

Violent protests resume in Greece

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There have been further riots in Greece in protest at the killing by police of a 15-year-old boy eight days ago

Violent clashes broke out in the capital, Athens, on Saturday evening following a day of largely peaceful vigils for Alexandros Grigoropoulos.

Youths threw petrol bombs at banks and the police station where the officer charged with the teenager's killing was based. Police responded with tear gas.

At least 70 people have been injured in the protests sparked by the shooting.

The unrest has spread throughout the country, and has prompted calls for Greek Prime Minister Costas Karamanlis and his government to stand down.

Mr Karamanlis has vowed not to be swayed by protests, insisting Greece needs experienced leadership at a time of economic crisis.

The BBC's Malcolm Brabant in Athens says the clashes on Saturday evening have been the most serious disturbances for several days.

The protests in memory of Alexandros Grigoropoulos's death last Saturday in Exarchia had begun peacefully.

Students of the school the teenager had attended held a silent vigil during the day in Syntagma Square. Hours later, hundreds of others brought candles to the site, while others gathered at the site of the shooting.

But later, about 100 youths hurled volleys of petrol bombs and rocks at a police station in the Exarchia district, where the officer, who shot him and has now been charged with murder, was based. The protesters chanted "murderers out".

Wearing hoods and masks, the protesters then turned their attention to a commercial area near the National Technical University of Athens, known as the Polytechnic, overturning cars and setting fire to three banks. Several shops and an office of the environment ministry were also attacked.

Riot police positioned at street corners in the area responded by firing tear gas at the protesters.

Several restaurants in Exarchia had already closed early in anticipation of the violence. Many shop owners meanwhile boarded up their windows as night fell.

Police subsequently charged the vigil in nearby Syntagma Square, when those taking part refused to move further away from the parliament building and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

Meanwhile in Greece's second city of Thessaloniki, dozens of youths vandalised a gymnasium during a demonstration, according to the AFP news agency.

According to BBC News, anger at the killing of the teenager has developed into a widespread sense of anger at Greece's government over the past week.

Thousands of Greeks have taken to the streets across the country, repeatedly clashing with police and vowing to overthrow the government.

Many have identified themselves as anarchists happy to use violence in what they say are legitimate protests against the government.

Some, though, have welcomed the return of a semblance of calm prior to the violence on Saturday evening. In Athens, Mayor Nikitas Kaklamanis greeted Christmas shoppers with the city's brass band.

"People came up to me and were telling me that it was the first time they had smiled in days," the mayor told the Associated Press.

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