



GSC UPDATE 10 (5 November 2012)

1. **Wednesday 14 November - European TUC Day of Action Against Austerity – General Strikes** will take place in Greece, Spain, Portugal, Cyprus and Malta, with other action taken by trade unions in Italy, Belgium, France and Germany. In the UK, there are solidarity protests in London, Manchester, Sheffield, Newcastle and Glasgow (see <http://www.coalitionofresistance.org.uk>).
2. **Join the solidarity protest In London on Wednesday 14 November, at 5pm, outside the European Commission, 32 Smith Square, Westminster, London SW1P 3EU** (tubes: St James Park or Westminster), followed by a photo-shoot with Big Ben backdrop, and indoor Rally at the nearby Emmanuel Centre, 9-23 {north end of} Marsham Street, London, SW1P 3DW - organised by the Coalition of Resistance, supported by UNITE and a number of unions, Greece Solidarity Campaign, London Against the Troika. [Invite your friends and share on Facebook](#).
3. **Come to the next Organising Meeting of the Greece Solidarity Campaign**, as ever on third Wed of month, 6.30 - 7.30 on Wed 21 November, at the Lucas Arms (upstairs room), 245 Grays Inn Road on corner of Cromer Street (5 minutes walk from Kings Cross).
4. **The third austerity measures package – commonly called “The Third Memorandum”** - of 13.5 billion euro, was brought to Greek Parliament with the signatures of all government ministers on Monday afternoon (5th October). The relevant committee of the Parliament will discuss the bill on Tuesday 6th as of 11 a.m. The bill will be discussed at the plenary of the Parliament on Wednesday 7th, while the voting will take place the same day, traditionally at midnight. An additional vote will take place on Sunday (after midnight) on the Budget 2013. The bill contains 150 measures: savage new spending cuts and euphemistically called ‘structural reforms’ that will turn upside down the life of every Greek with incredible reductions in wages and pensions, sharp cuts in health care and social welfare benefits, cuts in allowances, overturning any labour rights, utilities’ price increases, and also opening of closed professions, only to mention a few. (For fuller details see 15 below.)
5. **Will the Government fall?:** As Prime Minister and New Democracy Conservative leader Samaras prepares to see if Parliament will back his 13.5 billion euro spending cut and tax hike plan for 2013-14, his party remains in second place in new polls. The Coalition of the Radical Left (SYRIZA) is in first place. PASOK and the Democratic Left are coalition partners in Samaras’ government and paying a big price for backing more pay cuts, tax hikes and slashed pensions that they vowed to resist before the June 17 elections – broken promises for which voters look like punishing them. With their support falling, they are re-thinking their support for the Samaras austerity plan that is set to be voted on Nov. 7, the second day of a 48-hour general strike called by unions to protest against the measures. However, *To Vima* (newspaper see 15 below) thinks the Government will get the measures through with 3 or 4 more votes than the 151 MPs it needs.

6. **Greece this week - a resistance report from comrade Vangelis:** *“From 5th November, underground workers, power workers, transport workers all out on rolling strikes, joined by taxi and mini-cab drivers. From Tuesday 6-7th November, there will be no buses and no trolleybuses with air traffic control on strike as well as all ships in Greek ports. Journalists already on strike - now joined by ERT news journos. Official journalist union strike on Monday. Plus all security guards in hospitals, health centres and mental institutions on strike. On Tuesday they will be joined by ambulance workers. From 7th November pharmacists on strike nationwide. All cancer drugs for chemotherapy not being sent to Greece. Bank workers on strike for 48hours from Tuesday. Rolling 48 hour strikes for Genop-Dei state electricity workers starting Monday night. State prosecutors on strike until 18th November. All unions belonging to the KKE- Building workers, electricians, artists, hotels, agriculture, telecoms, pensioners etc. will have a demonstration starting at Omonia from 10.30am on Tuesday 6th November. POE-OTA rolling 48hour strikes when General strike starts on Tuesday 6th November. Increasing calls for indefinite strike action. Two positive signs: Syriza last week supported a KKE resolution in parliament to reject the memorandum; Syriza and KKE now march together on demonstrations. There is a keen desire for unity on the left from the rank and file.”*

7. **In Greek Opinion Polls:** SYRIZA, the radical left coalition, led by anti-bailout Alexis Tsipras, stands at 25.5% of would-be voters in a survey in the satirical magazine *To Pontiki* (The Mouse). New Democracy (Tories) have 22 percent, followed by a disturbing 11.5% for the fascist Golden Dawn. The plummeting PASOK ‘socialists’ tied for fourth at 6.5 percent with the Independent Greeks. The Communists were at 5 percent, with the Democratic Left at 4 percent, only one percent above the threshold needed to win seats in Parliament if the government falls and new elections are held. This means the three government parties (ND, PASOK and DL) appear to hold the combined allegiance of less than a third of the electorate.

8. **The case brought (with exceptional speed) against Costas Vaxivanis, editor of Hot Doc magazine, has been dropped.** Vaxivanis had published the names of some 2,000 Greeks holding accounts at the Geneva branch of HSBC. He successfully argued that publishing the raw data from this so-called ‘Lagarde List’ was in the public interest because it appeared that well-connected people were being protected by authorities. “Greece is run by a closed oligarchy of businessmen, politicians and controlled media groups. My publication of the list marked a confrontation, an extreme confrontation,” he told a press conference. The UK NUJ was one of the international bodies to bring pressure to bear in support of Vaxivanis.
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-20163430>

9. **Golden Dawn** – For a flavour of the threat posed by the fascist Golden Dawn party and their influence over sections of the police but also on some of the organised anti-fascist opposition, see (Economics Editor of *Newsnight*) Paul Mason’s piece at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-19976841>; Maria Margaronis’s piece in *the Guardian* <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/oct/26/golden-dawn-greece-far-right> ; and a short video at <http://roarmag.org/2012/11/greeces-uncertain-future-a-short-documentary/>

10. **Greeks Threaten Albanian Classmate with Golden Dawn thugs-** “An Albanian girl who had achieved the highest grades at a Greek school in Farsala, earning the right to carry the Greek flag in the national (Ochi Day) parade, declined to do so after it was reported her classmates didn’t want her to have the honour because she wasn’t Greek, and said they would threaten her and the school’s principal with the neo-Nazi group Golden Dawn. The student council

informed Principal Kostas Panos that she should be denied the honour she had won. He checked with the Head of Secondary Education of Larissa and asked for directions and was told to let her carry the flag. But the girl refused because, as she said, she 'respects the flag, the principal, her professors and classmates and not because she is afraid.' Similar incidents have happened before in Greek schools where immigrants earn the highest grade over Greek students who don't want them to be celebrated for their achievement." (Daniel Kanella Greekreporter.com 30 October 2012).

11. **Manolis Glezos, Syriza MP and Chair of NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR THE PURSUIT OF GERMANY'S DEBTS TO GREECE.** says: Please go to <http://www.greece.org/blogs/wwii/> and sign our petition which asks the German Government to honour its obligations towards Greece, which have been outstanding for decades, by repaying the forced occupation-time loan and the war reparations for the material damages inflicted and the crimes and the looting that were perpetrated by the German war machine in WW2.
12. **The Lord Mayor's Banquet vs. The Pigs Banquet (12th November):** The action will take place at the Guildhall (<http://www.guildhall.cityoflondon.gov.uk/>) from **5 pm, on Monday 12th November**. The guests are expected to arrive at 6 pm.
13. **Birkbeck Institute for the Humanities – 'The Southern Crisis and Resistances'**, Thursday 22nd November 7.15pm - 9pm Room B01, Clore Management Centre. All welcome – no registration – just turn up. Academics from Portugal, Italy, Greece, Spain will discuss the economic, political and humanitarian crisis austerity has created in South Europe. But PIGS can fly. The widespread protests of 2011 have started again in Spain, Portugal and Italy while in Greece the new austerity has brought the government close to collapse. Is austerity or resistance the future of Europe? Speakers; Costas Douzinas (Birkbeck); Andrea Fumagalli (UNI PV); Maria Margaronis (journalist for The Nation & The Guardian); Juan Carlos Monedro (Universidad Complutense de Madrid); Boaventura de Sousa Santos (Coimbra University and Birkbeck Leverhulme Fellow).
14. **This Swedish documentary (containing an interview with Greek KKE MP, Liana Kanelli)** provides a good introduction to the current crisis in Greece and what life is like for the average citizen in a country with 100,000 folded businesses, mass unemployment, soup kitchens, 2,500 school closures, 30 axed university programmes, 'with Indian wages and taxes higher than Sweden' - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mMQF2rSHnbw&feature=related>.
15. **Details of the 'third memorandum' being discussed in the Greek Parliament**, according to *To Vima* (newspaper), include:
 - *Restructure of public sector 719 million euro
 - *Municipalities 210 million euro
 - *Wages, bonuses and allowances cuts 1.497 billion euro
 - *Pensions, increase of retirement age 5,475 billion euro
 - *Cuts in social welfare 307 billion euro
 - * Health care sector 1.113 billion euro

*Defence spending (closure of military camps, cancellation of new armament deals etc) 406 million euro

*Education (universities & technical colleges mergers, reducing funding in sports and culture 133 million euro

*Cuts in state-run enterprises 495 million euro

*New taxation system (cancellation of tax free amount, tax hikes in tobacco products, tax hike in the interests rates from bank deposits from 10% to 15% etc) 3.89 billion euro.

Cuts, Cuts, Cuts

230 pages that will leave millions of households with a minimum income enough just to cover basic needs. According to leaked information **main changes will be:**

- Cuts in main and supplementary pensions 5% for 1,000-1,500 euro, 10% for 1,500-2,000 euro and 15% for pensions in more than 2,000 euro.
- Increase of retirement age from 65 to 67.
- Social welfare benefits (EKAS) for low-pensioners only for those over 65 years old.
- Cuts for special payrolls 2% for wages up to 1,000 euro and up to 35% for more than 4,000 euro monthly salary. Retrospective as of 1. August 2012.
- Up to 40% salary cuts for employees of state-run enterprises and municipalities.
- Abolition of Christmas/Easter & Vacation bonuses to wages of civil servants and pensioners.
- Cuts in several allowances of civil servants.
- Increase of working hours from 36.5 hours per week to 40 hours per week for civil servants.
- Decreases in overtime payments
- Reductions in pensions for disabled people
- Reductions in jobless allowances, i.e. seasonal workers
- Reduction in social welfare spending
- Hiring scheme 1:5 until 2015

Cuts in the health sector will leave thousands if not millions without sufficient health care. The bill foresees among others: Reducing health services for uninsured (25% of Greeks are without job, while uninsured labour blooms), reducing medicine from official lists, reducing spending for health care cost (medical services and drugs). In addition a new taxation system will raise taxes for low and medium incomes and reduce taxes for the rich.

Parliament Voting: Despite junior coalition government partner Democratic Left insisting in not voting in favour of the labour rights 'reforms, and some defiant MPs from partner PASOK and PM Samaras' New Democracy, the bill which requires a simple majority (i.e. 151 votes) to be accepted, is expected to pass with 154-155 votes.

The spending cuts and structural reforms are a precondition for Greece to receive the bailout tranche of 31.5 billion euro. Prime Minister Antonis Samaras said recently that the country has money until November 16th. The billions that will come with the bailout tranche will be spent for the recapitalization of the banks and by the state to pay outstanding debts to suppliers.

Under time pressure Greek government is pushing for the bill to pass through the Parliament and thus before the Eurogroup meeting on November 12th, where the eurozone finance ministers were allegedly to give the green light for the disbursement of the 31.5 billion euro."

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Unions representing 3 million members are affiliated to the Greece Solidarity Campaign.

Join or affiliate your organisation to the Greece Solidarity Campaign: you can run off an information leaflet using the membership form at <http://www.greecesolidarity.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Greece-Solidarity-Leaflet.pdf>

[αλληλεγγύη και φιλία - solidarity and friendship – Paul Mackney – Co-Chair, Greece Solidarity Campaign www.Greecesolidarity.org](http://www.greecesolidarity.org)<http://www.Greecesolidarity.org>