

Greek Lawmakers Approve Reform Bill Despite Protests



Athens, May 9 (RHC)-- The Greek parliament has approved fresh austerity measures demanded by international creditors, sparking fresh protests and clashes between police and demonstrators.

Greek lawmakers Monday adopted a controversial package of pension cuts and tax hikes hours before Eurozone finance ministers were due to discuss whether Athens had met terms of a multi-billion Euro bailout.

The overhaul bill was approved by 153 lawmakers of the ruling Syriza/Independent Greeks government coalition. All opposition parties in the 300-member Parliament voted against it.

The austerity measures are part of a package demanded by the European Commission, European Central Bank, and the International Monetary Fund in exchange for an 86-billion-euro (\$95 billion) bailout. Greece has already received two bailouts in 2010 and 2012, worth a total of 240 billion euros (USD 272 billion).

European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker said Sunday that Greece has "basically achieved" the goals of reforms required by the creditors. Since the new measures were introduced by the government, Greek protesters have been holding mass rallies to express their anger and frustration.

On Sunday, Greek riot police fired tear gas to disperse petrol bomb-throwing protesters in Athens as thousands took to the streets in anti-austerity demos ahead of the vote by lawmakers. Sunday's protest was one of the most violent rallies which took place outside the parliament building where some 10,000 protesters turned out to vent their anger at the latest reforms.

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