

Mourners and police clash at Greek schoolboy funeral

Mourners clashed with riot police outside an Athens cemetery during the funeral of a schoolboy whose shooting by officers triggered rioting across Greece. Officers used teargas to disperse small groups of stone-throwing youths who attacked TV crews, police and shops around the cemetery. No injuries were reported.

Some 6,000 people attended the funeral of Alexandros Grigoropoulos, applauding as the 15-year-old's body was carried out of the church in a flower-covered white coffin.

The ceremony itself was peaceful, though there were chants of "Cops! Pigs! Murderers!" from the mostly young crowd.

The main opposition party in Greece has called for early elections and accused the government of failing to protect the country during its worst unrest in decades.

As hundreds of protesters clashed with police outside the Greek parliament, the Socialist opposition leader, George Papandreou, said Greeks had lost trust in the government as the disorder across the country entered its fourth day.

"The country doesn't have a government to protect it," he said, speaking after emergency talks with the prime minister, Costas Karamanlis. "Citizens are experiencing a multiple crisis: a social crisis, a crisis of values. People have lost trust in the government."

Ranks of police, forming a cordon outside parliament, stood their ground when a crowd, many throwing stones, tried to break through to march on the legislature. The protesters, mainly students, regrouped repeatedly to advance on the police line, wearing handkerchiefs to protect against the teargas.

"The only thing this government can offer is to resign and turn to the people for its verdict," Papandreou told a party meeting inside parliament. "We claim power."

Karamanlis urged unity in the face of civil unrest as he struggled to reassert his authority. "We won't show any leniency," he warned.

"No one has the right to use this tragic incident as an excuse for acts of violence. At this critical time, the political world must unite to condemn those responsible for this disaster and isolate them."

It is unclear what measures the government is considering in

response to the unrest. With a general strike over economic policy planned for tomorrow, its position is looking increasingly precarious.

Violence has resumed in the northern city of Thessaloniki and in Ioannina, and Greek demonstrators occupied the country's consulate in Paris.

Karamanlis's party holds a one-seat majority in parliament and was

The disturbances intensified in the country's second-largest city, Salonika, where masked and hooded youths threw stones and petrol bombs at riot police, who responded with teargas. Rioting broke out in Trikala, a city in the country's agricultural heartland.

Demonstrators occupied the Greek consulate in Berlin, and in London five men were arrested after protesters clashed with police outside the Greek embassy.

Yesterday, Karamanlis accused "extremists" of exploiting the shooting and pledged to take "immediate" action to compensate those whose properties had been destroyed, saying: "The state has a duty to protect society and the citizen."

But the scale of the destruction has put the ruling New Democrats on the defensive. "It is as if the state, the government, has collapsed," said Ioannis Rougissis, a spokesman for the opposition Pasok party.

Papandreou accused the New Democrats of being

out of touch with reality. "The whole country, every citizen, is exasperated with a government that doesn't understand the real problems of the people," he said. "Everyone is saying enough is enough."

The shooting of the schoolboy laid bare tensions between the police and members of alleged anarchist groups, and gave vent to a deeper anger that has been mounting in Greece.

With many struggling to make ends meet, and one in five living below the poverty line, there is growing discontent over the tough fiscal policies of a government determined to reach the prescriptive benchmarks set out by Brussels and rein in budget deficits. The disaffection has been exacerbated by allegations of corruption and a series of scandals implicating members of Karamanlis's inner circle.

Secondary school students rushed to join the protests, throwing stones at police in clashes in front of the Athens parliament yesterday, and on islands and mainland towns nationwide.

"A lot of teenagers identify with Grigoropoulos," said Christos Mazanitis, an Athenian journalist. "There's a whole generation out there who see their parents in debt and feel they have nothing to look forward to in the future. Fear and despair are what these riots are about."



trailing the opposition Socialists by more than five percentage points in polls before the riots.

The government has denied reports it will declare a state of emergency, but last night the interior minister, Prokopis Pavlopoulos, signalled that the authorities would take a firmer stance against the rioters.

Emerging from a three-hour emergency cabinet meeting, he said: "What is happening both for the economy of our country and our democracy is unacceptable. We will not tolerate these events. We will do what we must."

Thousands took to the streets again last night, burning shops and buildings and even setting alight a Christmas tree in the centre of Athens. One hotel's windows were smashed and the guests evacuated. The four-storey Olympic Airways office in central Athens was burned, along with a bank and more than 130 shops.

Protesters threw stones and petrol bombs at riot police and set up barricades across downtown streets. Smoke rose above the city centre, mingling with clouds of teargas and broken glass littered the streets.



Aussies advised to avoid riot-hit Athens

Australians have been advised to avoid travel to Athens and several other areas of Greece amid riots in the country.

The fatal police shooting of a teenager has sparked Greece's worst rioting in years, with gangs of youths rampaging through Athens and the northern city of Thessaloniki at the weekend.

Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) has not changed its overall level of travel advice for Greece, but it advises Australians to avoid central Athens and the tourist areas of Monastiraki and Plaka.

The Australian Embassy in Athens is unaware of any Australians affected by the riots. A DFAT spokeswoman said 175 people had registered their travel to Greece with the department but noted the number of Australians actually in the country was likely to be much higher.

Less women in full-time work breastfeed

Women in full-time work find it harder to breastfeed their newborns than those in part-time work.

But just as many working women continue to breastfeed their young babies as women who are not in the workforce.

The Australian Institute of Family Studies review of the impact of employment on breastfeeding also found mothers working up to 14 hours a week had breastfeeding rates 15 per cent higher than those working more than 15 hours.

Women with flexible working hours had 10 per cent higher breastfeeding rates than those without. Self-employed mothers were more likely to breastfeed than others.

The research found about 50 per cent of working women were still breastfeeding when their baby reached six months of age, about the same as women not in work.

Institute director Alan Hayes says there is no dispute over the health benefits for babies and mothers of breastfeeding.

"Clearly the longer women can breastfeed the better," Prof Hayes said.

"What our paper shows is that working mothers of young babies clearly need the support and understanding of their employers to continue to breastfeed after returning to paid work."