



WORKING SESSION 9:

In this session I want to focus on the discussions about the so called “islamic” kindergartens in Austria. Two years ago, the integration ministry commissioned a professor to conduct a study about Islamic kindergartens. Recently a popular Austrian newspaper (“FALTER”) leaked that the result of the study had come about by significant changes. Neutral and positive statements which had been part of the study were deleted and replaced with the opposite wording. As FALTER pointed out, these changes were carried out by public officials working in the integration ministry. This clearly pointed out that islamophobia has reached the very top and is even supported by the Austrian Government. At a public minister Kurz said at an event that he wants to shut down all Islamic kindergartens by setting up some “Quality criteria’ for childcare workers to improve the standards of language proficiency. These quality criteria are applied only to Islamic kindergartens and not to other denominations.

He didn’t make a secret out of his intention. It is obvious that these kindergartens should fail to meet the requirements for state benefits. Kurz himself said that, “This is the easiest way in terms of the law.” and he believes that this would ensure integration. After all, he argues that Islamic kindergartens encourage “parallel societies”.

Sebastian Kurz and others of his kind, successfully agitate against the Muslim minority in his country. At the same time he ignores the rise of hate crimes, such as an attack on a Muslim kindergarten in the year of 2014. While kids are being attacked on the streets whenever they attend a school trip, populism moves on.

These examples show that Muslims have become a main target of hate in this country and that a new level of anti-Muslim sentiments and islamophobia has been reached.