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# Operation Luxor

- More than two years after the violent Operation Luxor raids targeting the Austrian Muslim community, the Graz Higher Regional Court has dismissed the [case against Professor Farid Hafez](#) and another individual as 'false'.

Remarkably, the other individual had been described in the search warrant as ["the leader of the Muslim Brotherhood in Austria"](#), underscoring the disconnect between police and government intelligence with reality.

- Professor Hafez, who has moved to the US following Operation Luxor, has previously highlighted attempts by the Austrian government [to silence him](#) due to his well respected work on Islamophobia in Austria.

In fact, his work on Islamophobia became part of the repressive Operation Luxor investigation - in May 2022, the [Graz Criminal Court had refused to dismiss](#) his case, by arguing that the term Islamophobia itself was a "violent terminology" warranting his investigation.

the Graz public prosecutor and a judge who was not subject to instruction by the government.

His attempts to shift blame are belied by the fact that during a [press conference](#) on the same day of the operation, Nehammer himself declared Operation Luxor as a legitimate and necessary response to the 2 November attacks in Vienna, referring to it as a "successful measure" taken against so-called "political Islam".

## Chancellor Nehammer's failed attempt to dissociate himself from Operation Luxor

- In a TV interview the [Chancellor Karl Nehammer](#) was questioned on Operation Luxor. Despite the scale, human impact and controversy surrounding the operation - which Nehammer oversaw in his previous role as Interior Minister - opportunities to quiz him about the operation have been rare.
- In his response to the interviewer, Nehammer attempted to deflect from his responsibility for Operation Luxor, and merely emphasised that the action had been approved by

# National Security & Counter-terrorism

New Security and Intelligence agency gets parliamentary control commission in bid to restore public trust

- There will now be a [control commission for the Directorate for State Security and Intelligence Service \(DSN\)](#), an agency which succeeds the scandal-hit Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution and Counter-Terrorism (BVT).
- The major Austrian parties including the ruling ÖVP and Greens, alongside the SPÖ, FPÖ and NEOS agreed on a joint initiative to reform the State Security and Intelligence Service Act.

This proposed control commission is set up in the Interior Ministry and will consist of five Members. The main role of the control commission will be to check that the DSN fulfils its tasks properly.

- This move aims to restore trust in the DSN after the November 2020 attack in Vienna unveiled major corruptions in its predecessor agency the BVT.

Despite this, an application by the opposition SPÖ, which called for the trustworthiness tests to be repeated every three years, was hindered by the government.

- Furthermore, [David Blum, who was responsible for intelligence and one of the two deputies of DSN director Omar Hajjawi-Pirchner, is leaving the DSN](#) at the end of January, for a new career in the private sector.

From 2010 to 2020, Blum worked in the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution and Counter-Terrorism, including as head of the "Strategic Analysis" and "Prevention" departments.

Austria's new bill to combat terrorist content online deemed ill-executed by EU Commission

- The Austrian Council of Ministers passed a [new law to combat 'terrorist' content online](#), announced by the Media Minister Susanne Raab (of the ÖVP: Austrian People's Party).

This follows an EU-wide regulation voted in last year by the European Parliament to remove terrorist content online, with many member states adopting their own national policies in step.

- This new act [allows the general public to report any online content they believe constitutes "terrorist content" to KommAustria](#) (communication authority Austria).

Such a report would initiate the following process:

- KommAustria is permitted 72 hours to check whether "terrorist content" is being published or not.
- If confirmed, KommAustria has the authority to demand the deletion of such content within one hour.
- If platforms refuse to comply, heavy penalties are set to be implemented as sanctions. Fines can go as high as 4 percent of the platforming company's turnover.
- Every report made to KommAustria is sent to the police regardless of whether it has been declared as actual "terrorist content" or not, meaning there is a high chance of innocent people being put on police data list, without understanding the ramifications of such an act.

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- This law, which is based on the [EU regulation to prevent the dissemination of terrorist online content](#), is supposed to aid the police and the Directorate for State Security and Intelligence (DSN).

Therefore, every report made to KommAustria regardless of its validity, is [passed on to the police](#).

Given existing Islamophobic sentiment fanned by the Austrian government, and without clearly defining what constitutes "terrorist content", this act incorporates the Austrian public into monitoring and surveilling Muslims and Muslim content online, and could therefore lead to high self/censorship of Muslims online.

- Furthermore, according to the EU Commission, [Austria and 21 other EU states have not properly implemented the aforementioned EU regulation](#) on combating the dissemination of terrorist online content.

For this reason, the Brussels authority has initiated infringement proceedings - though it is not entirely clear on what basis Austria's practices have fallen short.

Austria must reply to the letter from the EU within two months, otherwise the EU Commission will press ahead with the infringement procedure with a "reasoned opinion".

- This act, along with the corresponding EU statute and policy like Britain's Online Safety Bill, form part of a larger move by governments to assert greater control over the online space and grant them greater powers to manage 'unacceptable content'.

## Austrian 'right-wing extremism' risk increases according to new DSN report

- The DSN has published its first annual report for the year of 2021. The report provides an overview of the activities of the newly-established office

The report covers Right-wing 'extremism', Left-wing 'extremism' as well as "Islamism" and anti-state tendencies.

- The report states that [Right-wing extremist risk has increased](#) comparatively, which has been attributed to the Covid Pandemic, more specifically the anti-Covid restriction movement/protests.