenants Association, Germany

First signatories

Gilbert Achcar, SOAS, University of London

Against the Repression in Greece

Tariq Ali, writer, London

Cinzia Arruzza, New School, New York

Robert Brenner, Professor, UCLA

Alain Badiou, philosopher, Paris

Ludivine Bantigny, University of Caen

Diego Borja, former economy and finance minister of Ecuador

Noam Chomsky, professor emeritus, MIT

Jorge Costa, MP, Left Bloc, Portugal

Sevim Dagdelen, MP, Die Linke, Germany

Jodi Dean, Hobart and William Smith Colleges, Geneva, New York

Fabio De Masi, MP, Die Linke, Germany

Zillah Eisenstein, professor emeritus, Ithaca New York

Irene Escorihuela, president of Observatori DESC, Spain

Stefano Fassina, MP Liberi e Uguale, former vice-minister of finance, Italy

S nia Farr  Fidalgo, MP for En Com  Podem, Spain

Teresa Forcadell, Proc s Constituent, Catalonia

Heike H nsel, MP, Die Linke

Pierre Khalfa, Fondation Copernic, France

Stathis Kouvelakis, King's College London

Costas Lapavistas, SOAS University of London

Fr d ric Lordon, CNRS research director, France

Against the Repression in Greece

Francisco Louça, professor, University of Lisbon, Portugal

Michaël Löwy, CNRS emeritus research director, France

Jean-Luc Mélenchon, president of the parliamentary group of France Insoumise

Manolo Monereo, MP, Podemos, Spain

Eric Toussaint, CADTM, Belgium

Miguel Urban, MEP Podemos, Spain

Eleni Varikas, professor emeritus, University of Paris

General signatories

Alejandro Andreassi, Autonomous University of Barcelona

Clémentine Autain, MP, France Insoumise

Trond Andresen, Norwegian University of Science and Technology

Josep Maria Antentas, Autonomous University of Barcelona

Emmanuel Barot, Université of Toulouse

Tithi Bhattacharya, Purdue University

Josep Bel, Co.Bas and Procés Constituent, Spain

Ugo Bernalicis, MP, France Insoumise

Hugo Blanco, former MP FOCEP, Peru

Laura Camargo, Podemos MP in the Autonomous Community of Balearic Islands

Raül Camargo, Podemos MP in the Autonomous Community of Madrid

Rosa Cañadell, Podemos, Spain

Josep Manel Busqueta, economist, Catalonia

Against the Repression in Greece

Séverine Chauvel, University of Paris-Créteil

Alexis Corbieres, MP, France Insoumise

Pablo Cotarelo, economist, EReNSEP, Barcelona

Sergi Cutillas, economist, Podemos, Barcelona

Alexis Cukier, University of Poitiers

Laura DÃ-az, MP in the Autonomous Community of Madrid for Podemos

Klaus Draeger, former staff coordinator of GUE/NGL group in European Parliament on Employment and Social Affairs, Germany

CÃ©dric Durand, University Paris 13

Steve Edwards, Prof. Birkbeck, University of London

David Faroult, Ecole Nationale SupÃ©rieure Louis LumiÃ¨re, Paris

Caroline Fiat, MP, France Insoumise

Carme Font, Podemos, Catalonia

Iolanda Fresnillo, Ekona, Catalonia

Isabelle Garo, philosopher, Paris

Franck Gaudichaud, University of Grenoble

Kenneth Haar, Corporate Europe Observatory

Peter Hallward, professor, Kingston University

Eric Hazan, writer and publisher, Paris

Michel Husson, economist, France

Scott Ferguson, University of South Florida, USA

Claudio Katz, UBA-Conicet, Argentina

Razmig Keucheyan, Prof. University of Bordeaux 3

Thierry Labica, University of Paris Nanterre

Wilhelm Langthaler, author and activist, Committee Euroexit, Vienna, Austria

Olivier Lecour-Grandmaison, Prof. University of Evry-Val d'Essone

Bastien Lachaud, MP, France Insoumise

Michel Larive, MP, France Insoumise

Isidro López, MP in the Autonomous Community of Madrid for Podemos

Ramon Luque, Secretary for International relations of EUiA (Izquierda Unida in Catalonia)

Stuart Medina, economist, President of MMT Spain

Bill Mitchell, Newcastle University, Australia

Eva Nanopoulos, Queen Mary University of London

Olivier Neveux, Ecole Normale Supérieure, Lyon

Paul O'Connell, SOAS University of London

Danièle Obono, MP, France Insoumise

Arcadi Oliveres, Procés Constituent, Catalonia

Younous Omarjee, MEP, France Insoumise

Mathilde Panot, MP, France Insoumise

Moreno Pasquinelli, Spokerperson of MPL- Programma 101, Italy

Jaime Pastor, Editor of Viento Sur, Spain

Loïc Prud'homme, MP, France Insoumise

Adrien Quatennens, MP, France Insoumise

Alfredo Saad-Filho, SOAS University of London

Jean-Hugues Ratenon, MP, France Insoumise

Eulàlia Reguant, former MP for CUP, Catalonia

Muriel Ressiguier, MP, France Insoumise

Sabine Rubin, MP, France Insoumise

François Ruffin, MP France Insoumise

Lorena Ruiz-Huerta, former speaker of Podemos group in the Autonomous Community of Madrid

Carlos Sánchez Mato, coordinator of Economy in Izquierda Unida, Spain

Sol Sánchez, Izquierda Unida, Spain

Carmen San José, MP in the Autonomous Community of Madrid for Podemos

Andy Storey, University College Dublin, Ireland

G.M. Tamás, Central European University, Budapest

Bénédicte Taurine, MP, France Insoumise

Alberto Toscano, Goldsmiths University of London

Willy Pelletier, University of Picardie, Fondation Copernic

Ricard Ustrell, Journalist, Catalonia

Luc Vincenti, Prof. University of Montpellier

11 December 2018

[Jacobin](#)

[1] <https://jacobinmag.com/2018/10/syriza-repression-foreclosure-banks-tsipras>.