

Merkel says Germany 'takes total responsibility' for Nazi crimes in Greece



Athens, January 12 (RHC)-- German Chancellor Angela Merkel says her country "takes total responsibility" for crimes committed by the Nazis in Greece during the Second World War.

The Chancellor, who was on a two-day visit in Athens, said Friday that Germany is "aware of our historical responsibility," but it has already paid Athens 115 million deutschmarks in 1960.

"We are aware of our historical responsibility, we know how much suffering Germany caused Greece during the era of National Socialism so the lesson for us is to do everything we can to ensure good relations with Greece and to support each other for the benefit of both countries," Merkel said.

Germany has already dismissed a request by Athens to a compensation of ?288 billion for the destruction Greece sustained between 1941 and 1944, the years the country was subject to Third Reich rule.

"As Greeks, we consider these demands legally active and (can be) judicially pursued and should be solved in the competent European forum, judicial forum," Greek President Prokopis Pavlopoulos told

Merkel during a short meeting.

Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras, however, said Merkel's visit marked "the end of a difficult cycle between our two countries." This was Merkel's first visit in Greece after the country exited its bailout programs a few months ago.

Back in 2010, it was revealed that Greece that had been affected with a spiraling spending deficit had borrowed much more money than it was able to make in revenue through taxes. The government then asked for a financial rescue by the European Union (EU) and International Monetary Fund. Germany, provider of the bulk of Athens's international bailout during the years of economic crisis, sparked anger among many any Greeks who blame it for tough austerity measures they had to endure.

Greek protesters clashed with police on Thursday in Athens, during a demonstration against German Chancellor Angela Merkel's visit in the country. Protesters used sticks to attack police officers blocking the street in the center of Athens and police responded with tear gas, as Merkel was meeting Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras in his office nearby.

Thousands took to the streets, some dressed in Nazi garb and giving the Hitler salute, in displays of protest against the chancellor's visit earlier this week.

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