

Far-right Greek Member of Parliament Leads Raid into Primary School in Athens



Athens, January 18 (RHC)-- Several members of a far-right Greek party headed by a prominent MP have raided a primary school in Athens to prevent the staff from admitting refugee children in classrooms.

According to the Greek Ministry of Education, around 20 members of Golden Dawn, led by Yannis Lagos, a lawmaker with the party, stormed the Neo Ikonio public school in the capital's Perama neighborhood on Tuesday. They verbally abused the teachers and parents attending a meeting at the school, and even beat some of them.

The school had scheduled the meeting to hold talks on plans to offer classes to 25 refugee children living in a nearby camp. The ministry condemned the assailants for their "abusive and threatening behavior" towards the staff and parents.

In a statement, Yiannis Pantis, the ministry's general secretary, said the government will pursue its programs for educating refugee children despite oppositions and acts of racism.

"Today's acts by the Golden Dawn members ... will not affect the operation of the school for the refugee children," said Pantis. "Instances of violence and racism have no place in a school environment," he added.

Golden Dawn, the third-largest party in the Greek parliament, has held numerous campaigns against governmental programs for providing education to refugee children. The party described the Tuesday raid as a reaction to Europe's failure to contain the flow of refugees into the continent.

Over 60,000 refugees, mostly from crisis-hit Middle Eastern states, are currently stranded in Greece after many European states shut their borders to refugees early in 2016.

The Greek government is struggling to overcome the refugee crisis, despite the 2016 deal between the EU and Turkey aimed at decreasing the number of asylum seekers trying to reach the Greek islands by boat. The process of either returning them to Turkey, or moving them elsewhere in the EU, has virtually come to a halt.

The government in Athens has been repeatedly criticized for the dire humanitarian situation in overcrowded refugee camps across the country.

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