

Greece's Anti-Austerity Prime Minister Sworn In



Athens, January 27 (RHC)-- The leader of Greece's anti-austerity Syriza party has been sworn in as the country's new prime minister after forming a coalition government with the right-wing nationalist Independent Greeks (ANEL) party.

On Monday, the Syriza leader, Alexis Tsipras, was sworn in as Greek prime minister at the Presidential Palace in the capital, Athens, pledging to do his utmost to "to protect the interests of the Greek people." In an iconoclastic gesture, Tsipras took a civil oath while it is conventional for the Greek prime minister to take a religious one. Before the ceremony, the 40-year-old premier met the Greek Archbishop Ieronymos II to inform the priest of his decision to do away with the traditional religious oath, using the Bible.

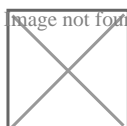
According to reports, this was the fastest and simplest swearing in ceremony in the Greek history of modern times. Earlier in the day, Syriza and the Independent Greeks (ANEL) party agreed to form a coalition government.

Though Syriza and ANEL come from two different ideological backgrounds, both of them pursue an anti-austerity campaign. According to the Greek Interior Ministry's preliminary results released on Sunday, Syriza won 36.34 percent of Greece's legislative elections, or 149 seats in the country's 300-seat parliament.

Syriza is a fierce opponent of Greece's bailout deal with the International Monetary Fund and eurozone countries, and has vowed to reconsider the austerity measures that have caused mounting dissatisfaction in the country.

Greece nearly went bankrupt in 2010. It survived, however, on international rescue packages. Athens has received 240 billion euros (USD 330 billion) in international loans in return for the enforcement of austerity measures.

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