

Greece: Political Prisoner Dimitris Koufodinas Stops Hunger Strike

Saturday 27 March 2021, by [Solidarity campaign for hunger striker Dimitris Koufodinas](#) (Date first published: 15 March 2021).

On Sunday 14 March 2021, after 65 days, the 63-year-old political prisoner, Dimitris Koufodinas, stopped the hunger strike he had started on 8 January. Since 16 February, he had been in the intensive care unit of Lamia Hospital, with either a serious threat of irreversible damage to his health or sudden death. According to doctors, the recovery process will last two months, but without knowing if the functions of his affected organs will recover, his life is still at risk.

The striker's demand to be transferred from Domokos, a remote village in central Greece, to Korydallos, in the Athens metropolitan area, has not been met. It was refused both by the courts, which declared themselves "incompetent", and by the "central prisoner transfer service": they all aligned themselves with the government's orders and arguments.

The end of the hunger strike, which prevented the striker's death, was greeted by the solidarity movement with relief, while his struggle was seen as a victory of life against a government that risked pushing him to his death or forcing him to undergo forced feeding in a situation of immobilisation, pushing to the end its intransigent and revanchist political attitude towards the striker.

According to the striker's statement, "what is happening out there is much more important than what it started for", namely the hunger strike.

This assessment of the situation is well-founded: Dimitris Koufodinas' struggle has achieved much more than he claimed:

- For almost two months, tens of thousands of people all over Greece have defied the uncontrolled police violence against the protestors, with immoderate use of chemicals, the permanent danger of arbitrary arrests, harassment, and fines (under the pretext of anti-covid measures), with orchestrated propaganda in the mainstream media, as well as with censorship extended to social networks, such as Facebook. All these people demonstrated and intervened systematically, with online rallies and public comments in support of the striker. In a country where demonstrations have been virtually banned under the pretext of a pandemic, the government's intransigence and police violence have brought together students, intellectuals, lawyers, artists, members of trade unions, far-left organisations, and the libertarian movement, with the daily participation of thousands of people.
- Although at the beginning the support for the hunger strike was limited to groups of the libertarian movement, the extreme left and left intellectuals, with the passing weeks we saw the interventions of institutional organisations, personalities, in Greece and abroad, as well as countless solidarity actions from everywhere. Among others, we can mention interventions by the Greek Ombudsman, Amnesty International, Greek and foreign MEPs, the Greek Commission for Human Rights, the National Commission for Human Rights (government advisory body), leaders, MPs, and executives of several parliamentary parties (Syriza, KKE, Mera25, KINAL), the declarations of the Union of Judges

and Prosecutors, the successive mobilisations of more than a thousand lawyers, the trade unions, hundreds of academics, journalists, artists, doctors, and all media not controlled by the government. It has also prompted actions such as other hunger strikes, in solidarity, (four anarchist prisoners, as well as the Greek professor at the School of Fine Arts, Georgia Sagri). Another strong indication is that in recent weeks theologians, popes, and even right-wing cadres have made public statements or given support to the striker in an attempt to bend the government's intransigence. This is more or less how all the allegations of the government and its attempts to break the striker's morale were debunked: the lies and distortions were taken down, including the claim that the striker was asking for privileged treatment, that he was blackmailing (according to the penal code, the hunger strike is a prisoner's right), that the hunger strike is not about society and that he was the only one to harm himself.

- The struggle of Dimitris Koufodinas went worldwide in the first weeks. Beyond the interventions of MEPs and the actions of Amnesty International, which made known beyond the borders the legality of the striker's request and the censorship in Greece, there were signatures and messages of support coming from Europe, Latin America, India, Canada, there were dozens of rallies of support, from Italy, the Spanish state, Euskadi, Germany, and France, to Turkey, Kurdistan, Argentina, the United States.

- For several weeks, the solidarity movement has brought to everyone's attention, even to those less likely to believe it, that the international and state anti-terrorist strategy -especially in a country like Greece, where the cycle of left-wing armed violence has been closed for a long time- does not only concern the "weak links", i.e. those who participated in organisations like the "17 November".

What has been proven is that in the name of the "fight against terrorism" (or, in today's terms, "prevention of radicalisation") there is a whole constellation of foreign embassies, parties, media, judges, and police, which dramatically reduces democracy, which frees itself from the principles of the rule of law, which uses/violates laws for political purposes, which exercises violence and draws up "lists" of citizens on the basis of their political views, as in the '50s and '70s, which ideologically terrorises the left, with the aim of drastically restricting the space for legal anti-government protest.

For all these reasons, the hunger strike, on the one hand, and the gigantic solidarity movement that has been created, on the other hand, have become in more than two months catalysts for important sectors of Greek society to return to politics and to the streets, in the face of a government, extremely conservative, hostile to society, notoriously failed in the management of the pandemic and the economy, rendered morally illegitimate and precisely for that reason more and more authoritarian and dangerous for democracy in the country.

We would like to warmly thank the comrades and friends who have contributed to the alternative information, to the support of the striker's demand, and to the strengthening of the solidarity movement.

Solidarity campaign for hunger striker Dimitris Koufodinas.

Athens, 15 March 2021

P.S.

- Anti*Capitalist Resistance. 22 March 2021:

<https://www.anticapitalistresistance.org/post/political-prisoner-stops-hunger-strike>