

Scientific Conference "City, Crime and Insecurity in Times of Economic Crisis"

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The Postgraduate Programme of Panteion University, entitled "The Contemporary Criminality and its Confrontation", the Konstantinos Karamanlis Institute for Democracy and the National Centre for Social Research, organized a scientific Conference under the thematic "City, Crime and Insecurity in Times of Economic Crisis", on January 30th, 2013, in the *Athens 984 Radio Station* auditorium, at Technopolis of Gazi.

The conference opened by the President of the Konstantinos Karamanlis Institute for Democracy, Mr. Yannis Michelakis and the Minister of Public Order and Citizen Protection Mr. Nikos Dendias.

The speakers of the conference were:

- Prof. George Kaminis, Mayor of Athens; topic: "The problem of violence in Athens"
- Mrs. Christina Zarafonitou, Professor of Criminology and Director of the Programme of Postgraduate Studies in Criminology at Panteion University; topic: "Fear of crime, victimization and quality of life in the environment of the Greek capital"
- Mrs. Ioanna Tsiganou, Director of Research at the National Centre for Social Research; topic: "Economic crisis and crime"
- Mr. Iakovos Farsedakis, Emeritus Professor of Criminology at Panteion University and Chairman of the Legal Department at the European University of Cyprus; topic: "A criminologist approach to the phenomenon of contemporary criminality in Athens"
- Mr. Eleftherios Economou, former Minister of Citizen Protection and Honorary Chief of the Greek Police; topic: "Fighting lawlessness in practice".

The event was coordinated by Mr. Aris Tolios, journalist. The conference was attended by representatives of the academic community and of ministries, by politicians and by a large number of citizens.

Both the President of the Institute for Democracy Konstantinos Karamanlis, Mr. Michelakis, and the Minister of Public Order and Citizen Protection, Mr. Dendias, thanked the organizing committee of the conference, and highlighted the necessity to deal effectively with violence and lawlessness in the center of the Greek capital, based on the universal application of laws, which should be the minimum denominator in what constitutes the conditions of our common life.

Athens Mayor Mr. Kaminis focused on the growing phenomenon of political violence, briefing on the nation's recent history. Additionally, he condemned the violent behavior inside Greek universities and the actions of ferocity of the political party of *Golden Dawn*, which expands in the neighborhoods of the erstwhile middle class. He argued that the inability of Greek Security Forces to preserve rudimentary the borders of the country,

resulted in the phenomenon large populations of illegal immigrants channeled consciously in the neighborhoods of Athens. Finally, he noted that the Municipality of Athens could exercise criminal policy, only if it were operating under the standards of a Metropolitan Municipality, such as the one of New York City.

The Professor of Criminology at Panteion University, Mrs. Christina Zarafonitou, focused her speech on a series of scientific research findings of national and European level, which link the fear of crime to the list of complex social problems in contemporary megacities. The findings of a recent investigation on ghettos in the center of the Greek capital indicate the role of degradation in the quality of life and its association with insecurity. Moreover, those residents' fear of crime was much higher, compared to the more "elegant" neighborhoods of the city. As a final point, the Professor analyzed the macro-social phenomena, which are likely to influence significantly and shape an environment of crisis and clash as well as crime-breeding factors.

The Director of Research of EKKE, Mrs. Ioanna Tsiganou pointed out that almost all econometric analyses, statistical reports and studies of several criminologists link the crisis with the boost of crime rates. However, she argued that no such connection is confirmed by analogous UN studies in countries that have befallen into similar economic calamity. Thus, despite the pessimistic findings, Mrs. Tsiganou asserted that social consensus, solidarity and vigilance of citizens are elevated, a fact that makes us rethink the suggestion that poverty is the only factor which alone produces crime, because the social pathology of crime is not linearly generated by the crisis.

The Emeritus Professor of Criminology, Mr. Iakovos Farsedakis, described the deterioration aspects in quantity and quality of crime in Athens, with the omnipresence of violence. Referring to the natural laws of saturation / super-saturation, he explained how crime rates increase, proportionally, in times of crisis and tension. The Professor analyzed the parameters of social homogeneity / heterogeneity, while crime rate increases, when value systems of different social subgroups mingle together, resulting in the dwindling of informal social control; a phenomenon we face today in the multicultural city of Athens. He presented the conditions of transition to criminal behavior and the importance of applying unremitting criminal policy, while highlighting the special importance of prevention, the role of which is validated after the findings of the UN research, which show the percentage of effectiveness of the intervention of the state in the long run, in relation to the type of intervention.

The former Minister, Mr. Economou described the situation in the city of Athens, focusing on the problems caused by illegal immigration, global organized crime and terrorist organizations. He noted that Athens has now become a slow-burning health bomb, while our country receives 80-90% of all immigrants planning to trek into the European Continent, with the Greek police being the one and only who deals with this condition. Finally, he emphasized that it is essential to revise the legal frame relating to criminal policy, and he underlined the significance of the security which is a civil right that every citizen is to enjoy.

After Mr. Economou's lecture, discussion ensued and the organizers announced the publication of the proceedings of the conference.