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National Security & Counter-terrorism

Head of State Security advocates for more surveillance powers, including unrestricted access to WhatsApp and enhanced anti-espionage powers

- The chief of the Directorate for State Security and Intelligence (DSN), Omar Haijawi-Pirchner, is pushing for alarming and far-reaching legal powers to monitor extremists, specifically by [advocating for unrestricted access to messaging services like WhatsApp](#).

In an interview on the Ö1 program "Im Journal zu Gast," Haijawi-Pirchner reiterated his demand for greater access to these platforms, using the pretext of investigating Islamist extremism and right-wing extremism.

- Haijawi-Pirchner's claims of targeted access to specific extremists and preventing attacks are a mere smokescreen to justify intrusive surveillance measures. His vague assurances of not engaging in mass surveillance fail to alleviate concerns about unchecked government intrusion into individuals' privacy and civil liberties.
- Furthermore, his call for stricter laws for espionage cases is a thinly veiled attempt to extend the reach of the intelligence apparatus. By emphasising the need for enhanced penalties and legal provisions, Haijawi-Pirchner reveals his eagerness to wield greater control and surveillance capabilities.

Vienna implements counter-extremism workshops at school

- In 2021, the [Vice Mayor of Vienna](#) sparked controversy with his divisive vow to specifically target Muslim youth and children with PVE (Preventing Violent Extremism) measures following the ISIS-inspired attack in Vienna on 2nd November 2020.

Now, the [city of Vienna's pilot project aimed at preventing extremism in schools](#) has raised serious concerns regarding its pre-crime approach and its targeting of Muslims.

- The project, titled "Wir alle sind Wien" (We are all Vienna), intends to target children between the ages of 10 and 17 with workshops and discussions led by so-called "role models" on topics such as anti-Muslim racism, sexism, homophobia, and migration.
- Based on the study ["Prävention findet Stadt"](#) (Prevention Finds City) by Nicolas Stockhammer, which forms the basis of the initiative, the project seems questionable.

The use of social media influencers as campaign testimonials raises doubts about the project's substance and its ability to address the complex issues at hand. The lack of clarity on school selection criteria and the project's reliance on superficial measures risk perpetuating stereotypes and alienating the Muslim community.

- Initially, the project will be implemented at ten selected locations, avoiding those where incidents have already occurred - where training and workshops for teachers are considered more appropriate. The criteria for selecting the schools were not clearly defined in the article.
- After the project is monitored and evaluated, there are intentions to expand it further. The effectiveness of the project will be assessed through surveys and feedback from teachers and participants following the workshops.

National Security & Counter-terrorism



Austrian member of far-right group Feuerkrieg Division identified

- An Austrian member of a far-right neo-Nazi group, the "Feuerkrieg Division," has been identified by the DSN.
- In three house searches conducted in May, firearms, knives, and gas pistols were seized from the Austrian citizen. Additionally, items related to Nazi symbolism and storage devices containing relevant content were discovered.
- The authorities had been investigating the individual since 2020 when the group was dismantled. At that time, there were initial indications that one of the active chat participants might have been operating from Austria, according to the State Protection Agency.
- The suspect is accused of inciting right-wing terrorist attacks in other countries, disseminating bomb-making instructions and 3D-printed weapons, and providing training to other members on data encryption. A firearms ban has been imposed on the individual.
- The "Feuerkrieg Division" is an internationally-operating online group that primarily connects its members through encrypted Telegram channels. They share content glorifying the Nazi regime and promote acts of violence.
- It claimed to disband in 2020, and was proscribed as a terrorist group in the UK that year. The DSN has not verified an immediate threat to Austria from the group.

Islamophobia

New study by 'Islam Map' creator criticised for invasive questioning of Muslim students

- A study conducted by the University of Vienna, titled ["Effects of Islamic Religious Education in Austria."](#) has sparked criticism and concern among Muslim students and organisations.

Led by Ednan Aslan, who has been previously involved in controversial studies - such as the 'Islam Map' of Muslim institutions in Austria and controversial 'Kindergarten study' - the research aims to evaluate Islamic religious education in Austria through quantitative research methods.

- [The Muslimische Jugend \(MJÖ\)](#), a Muslim youth organisation, has criticised the study. They argue that the affected students were singled out as the only participants required to take part in the survey.

These students were taken out of regular classes and subject to statements such as "It is disgusting when homosexuals kiss" under external supervision, leading to feelings of discomfort and incomprehension.

- The MJÖ has called for an immediate halt to the study, claiming that it has [racist undertones and an inherently biased structure](#) that may have predetermined results.

They raised concerns about the stigmatising implementation of the study, which they believe has further marginalised Muslim students.

- Criticism has also been directed at the survey questions used in the study. In addition to knowledge-based questions about Islam, the wording of

certain questions appears designed to assess the attitudes of the participants.

These questions include determining who goes to hell, evaluating whether men are weak if they refrain from using violence, and rating statements such as "I am bothered by the sight of disabled people" or "If women wear miniskirts or revealing clothing in public, they are signalling sexual readiness."