

Greek police crack down on angry protests after shooting teenage Roma boy

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Violent clashes between protestors and riot police broke out in Greece's second-largest city on Monday after a 16-year-old was shot in the head by Greek police.

Athens, December 6 (RHC)-- Greek police have launched violent crackdown against protestors in the country's second-largest city after a teenager from the minority Roma community was shot in the head by police. The incident was reported on Monday morning near the port city of Thessaloniki when the 16-

year-old was shot by police for allegedly driving off without paying the bill of ?20 (£17) at a fuel station. The teenage boy, who has not been identified, was admitted to a hospital in critical condition, reports said.

About 1,500 people took part in a protest march organized by leftwing groups in central Thessaloniki on Monday night to protest police excesses against the Roma minority community, who are among the poorest in most European countries and discriminated against.

Angry protesters gathered outside the hospital where the Roma boy was receiving treatment. The police tried to disperse them by lobbing tear gas canisters and stun grenades. People also took to the streets in central Athens over the shooting, holding a banner reading: "They shot them because they were Roma."

The Greek police announced the 34-year-old officer was arrested on charges of shooting the teenager and is due to appear before a public prosecutor on Tuesday to face charges of attempted manslaughter. Members of the Roma community in Greece and human rights activists accuse Greek authorities of widespread discrimination. Several members of the community have been fatally shot or injured in recent years on flimsy pretexts.

The Monday shooting happened one day ahead of annual protests in Greek cities to mark the fatal shooting of 15-year-old Greek teenager, Alexandros Grigoropoulos, by the police in 2008. His death triggered weeks of protests in the country.

Asked to comment on the shooting, Giannis Oikonomou, a government spokesperson, said "the value of a human life can never be measured by any amount of money", in an attempt to calm angry demonstrators. Christos Spirtzis, a spokesperson for Greece's main opposition, the leftwing Syriza party, accused the centre-right government of failing to keep excessive policing methods in check.

"Society can no longer tolerate this climate of fear created by extreme police brutality which, for trivial reasons, has threatened the life of an underage 16-year-old child," said Spirtzis.

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