

Protests Erupt as Greek Lawmakers Approve Harsh Austerity Measures



Athens, July 16 (RHC)-- Protests erupted in Athens Wednesday night as the Greek Parliament approved harsh new austerity measures in exchange for a third European bailout.

Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras won the parliamentary vote by a vote of 229 to 64. But 32 members of his own Syriza party voted against the deal, including former Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis. Greece's deputy finance minister, Nadia Valavani, resigned in protest.

Before the vote, Tsipras said he was being forced to accept the austerity measures even though he didn't believe they would benefit the Greek economy.

During the voting session, violent clashes broke out between police forces and over 12,000 protesters, comprised of civil service, tax office and municipal workers, who had gathered in front of the parliament in the capital Athens. Some 50 people were reportedly detained during the clashes.

In the wake of Monday's bailout deal with the international creditors, the Greek Public Sector Union (ADEDY) had urged Greeks working in the country's public sector to stage a 24-hour strike on

Wednesday followed by a demonstration in front of the parliament to show their deep dissent with the deal.

In a referendum held on July 5th, the majority of Greeks, including Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras, showed their dissent with implementing more austerity measures in exchange for receiving a third bailout from eurozone lenders. However, in a 17-hour-long eurozone summit in the Belgian capital Brussels on Monday, Tsipras finally accepted nearly all the austerity measures most of the Greeks had refused to accept by a "NO" vote in the referendum.

Of all the austerity measures, tax hikes and increasing the retirement age have angered the Greeks the most and have split Tsipras' own Syriza party.

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