Athens and the War on Public Space: Tracing a City in Crisis

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https://muse.jhu.edu/book/84172
map.crisis-scape.net is an online map of racist attacks with a focus on Athens, while including some of the more severe incidents from the rest of Greece. The map was launched in the spring of 2013, created using a local install of Ushahidi, an open source mapping and data-visualisation platform, and lasted until May 2015. It allowed anyone to submit information about a racist attack by adding the location, type and time of the attack along with any eyewitness accounts of what happened. Once submitted, each incident was then screened and — to the extent possible — verified by the crisis-scape research group, seeking additional sources before it was made public. Incidents could be added anonymously; only an email address was required in order to follow up on the report and to clarify any details.

The mapping project began while the migration flows through Greece were still relatively small in comparison to the years that followed. The focus was therefore on the frequent attacks that took place by the police, Golden Dawn, employers, or other local residents, rather than on the systemic violence in detention centres and along borders. Most of the data was gathered through the help of existing migrant associations in Athens and reports by the Racist Violence Recording Network, as well as local indymedia nodes.

The motivation for the mapping project was twofold: on the one hand to serve as a possible outlet for information and reporting that was not being registered because of police complicity, and on the other, to present the attacks in a medium where the severity of the situation could be communicated in one glance. The map was shared widely and became a reference for reporting on the situation in international news outlets (Al Jazeera, The Guardian, and Süddeutsche Zeitung).

The map served as a cumulative record of attacks, with the aim of preventing these experiences from being lost in the continuous flow of crisis stories and information coming out of Greece at the time. Although it was visually quantitative the intention of the map was not to arrive at exact numbers but instead to serve as a witness, making visible the violence that was taking place, while keeping hidden any potentially sensitive information. When known and widely published, the names of people who were attacked were explicitly used in respect of their person, to not turn people into faceless victims.
Police Beat and Throw Afghani Man from Balcony

July 25, 2012
Liosion, Athens, Greece

Categories: Severe physical attack; damage to property; theft; police

Description: Statement made by AH while hospitalised: “On Wednesday (25th of July) two policemen entered the house where I live on Liosion at 10 a.m. The officers wore normal uniforms. They entered the house while keeping their hands on their batons and began asking me and my compatriots for money and told us to “bring all the money you have.” Then my countrymen fled from the balcony using a fire escape ladder descending from the third floor. I stayed and tried to get away from the balcony. I told police “I have not done anything, what are you accusing me of?” Then two more policemen arrived and the earlier two left. When I told them that I had no money, the police began to beat me with batons and told me “Why don’t you jump from the balcony? I will help you to jump.” I was pushed from the balcony but held on to an iron post. The police continued to beat me until I fell from the balcony.” AH was then taken by ambulance to the hospital.

Link to incident report:
http://map.crisis-scape.net/reports/view/63

Additional sources:
https://www.ksm.gr/αστυνομικοι-βασανισαν-και-εριξαν-απο/
Iranian Man Stabbed Twelve Times by Men on Motorcycles

August 7, 2014
Kerkinis street, Athens, close to the police headquarters

Category: Severe physical attack

Description: Outside the police headquarters on August 7, 2014, a motorcycle with three men around the age of 30, dressed in black and with shaved heads stopped AN on the street. One asked him where he’s from, he responded that he was from Iran. AN had been asked that question many times before, especially by police. Then two of the men punched him until he fell, while the third person waited on the bike. The attack lasted for about a minute. One of the men was sitting on top of him as he was stabbed 12 times to the chest and abdomen.

After they escaped he managed to get himself to the main road, Alexandras, where he got the attention of the security guard at Άγιος Σάββας who called an ambulance. At this point he had lost a lot of blood. At the hospital the doctors asked him if he had papers, and the police enquired whether his papers were fake or not. He had to have 60 stitches for his wounds.

Link to incident report:
http://map.crisis-scape.net/reports/view/230

Additional sources:
https://athens.indymedia.org/post/1529988/
http://www.vice.com/gr/read/epithesi-maxairies-iran
Walid Taleb from Egypt Chained and Tortured for 19 hours by Employer

November 3, 2012
Salamis Island, Greece

Category: Severe physical attack; torture

Description: 29 year old WT from Egypt is chained, kidnapped and held in a barn by his employer, the baker Georgios Sgourdas (former local councillor and deputy mayor for Nea Demokratia in Salamina) and Sgourdos’ son for 19 hours while they torture and severely beat him, telling him they will kill him. In the early morning they leave for a moment and WT manages to escape. He collapses at a nearby gas station (http://bit.ly/1dG68Wr), unable to speak or move and is found some hours later. Taken to the hospital, the medical workers say he does not need attention and he is arrested for lack of documents and held in the police station for four days without medical attention. Sgourdas is arrested and released on bail a couple of days later.

Comments: Katsaros (Sep 4 2013) Thank you for the site and the report! I have some minor corrections to make: – The baker’s name is Georgios Sgourdas (not Sgourdos). – The exact point that the victim collapsed was here: http://bit.ly/1dG68Wr (I cannot find a way to point this to your map). I was there when the Egyptian was found, as I was living nearby. Feel free to ask for any related details.

Link to incident report:
http://map.crisis-scape.net/reports/view/22

Additional sources:
http://international.radiobubble.gr/2012/11/walid-story.html
http://www.reuters.com/article/us-greece-migrants-idUSBRE8B50Y920121206
Golden Dawn Attack Home of Migrants

July 21, 2013
Tavros, Athens, Greece [exact location unverfied]

Category: Physical attack; verbal attack; damage to property; theft

Description: Pretending to be police offices, six fascists entered the house of migrants in Tavros to “check their papers”. When the migrants asked for the assistance of a police patrol car the six began beating the migrants, cursing them and stating they were from Golden Dawn. They then stole their wallets, work permits and some appliances in the house and any cash they could find in front of shocked neighbors. When the migrants recognised two of the perpetrators, they fled. The victims are now prosecuting the two perpetrators that they recognised.

On Tuesday the 23rd a solidarity protest was held in Tavros.

Link to incident report:
http://map.crisis-scape.net/reports/view/125

Additional sources:
http://icantrelaxinggreece.wordpress.com/2013/07/24/attack-on-migrants-house-in-tavros/
https://athens.indymedia.org/front.php3?lang=el&article_id=1483242