

Tens of thousands rally to demand justice after Greek train crash

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Greeks are calling for accountability after dozens were killed in the country's deadliest rail disaster.

Protesters take part in the rally in Athens

Athens, March 9 (RHC)-- Tens of thousands of people have rallied in Athens and cities across Greece to demand accountability following the deaths of 57 people last week in the country's worst train disaster.

Labor unions and student associations organised the demonstrations on Wednesday, while strikes halted ferries to the islands and public transportation services in Athens, where at least 30,000 people took to the streets.

Demonstrators in the capital waved signs reading “it’s not an accident, it’s a crime” and “it could have been any of us on that train.” More than 20,000 joined rallies in Thessaloniki, Greece’s second-largest city, where clashes broke out when several dozen youths challenged a police cordon. Twelve students from the city’s university were among the dead in last week’s head-on crash between two trains.

Police fired tear gas in the southern city of Patras, where a municipal band earlier played music from a funeral march while leading the demonstration.

In the central city of Larissa, near the scene of the train collision, students holding black balloons chanted “No to profits over our lives!”

The February 28 crash has stirred public outrage over the crumbling state of the Greek rail network, and striking workers say years of neglect, underinvestment and understaffing – a legacy of Greece’s decade-long debt crisis – are to blame.

Many of the estimated 350 people on board an intercity passenger train that collided head-on with a freight train while travelling on the same track were university students heading to the northern city of Thessaloniki from Athens after a long public holiday weekend.

The disaster has sparked protests across Greece with more than 10,000 people rallying in Athens on Sunday, releasing hundreds of black balloons into the sky. Rail workers have staged rolling, 24-hour strikes since Thursday, bringing the network to a halt. They say their demands for the improvement of safety protocols have gone unheard for years.

ADEDY, the umbrella union representing hundreds of thousands of public sector workers, has also called for a 24-hour walkout. “We will impose safe railways so that no one will ever experience the tragic accident at Tempi ever again,” the main railway workers’ union said in a statement. “We have an obligation towards our fellow humans and our colleagues who were lost in the tragic accident.”

Other transport workers went on strike in solidarity, disrupting metro, tram and bus services in the capital, Athens. Ships also remained docked at ports as seamen participated in the labour action.

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