

## Greece Will Not be 'Blackmailed' into More Austerity

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Speaking before a session of the new Syriza parliament in Athens on Tuesday, Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras declared that Greek negotiators will not succumb to "blackmail" from European lenders and will adhere to their promise to end austerity policies in the state.

"We are not in a hurry and we will not compromise," Tsipras told the assembled lawmakers. "We are working hard for an honest and mutually beneficial deal, a deal without austerity, without the bailout which has destroyed Greece in recent years, a deal without the toxic presence of the Troika."

Tsipras made the comments as tense negotiations with other European financial ministers and lenders representing the Troika lenders—which include the European Central Bank (ECB), the European Commission, and the International Monetary Fund—continued in Brussels.

On Monday, those talks collapsed after finance minister Yanis Varoufakis rejected a proposal put forth by the Eurogroup ministers because it called for an extension of the current bailout scheme with no alterations to the terms. Greek leaders face a Friday deadline by which they must agree on a short term aid package.

The Guardian, quoting sources close to the Greek finance ministry, said that it was "highly probable" that on Wednesday Greece would submit a request for a temporary loan agreement, which they say would exclude the austerity conditions set in the existing bailout.

The Guardian reports:

Greek journalists briefed in Brussels by the country's finance ministry officials reported that the extension request would be accompanied by terms and conditions proposed by the Greek side, including commitments to refrain from taking unilateral actions and to collaborate on policies ranging from clamping down on tax evasion to pressing ahead with privatizations.

To that same point, during his parliament speech, Tsipras announced that the government would vote on a series of social reform bills on Friday, including a bill that deals with labor reform and restores collective bargaining agreements, which were previously scrapped "by the Troika to serve the interests of the oligarchy."

During his speech, Tsipras conceded that in the brief time since the leftist Syriza party took power, the country's huge economic problems have not yet been solved. However, he said that Greeks display a newfound pride and can hold negotiations with their EU counterparts as "equals."

"Three weeks after the elections and already our people feel that they are living and breathing in a different country," he said.

Tsipras continued: "What radically changed is the feeling of the average Greek citizen, that they no

longer feel this disdain and humiliation. The Greek people now feel proud and dignified." Greece will no longer behave like a "colony" and will no longer allow themselves to be treated "as if they are the untouchables of Europe."

As with the ongoing Brussels talks, Tsipras said that Greece will now "negotiate as an equal partner"—a step which he declared is the first "concrete change" since Syriza was elected to power.

"For the first time, Greece has its own voice," and it is a voice, he said, that has been shared in expressions of solidarity throughout Europe. On Saturday, 5,000 people marched to the Banque de France in Paris to denounce the EU's austerity agenda in Greece, and in London hundreds of pro-Syriza demonstrators rallied in Trafalgar Square.

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