

THE OTHER VICTIMS OF THE GREEK CRISIS

Photography and Testimonies



Athens, 25 of December 2012

>The context:

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In the Greek elections of 17 th June 2012 , the ultra right wing party Golden Dawn won 7% of the popular vote , giving them 21 legitimate members of parliament. Their ideology is clearly fascist and the black-uniformed members unabashedly use the right hand raised, nazi salute to greet their fuhrer Mihaloliakos .

On a regular basis, Golden dawn members organize a variety of direct actions: food and clothes handouts only for Greeks, attacks of the stalls and shops of migrant merchants, as well as the eviction of refugee squatters. They recently set up a hotline for Greeks to get help in dealing with migrant tenants and also organised a ‘pure’ blood bank providing and accepting donations to and from Greeks only.

In a context of economic and social crisis , the Greek population has lost trust in the government and the violent political strategy used by Golden Dawn is attracting significant support from an insecure and disillusioned population. With almost half of the police force on their side as well as a section of the church, their ideology becomes quasi-legitimate as they set themselves up as an alternative authority.

Migrants , whether legal or not , are regularly victims of racist attacks in which the perpetrators are never found nor charged. Javet Aslam , president of the Pakistani community estimates around 700 to 800 victims in the last two years. When there is a police presence , often both victim and attacker are taken for questioning and then released. In some cases, the attacker is released and the victim is detained because of his “illegal” status regardless whether he is wounded or not. In this environment of fear and lack of justice most victims do not file a complaint nor press charges.

Even if most of these attacks are racist driven, Golden Dawn’s violence does not stop here. Homosexuals , anarchists and leftists as well as people who simply do not share their ideology are also victims of this violent political strategy.

>Contact:

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Stephanos Mangriotis / member of Dekadrage Collective
website www.dekadrage.org
e-mail stephanos@dekadrage.org
tel +33 06 32 53 33 81



Simon, Bangladeshi

5 years in Greece. Cook.

17th of July 2012, around midnight. Simon was strolling on Akadimias street (Central Athens) when suddenly three men on bikes came up from behind him and kicked him down to the ground. They shouted “Paki! Negro!”. He got up and told them that he was Bangladeshi but they replied by kicking him again. He saw black jackets and counted seven hits before falling unconscious.

He woke up in the hospital with his lips ripped, his two front teeth and his right arm broken. The doctors told him that

they could not operate on his arm because he had no legal documents. Up to this day, Simon still has a caste to keep the broken bones of his arm together and he cannot work.

Recently, he has been thinking about going back to Bangladesh to take care of his arm. Since the attack, he’s very scared to walk in the streets of Athens and passes most of his time at home on the internet and in a bangladeshi restaurant just below his house.



The X-ray of Simon's right hand. Without legal documents, he doesn't have the right to be operated at the public hospital and a private clinic asked him for 5,000€.



Dimitris, Grec

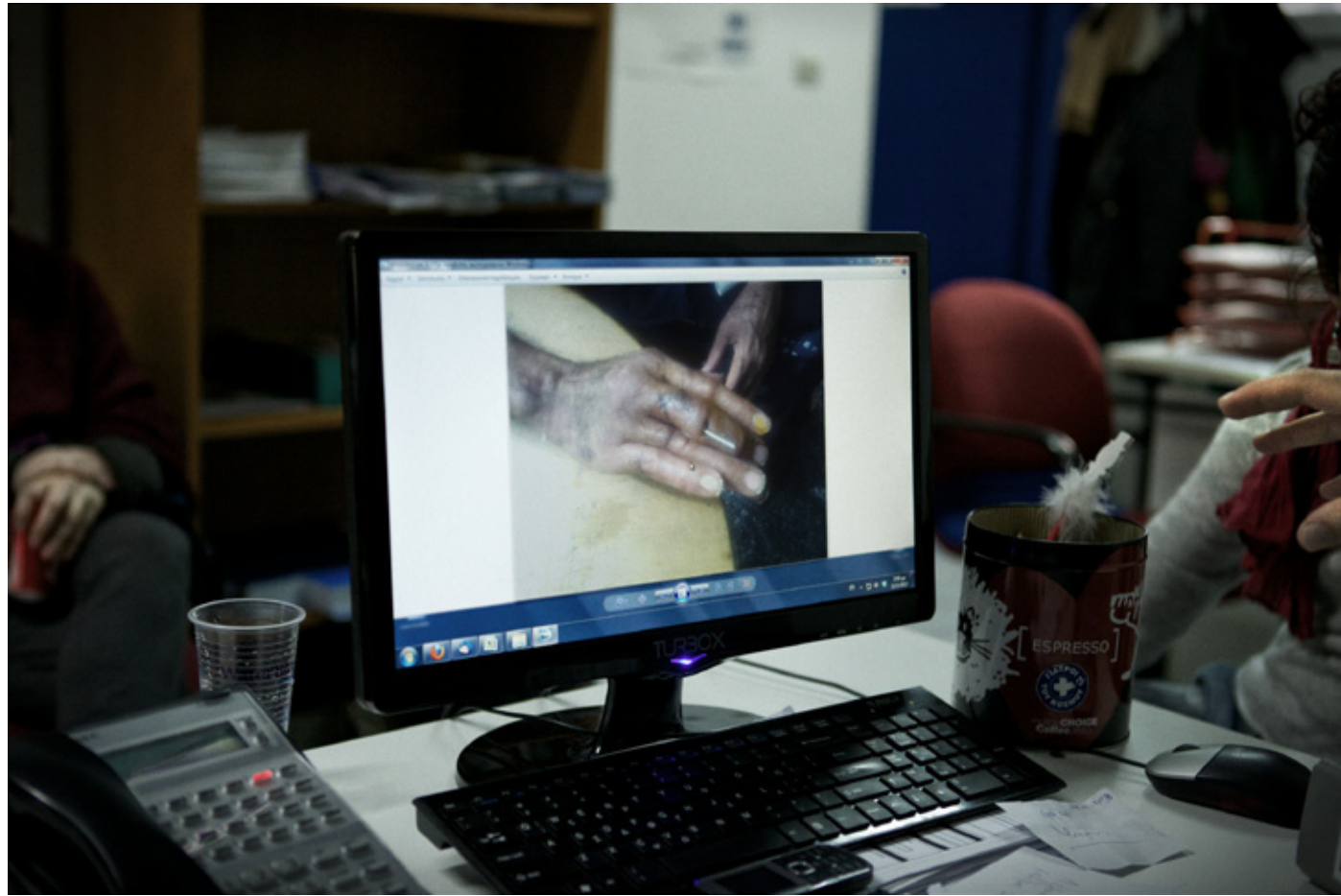
Freelance Photographer.

Dimitris has been working for the last year on a photographic project about Acharnon avenue in the centre of Athens. Last September, he was walking at night in the streets behind Agios Padeleimonas; a neighbourhood known for the numerous racist attacks and the informal control gained by Golden dawn. He came across one of their guerilla patrols but he took notice and continued walking. Two of them followed him and began insulting him : “Put your camera in your ass” and told him to never photograph in this area again.

«I tried to explain to them that I wasn’t photographing them and that I wasn’t hurting anyone but they starting hitting me with head butts and fists. In a couple of seconds, five others came and kicked me to the ground. They hit me for about 6 or 7 minutes».

Dimitris called his neighbour who drove him to the hospital where he had 17 stitches on his lips. He had bruises everywhere and was in shock.

«...I didn’t go out of my house for 15 days... It was like a rape, a submission to fascism: you will do what we tell you, nothing else! I didn’t file a complaint because doing so in a police station where 90% of them cooperate with Golden dawn is like a joke. I will press charges with my photographic work».



In the offices of Doctors of the World in the centre of Athens, the computer screen shows the wounded hand of an afghani that was attacked by a group of 15. They brutally broke his finger that was operated and held together with a metal bar. This NGO takes care of many victims of racist attacks. Their anonymity policy, reassures the migrants who fear being persecuted by police after their attack.



“People’s Association – Golden Dawn – Western Attica”, the modified advertisement billboard, dominates above the Golden dawn offices of Aspropyrgos, a small city 20km from Athens.



Ahmet, Egyptian

18 years in Greece. Fishmonger.

Ahmet is one of the first Egyptian fishmongers to work and live in Perama (western suburb of Athens). He has a good relationship with the locals and is the owner of a fish store. On the 12th of June 2012, he was sleeping in his home in Perama with his brother, his two sons and a friend. He was woken up by an uproar and quickly looked out of the window to see ten people arriving with cars and bikes in front of his house.

«They threw a fire extinguisher into the house and once the window was broken they threw in stones and anything they could find. They even threw a bucket of paint...When I heard them screaming and banging I told myself that we are going to die today, for sure».

His friend Abouzed, was sleeping on the terrace of the house. He was brutally attacked with steel bars and Ahmet thinks that they left him because they thought that he was dead. «When you saw his face completely destroyed, you could not believe that he was going to recover».

The police arrested six people that Ahmet identified later at the police station. He pressed charges but he didn't go to the trial in fear of the 200 Golden dawn members that had gathered in front of the court.



Seven months after the attack, Ahmet's house's door still bears the marks of this violent attack. Since that night, Ahmet has never been back to the house. He now elsewhere in the same neighbourhood for the last 5 months.



Opposite the previous Tanzanian community centre that was destroyed by Golden dawn militia and locals. The greek flags symbolise this “victory”.



Antifascist graffiti in Perama neighbourhood where most of the Egyptian immigrants live and work in fishing boats or fish stores.



Kayou closes the door of their new premises. They moved 4 months ago.



Kayou, the secretary of the Tanzanian community, in their new premises.



Asief, Pakistani

9 years in Greece, builder

Like most days, Asif got into the bus 820 to go to work. It was the morning of the 20th of december in his neighbourhood of Keratsini (west suburb of Athens). At the next stop, two men got on the bus and started looking at him suspiciously. When he asked them why they were looking at him that way, one of them turned his head aggressively towards Asif's and told him: "We've been looking for you! Get off with me at the next stop!"

«I asked him why? I just want to go to my work. Who are you to tell me to get off? He then opened his jacket and showed off his T-shirt with the Golden dawn logo. I could read it clearly. He told me, now you know who I am! I answered, who are you? A fascist? Just after that, he gave me a punch on the nose; I had blood on my face, on my teeth...then he punched again...he insulted me a lot: "asshole pakistani"...»

The passengers intervened shouting "You're a fascist, get out of here!" and the driver stopped the bus in front of a square where there were already some policemen.

«One of them [the fascists] left and the other was trying to leave as well. One of the policemen told him: "go, go" but I said "no, he mustn't leave"... then the policeman told me "you are the problem"».

Even though Asif's nose was bleeding, the policemen handcuffed him and took him to the police station in the same car as the attacker. Later on, he found out that his aggressor was let free with no charges. Asif was probably targeted because he is a representative of the Pakistani community as well as an active member of the worker's socialist party. Even though his face is not scarred from the attack, his mind is not at peace.

«When I stay out at night, I'm very scared that something will happen to me».



Wahel, Egyptien

11 months in Greece. Fishmonger.

Last november around midday, Wahel was stopped with his three-wheeler in front of a red light in Kallithea (centre of Athens). A Golden dawn patrol group was hitting a pakistani immigrant who was collecting scrap metal.

«Suddenly, a welt built guy came behind me and pulled me off the motorbike...I saw more then 15 people coming towards me, they kicked me for around 10 minutes... They insulted me: “you stink, go back to your village, blackman, asshole”, the well built guy pulled me up and punched me hard on the nose, I had blood everywhere.»

Despite the cries of the women that came to help him, the racists continued their attack until the arrival of the ambulance. They then

disappeared on motorbikes. Once at the hospital, his face was stitched up by the doctors but Wahel quickly left in fear of the arrival of policemen. He had heard of a similar experience of a friend who was arrested in the hospital after being attacked and was kept for three months because of his “illegal” status. «Since the attack, I’m scared to go onto big roads, I always take backstreets when I can. If I can make some money I want to get out of here.»



Reza, Afghan

depuis 10 ans en Grèce, travail dans un kebab grec

The 30th of July around midnight, Reza had finished his work in Peristeri (western suburb of Athens) and was heading towards the metro. He first saw a man who was sitting at the bus stop talking on his phone and later, five meters down the road, he was stopped by another two men who asked him where he was going, he told them that he was going home. The attack was fast and brutal.

«One of them held me and punched me on the face while the other hit me on the head with a brick, the third man also came with a brick...I then fell to the floor and I don't remember what happened.»

Reza woke up on the stretcher while they were putting him into the ambulance. Once at the hospital, he had 38 stitches to

the back of his head and on his face. When he returned to the place of the attack, there was still a lot of his blood on the ground but the bricks had disappeared. Like most migrants, he didn't file a complaint for fear of being further persecuted. Since then, his life has changed.

«I'm very scared now. It's hard, when I wait for the bus I look around everywhere. When I see someone coming off the bus I look...When I finish late from my work, I take a taxi. Before I always used to walk... I like this country but I'm nervous around people...I never harmed anybody...I don't understand why they hit me.»

Reza hopes that one day he will have enough money to go to Germany, France or Italy.