

Greece threatens Germany with asset seizure

11/03/2015



Justice Minister said he was "ready to approve" a Greek Supreme Court ruling in 2000 that ordered to pay around 28 million euros (\$32 million) to the relatives of 218 civilians in the central Greek village of Distomo who were massacred by Nazi forces on June 10, 1944.

Under the Supreme Court ruling, assets such as property belonging to Germany's archaeological school and the could be seized as compensation.

"The law states that the minister must give the order for the Supreme Court ruling to be carried out. ... I am ready to give that order," Paraskevopoulos told Antenna TV.

Hours earlier, the minister told parliament that his decision would depend "on the political negotiations of the government" on the war reparations issue.

The chamber late Tuesday night unanimously approved a motion to reactivate a special committee examining the issue, a forced war loan and the seizure of archaeological relics by German occupation forces.

Greece's new radical government is locked in negotiations with its EU-IMF creditors over austerity reforms pledged by previous governments in return for a massive 240 billion euro bailout funded.

Athens is arguing that the austerity that has plunged the country into poverty and should be relaxed, a demand opposed by Germany and other creditor nations.

A working group set up by the Greek government in 2013 estimated that the total amount due in reparations to was 162 billion euros.

Berlin argues that the issue of reparations to Greece has already been settled, and points to the 115 million Deutsche Marks it paid in 1960 as part of an agreement with several European governments.

Among high-profile Greeks who support the call for reparations are President and Eurodeputy Manolis Glezos, both of whom are former wartime resistance fighters.

Many experts say the dispute has effectively reached a judicial stalemate after a related adjudication between Germany and by the International Court of Justice earlier this year.

In 2012, the U.N.'s highest court ruled that Italy had broken international law by allowing its courts to hear civil compensation claims against Germany.

In addition, the Greek Supreme Court ruling in 2000 had later been contested by Greece's top administrative court.
