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National Security & Counter-terrorism

Austria's Shift on Syrian Asylum Policies Amidst Bashar al-Assad's Fall

- Following the fall of Bashar al-Assad, [Austria plans to drastically change its asylum policies for Syrians](#), Around 7,300 open cases, including 1,146 family reunification applications, have been put on hold, leaving many Syrian refugees in limbo. Even existing asylum protections, initially granted for three years, are now subject to review, with potential revocation of conditions in Syria deemed safe.
- Interior Minister Gerhard Karner has instructed the development of a structured deportation program, signaling a clear pivot towards re-emigration. The FPÖ has amplified this rhetoric, demanding immediate revocation of asylum statuses, mass deportations, and a halt to further applications.
- These changes align with broader right-wing and islamophobic trends in Europe, using Assad's fall as a pretext to advance the re-emigration agenda. The timing of this move amid a budget crisis reveals the state's prioritization of cutting resources for marginalized communities, treating Syrian refugees as expendable.

DSN gives ÖBB Staff Counter Extremism Training

- [Austria's state security service \(DSN\) has partnered with ÖBB \(Austrian Federal Railways\) to train employees in recognizing signs of "radicalization"](#), with workshops focusing heavily on so-called "Islamist extremism". The initiative is a move towards securitizing workplaces and reinforcing Islamophobic stereotypes. The focus on vague indicators, such as changes in appearance or demands for prayer spaces, risks can encourage racial profiling and false reporting, disproportionately targeting Muslim communities.

Islamophobia

IGGÖ's Propose Imam Training Academy

- The Islamic Religious Community in Austria ([IGGÖ](#)) [has proposed the creation of an Austrian-based Imam training program](#) aimed at reducing dependence on foreign institutions and aligning Islamic education with Austria's social and cultural context. This initiative, announced during a conference in Vienna, includes potential partnerships with Austrian universities and envisions the establishment of a dedicated

Imam Academy.

- While the IGGÖ presents this as a groundbreaking step to professionalize and localize Imam training, the initiative raises concerns about its implications for the autonomy of Islamic communities. By centralizing the training of Imams within state-linked institutions and embedding it into Austria's academic framework, the program risks shaping and constraining the narratives permissible in mosques. This could enable significant state influence over religious discourse, aligning it with government-defined "acceptable" narratives under the guise of integration and security.
- The move mirrors broader efforts to create a so-called "Austrian Islam," a framework that prioritizes conformity to state narratives over preserving the authenticity of Muslim identities. By institutionalizing Imam training within Austria, the IGGÖ may facilitate state control over theological interpretations, effectively silencing voices and practices that diverge from politically sanctioned ideals.

National developments

Styria's New FPÖ and ÖVP Coalition promises Hijab bans and expansion of the fight against "Political Islam"

- The new [coalition government in Styria, led by FPÖ's Mario Kunasek and ÖVP's Melanie Khom](#), has presented a governing program characterized by restrictive immigration policies, cultural nationalism, and Islamophobic measures targeting Muslim communities under the guise of neutrality and security.
- Central to the agenda is the establishment of a Documentation Center for Political Islam in Styria, mirroring similar national initiatives. This center, institutionalizes the surveillance of Muslim communities and sets the ideological grounds for legal persecution of Muslim communities under the guise of fighting so called "political islam"
- A Hijab Ban in state administration explicitly targeting Muslim women, while allowing Christian symbols like crosses. Additionally, asylum reforms include the introduction of a Bezahlkarte to limit financial autonomy and a Security Office for Asylum Homes, reinforcing the narrative of asylum seekers as security threats.
- In education, German will be enforced as the sole language, even during breaks, marginalizing non-native speakers. Meanwhile, cultural nationalism is emphasized, prioritizing Styrian traditions and customs in public institutions, with celebrations like Christmas and Easter framed as essential cultural values.