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Operation Luxor case against two brothers terminated

- [The extensive investigations](#) into two Syrian-born brothers as part of Operation "Luxor," a counterterrorism initiative, have ultimately been terminated.

The brothers were suspected of involvement in establishing the Austrian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas.

- The investigations, spanning over three years, subjected the brothers, along with 80 other suspects and 26 organisations, to rigorous scrutiny.
- Despite the prolonged investigative efforts, the Higher Regional Court (OLG) Graz found that the prosecution failed to substantiate the allegations against the brothers.

The court's criticism of the investigation's prolonged duration underscores concerns about abuses of power and procedural irregularities within the Austria counterterrorism framework.

- The lack of concrete evidence linking the M. brothers to terrorist activities or criminal organisations is a damning indictment of the operation's credibility. It lays bare the inherent bias and prejudice within the investigative framework, which unfairly targets Muslim individuals under the pretext of national security.
- Moreover, the termination of the investigations serves as a stark reminder of the dangers posed by unchecked state power and the erosion of civil liberties in the name of counterterrorism.

Operation "Luxor" is not just an isolated incident but a symptom of a broader pattern of state-sanctioned Islamophobia that must be confronted and dismantled.

Legal proceedings against Farid Hafez arising from Operation Luxor finally dropped

- [Two peripheral elements of the terrorism prosecution](#) against Austrian academic Farid Hafez in Operation Luxor have now been definitively closed, putting an end to his legal ordeal initiated by the raids in 2021.
- In October 2023, the Higher Regional Court in Graz dismissed a case involving attempted coercion and incitement to perjury, highlighting the shaky foundation upon which these accusations were built.

The case stemmed from Farid Hafez's efforts to challenge what he believed was a defamatory statement made by an Islamic scholar in an online publication. The scholar alleged that Hafez had sworn allegiance to the Muslim Brotherhood years ago.

Hafez, represented by lawyer Leonhard Kregcjk, vehemently denied these claims and successfully pursued legal action for defamation through private prosecution.

- More recently, [the same court decided to dismiss the last remaining allegation of financial misconduct related to an aid organisation for war victims](#).

The closing of Hafez's case, while a relief for Hafez, does little to assuage concerns about the broader implications of Operation Luxor and the legal proceedings that have followed.

The fact that these accusations have been dispelled does not erase the shadow of suspicion cast over Hafez and others targeted in the raids.

The lack of substantial evidence and the apparent reliance on hearsay and conjecture raise serious questions about the motives behind these investigations and the broader context of state-led initiatives targeting perceived dissenters.

Lorenzo Vidino implicated in high-level UAE smear campaign against oil trader

- Hazim Nada, an American oil trader, has taken [legal action against the United Arab Emirates \(UAE\) and its ruler, Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, in a US court](#), alleging their direct involvement in financing a malicious "dark public relations" campaign.
- Nada's lawsuit contends that the UAE funnelled funds to a Swiss private intelligence firm, Alp Services, with the explicit purpose of tarnishing Nada's reputation and sabotaging his business through a concerted smear campaign - by insinuating links between the business and the Muslim Brotherhood.

Seeking a staggering \$2.77 billion in damages, Nada accuses the UAE of masterminding a calculated disinformation scheme that ultimately led to the collapse of his commodities trading firm, Lord Energy.

- Notably, [the lawsuit implicates academic Lorenzo Vidino](#) in the orchestration of these smear campaigns.

Vidino's role in providing academic legitimacy to these reprehensible tactics is highlighted, underscoring the complicity of individuals in propagating Islamophobic agendas.

- Furthermore, Vidino's association with the Austrian government's Documentation Center Political Islam and the violent Operation Luxor Raids highlights how the 'counter-terror' industry is intimately connected to repressive state powers internationally.

The fact that both the alleged UAE smear campaign and Austria's Operation Luxor relied on allegations of association with the Muslim Brotherhood is also telling.

Education ministry gets increased budget for CVE workshops at schools

- The Austrian government's response to the October 7th operation against Israel amounts to an opportunistic move to expand its Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) apparatus.

[By allocating additional budget for workshops in schools under the guise of combating 'extremism'](#), Education Minister Martin Polaschek is effectively leveraging the ongoing Genocide against Palestinians to justify an increase in state surveillance and intervention.

- The government's approach seems disproportionately focused on controlling the narrative on Israel and criminalising expressions of pro-Palestinian solidarity.

By collaborating with the Ministry of the Interior, the DSN and deploying police officers to schools, there is a clear agenda to monitor and potentially suppress dissenting voices.

- In essence, the government's response to the October 7th attack appears to be about consolidating power and controlling public discourse.

By exploiting the ongoing genocide to expand its CVE apparatus and target a wider audience, particularly the youth, the Austrian state risks infringing on fundamental rights and perpetuating the state narrative on Israel and Palestine.

Vienna commences new counter-extremism project as a response to October 7th

- Vice Mayor of Vienna Christoph Wiederkehrer (of the NEOS party) [introduced yet another CVE project, the new "Democracy Office" in Vienna](#), which signals a significant expansion of the counter-extremism apparatus.

It also raises concerns about its potential use as a tool for surveillance and control of Muslim

dissidents and pro-Palestinian voices.

- Emerging in response to the Al-Aqsa Flood and subsequent demonstrations, this initiative appears to target individuals or groups perceived as sympathetic to causes deemed 'extremist' by authorities.
- The Office's mandate includes supporting extracurricular activities in social and educational institutions. The emphasis on monitoring social media channels and distributing materials on Israel's history suggests a broader agenda of controlling the narrative on the Palestinian cause.
- The operational activities will commence in February. The annual budget currently amounts to 428,000 euros.