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National Security & Counter-terrorism

ECJ Ruling Expands Police Access to Mobile Data

- [The European Court of Justice \(ECJ\) has ruled that police may access personal mobile phone data even in cases not involving serious crimes](#), provided there is authorization from a court or an independent administrative body. Additionally, the ruling requires that individuals whose data is accessed be informed of the retrieval. This decision arose from an Austrian case where police sought to extract data from a confiscated phone during a house search related to a minor cannabis offense, raising questions about the proportionality of such measures.
- While the ECJ stressed that the severity of a crime should influence proportionality, it rejected limiting data access solely to cases of serious crime, arguing that such restrictions could hinder investigative powers. However, this broadening of police authority raises critical concerns about privacy and the potential for misuse, particularly in politically sensitive situations. Activists and political dissidents, who often depend on digital tools for organization and communication, may face increased surveillance under the pretext of minor infractions. This risks transforming lawful dissent into a target for unwarranted state intrusion.

Increased efforts to securitize education system in Austria

- The recent “expert” discussion on threats and extremism in Austria, organized by the Society for National Defense and Security Policy and the Education Directorate of Salzburg, serves as a troubling sign of efforts to securitize the education system. The event sought to address national security concerns, focusing heavily on “extremism”, it raised alarm bells about the increasing integration of security measures into educational settings. High-ranking officials, including Generalmajor Peter Vorhofer and Sylvia Mayer, emphasized strategies to combat “extremism”, particularly through educational institutions.
- This framing of education as a battleground for national security risks criminalizing Muslim students. The focus on preventing extremism and fostering resilience within

schools are part of a broader trend of security policies that have increasingly targeted marginalized communities, particularly Muslims, under the guise of Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) programs. Such initiatives often lead to heightened surveillance and discrimination, as vague and politically charged definitions of "extremism" are used to justify intrusive measures. This approach not only undermines educational environments but also disproportionately affects Muslim students, subjecting them to unnecessary scrutiny and potentially leading to their marginalization and criminalization.

National Developments and Islamophobia

Amidst coalition talks ÖVP, SPÖ and NEOS push for law against "Political Islam"

- After Austria's national elections, the [ÖVP, SPÖ, and NEOS entered formal coalition negotiations](#) to form the next government. This move follows weeks of initial talks and comes after the decision to exclude the far-right FPÖ from any coalition.
- [Efforts to introduce a law banning "Political Islam," modeled after Austria's NS-Verbotsgesetz](#) (prohibition law against National Socialism) as part of coalition discussions, reflect a deeply troubling development in institutionalizing Islamophobia in Austria and sends a signal to the muslim community that this coalition is going to continue the islamophobic path the ÖVP paved in their previous governing term.
- Spearheaded by ÖVP politicians like Karl Mahrer and supported by the SPÖ and NEOS, the proposal claims to address so-called "political Islam" but is built on vague and islamophobic premises. Proponents, such as SPÖ-Burgenland, argue for its preventative impact, likening it to measures that have weakened neo-Nazi movements, *"Political Islam abuses a religion to establish a state and societal system under religious laws like Sharia, even through terror and violence."* This comparison is islamophobic, flawed and dangerous, as it compares a religion and its political expressions with Nazism.
- By proposing this ban, Austrian political elites are attempting to leverage a security discourse that frames political activism and solidarity with global Muslim causes—such as support for Palestine—as potentially subversive and dangerous. The proposal not only conflates Islam with extremism but also seeks to create a legal framework that could disproportionately target Muslim activists, political dissidents, and entire communities under the guise of national security. The very notion of criminalizing "Political Islam" reflects a deeper pattern of Islamophobia, where



Muslim identity itself becomes viewed as suspicious, divisive, or radical by the state.

- The intentional ambiguity allows for political and legal frameworks that can easily label any form of Muslim political activity, dissent, or solidarity as a threat. Operation Luxor, which saw the targeting and intimidation of Muslims under the pretext of combating "Political Islam," is a stark example of how such undefined terms are weaponized to silence and criminalize politically active Muslims. In this context, the call for a ban on Political Islam risks further marginalizing Muslim communities, stripping them of the ability to express political opinions, and reinforcing systemic Islamophobia in Austrian society.