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Greece

# The urgency of international solidarity with refugees

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**The pre-electoral bluster of Greek prime minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis last year, that with him there would be no more “immigrant problem”, was certainly intended to attract the Nazi electorate and also reflected the alignment of the right with the far right current, very present now in power. But in reality, there has been a headlong rush for a year that has made the Greek government an emulator of the Orbán and Salvini, and it is imperative that the terrible fate inflicted on refugees in Greece be subjected to broad international denunciation .**

Last week, the police resumed their intrusions into places inhabited by refugees: in Exarcheia, around fifty people, including many children, and almost all in good standing, were made to sleep outside, even if solidarity activists tried to help the most urgent cases. This is seen as a dress rehearsal for the project directed by Mitarakis, Minister for "Migration and Asylum": pressed by the anger of the inhabitants of the islands close to Turkey, the government wants in part to "empty" the registration camps, as in Mytilene, by housing those leaving in "reception centres" (accommodation blocks, hotels and so on) in mainland Greece. Hence the plan to expel 10,000 occupants, on the pretext that as they are in good standing, they can find work and pay rent. Cynicism accentuated by the confidential appointment of directors of these reception centres, many of them members of the right wing party and/or ex-soldiers, or, as in Pyrgos (in the Peloponnese), a racist author of a book published by Nazis!

## Criminal stalemate in anti-refugee policy

It seems that the sole objective of the government is to discourage refugees from coming to Greece. This is more or less what was suggested by Mitarakis before the European authorities when speaking, against a background of "asymmetric threat", of a "force majeure" which would push Europe to firmness, and instrumentalizing the coronavirus. [1] The result: a severe reprimand from the bodies dealing with refugees and liberties and from many MEPs. But as the reality of European policy is a fortress Europe, the Greek government pursues its racist policy without hesitation, as with the return of refugees to the Turkish side of the Evros river or to the eastern coasts of the Aegean: an investigation by *Deutsche Welle* has established several dozen such returns, prohibited by international law.

And just as serious is the racist climate maintained by the government, with ministers speaking of "invasion": in places where refugees are to be received, the far right then feels free to call racist rallies to "protect the integrity" of the site, as we have just seen in Pella, a well-known archaeological site, where a hotelier has been subjected to so much pressure that he has given up opening his establishment to refugees. This daily racism also produces its "blunders": a Cretan mistaken for a Pakistani has just been beaten by local police!

## For an anti-racist response, in Greece and in Europe

Faced with this nauseating climate, local responses fortunately exist, as in Pella precisely. But everyone agrees it is high time to move up a gear, for the reception of refugees in safe and dignified places, for the closure of degrading camps, on islands and on the continent (Malakassa, Serres and so on) . And of course, the opening of European borders, and not only to welcome minors without families. But that presupposes an anti-racist campaign waged jointly on a European scale!

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[1] A failure for the racists: believing that they had "finally" found a centre of infection in a refugee centre in Argolis, they were preparing their vile campaign. But the virus seems to have been "imported" by those around the Dutch royal family, who have a residence nearby! Suddenly, radio silence ...