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Operation Luxor // Counter-terrorism

Operation Luxor survivor, once celebrated for his actions during 2020 Vienna attack, denied Austrian citizenship

- Mansor Abu El Hosna, a stateless Palestinian in Austria celebrated for saving the life of a wounded Austrian police officer during the 2020 Vienna attacks, was shortly thereafter caught up in Operation Luxor.

As a consequence, he has been [robbed of his chance of obtaining Austrian citizenship](#).

- Although the charges of terrorist financing, money laundering and membership in a criminal organisation against Abu El Hosna were deemed baseless and [dropped](#), the Vienna immigration authority MA35 still denied him access to citizenship.

This was based on as-yet unsubstantiated accusations made by the intelligence agency [LVT](#) of his supposedly "religious-fundamentalist attitude", and an "anti-democratic attitude".

New proposed clause in Criminal Code expands the scope of counter-terror prosecutions

- The Austrian government has moved towards instituting a new criminal offence - Section 278c ('Terrorist offences') in the Criminal Code - which includes ["terrorist threats"](#).
- This would make it an offence to threaten to carry out one of the existing terrorist offences listed in the code - ranging from murder to bodily harm, kidnapping by extortion, aggravated coercion, serious damage to property, air piracy, various offences endangering the community and offences under the Weapons Act.
- Although threats of this kind were already punishable as a dangerous threat, now if the act is committed with a terrorist aptitude or with a corresponding intent, there are [higher penalties](#) of between six months and five years and the possibility of further legal consequences such as special investigative powers.

This is illustrative of the way that counter-terrorism powers serve to aggravate and make more punitive existing legal offences.

Islamophobia

Austrian Islam Conference launched, seemingly 'grassroots' project with links to state actors

- The 'Austrian Islam Conference' (AIC), modelled off a similar German conference, was introduced in a press conference by Mouhanad Khorchide - an Austrian theologian deeply involved in Austria's recent securitisation measures against Muslims.
- The AIC seeks a regular exchange between politicians, the church, science, the media and civil society with representatives from the Muslim community in Austria.

Five meetings, each with 100 participants, are to take place by the end of 2024, with the first scheduled for June 24th.

- The project is being funded with around €250,000 by an EU fund granted through the Austrian Federal Chancellery.

Unlike the German Islam conference which is formally part of the German Interior Ministry, Khorchide has stated that the AIC is to be a 'grassroots' project, and part of the Muslim Forum Austria, an organisation he founded.

- Yet this grassroots claim is belied by Khorchide's intimate relationship with the Austrian state.

He is Chairman of the Scientific Advisory Board of Documentation Center for Political Islam, one of the main proponents of the fight against so-called "political Islam" in Austria. He has also personally supported [Hijab](#)

[bans](#), and the [closure of mosques](#), and presented the Austrian Islam Conference as an institutional "solution-oriented-dialogue" platform that seeks to present recommendations for the political establishment on affairs pertaining to Muslims and Islam in Austria.

- It is therefore strongly believed that this ostensibly grassroots project could be [another initiative supported by the Austrian government](#) in order to control and discipline the Muslim community.

In fact during the press conference Khorchide promised to tackle the alleged 'imam issue' as part of the AIC. The 'imam issue', through which the government is leading an attack on foreign imams as being 'anti-democratic', was part of the government's agenda as declared during the "Vienna Forum".

Austrian Integration Fund publish new mosque study, comes as part of drive to problematise mosques as threat to national integration

- The Austrian Integration Fund ÖIF [published a study on mosques in Vienna](#).

The study sought to investigate whether mosque associations in Vienna promote the integration of their members or try to prevent integration, by primarily analysing mosque sermons.

Furthermore, the study tried to highlight whether or not mosques are building patriotic and emotional connections to Austria.

Islamophobia

- The study author Heiko Heinisch is affiliated with the Documentation Center on Political Islam, and was ousted as an expert witness from the investigation into Operation Luxor last year after being [declared biased by courts](#).
- The Austrian Integration Fund is under the umbrella of the Austrian Interior Ministry and has funded one of the studies conducted by notorious academic Lorenzo Vidino, used as ideological basis for the repressive Operation Luxor raids.

Furthermore the Fund has been platforming proponents of the term “political Islam”, and other figures involved in Austro-German Islamophobic networks like [Seyran Ates and Ahmed Mansour](#).

- The questions posed in the study indicate a clear attempt to problematise mosques as potential ‘fifth columns’ in Austria.

Therefore, both the study as well as the Austrian Integration Fund could be understood as instruments of the Austrian state's attempts to surveil, control and discipline the Muslim community in Austria.