

Greek Police Fire Tear Gas at Pensioners Rally in Athens



Athens, October 4 (RHC)-- In the Greek capital of Athens, over 1,000 elderly demonstrators, some of them with canes, participated in a protest rally on Monday to voice their opposition to further cuts to their pensions -- shouting slogans such as "Shame on you!" as they tried to overrun a police cordon.

Other protesters attempted to tip over a police bus blocking a road to the prime minister's office when officers fired tear gas to drive them back. As the pensioners ran away, several appeared to be in distress as some fell to their knees while coughing.

"This is a fight for our live. The country has been driven to desperation," said the protest organizer, Dimos Koumbouris, as quoted in the report. "They have torn our income to shreds - taking money that people earned with hard work. We have to protest today and keep protesting," he noted, adding: "There's no other option."

Athens' government has imposed new cuts on pensions this year as part of its bailout commitments to its international lenders as the US-based International Monetary Fund (IMF) is pushing for even tougher measures.

The latest round of cuts comes after six years of bailout-related austerity measures as nearly 25 percent of Greeks remain without jobs and no longer eligible for state benefits. This is while the persisting cuts

over the years have pushed the monthly income of nearly half of pensioners below the official poverty line, according to a survey released last week by the National Pension Network, an institution that represents Greece's main retiree associations.

Meanwhile, 52 percent of Greek households rely on pensions to meet their monthly expenses, the survey found. The administration of Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras faces growing public discontent as it braces for a new round of unpopular measures that include loosening employment rights and mortgage protections.

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