

Hundreds of Greek doctors stage 24-hour strike to protest compulsory COVID vaccinations

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Health workers, hospital doctors and ambulances staff protest in front of the Greek parliament against mandatory Covid vaccines for health workers in central Athens (Photo: AFP / Louisa Gouliamaki)

Athens, October 22 (RHC)-- Hundreds of doctors working in state-run hospitals in Greece marched through the capital, Athens to decry compulsory COVID vaccination and government plans that they believe will only worsen staff shortages.

Around 500 protesters took to the streets in Athens on Thursday, marching past parliament toward the Health Ministry as part of their 24-hour strike. Photos and footage uploaded to Twitter show people with banners and flags as they walked through the capital.

Unions representing medical personnel are demonstrating against government proposals which they argue will intensify staffing shortages and result in healthcare professionals working longer hours, infringing upon their rights.

As well as protesting shortages, staff in the healthcare system are demanding to be added to the list of professions qualifying for extra hazard pay due to “heavy and unhealthy work.” The unions also oppose the suspension of healthcare workers who are unvaccinated against COVID, as it would only exacerbate the lack of personnel, and said that staff should be able to choose whether they want to be vaccinated.

Beginning September 1st, it became mandatory for all healthcare professionals in Greece to be vaccinated against COVID or to provide a certificate proving they had recently recovered from the virus. Workers who did not comply ran the risk of indefinite suspension without pay. The policy had previously only covered care home workers.

In late August, around 7,500 people gathered on Athens’ Syntagma Square near the parliament to protest the looming vaccine requirement for healthcare professionals in both the private and public sector. A total of 47 people were detained by police when the rally turned violent.

Authorities claimed that the demonstrators launched “Molotov cocktails, flares, bottles and other objects at the police forces at the scene,” prompting officers to fire water cannon and deploy a “limited use of tear gas.”

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