

2011 OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting

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Hate Crimes / Islamophobia in Austria,

„Muslims are becoming target of numerous hate attacks“

Speech of Öztürk Yavuz, Spokesman of WIAR / Innsbruck – Austria

In recent years we can observe a dramatic increase of islamophobic motivated attacks against Muslim people, organizations, mosques and other buildings in Austria. When our organization first started to address the issue of the rising Islamophobic tendencies in Austria in 2007, we were ridiculed for our statements, because no one could believe that a degressive development like this was going on in Austria, which is more known as a leading democracy in the heart of Europe.

After the terror attacks of 11.9. and the following war campaigns of the US lead alliance against Alkaida terrorists, the general opinion of many Austrians towards muslims has changed very quickly to the worse. In the collective sense of many Austrian people this was a collective guilt of all muslims, because driven by the alliance members national mass media machinery this was presented also as an attack to the western values. So it was the collective guilt of all muslims including secular ones, and not the guilt of single individual terrorists. This argumentation chain has been abused by right party politicians to justify hate speeches and campaigns against the Muslim community living in Austria. Combined with massive anti Islamic paroles and election campaigns over the last decade, together with a collective neglecting of this development by the responsible politicians and the mass media responsible, we have now a situation in Austria, where the number of islamophobia driven hate attacks against muslim people has doubled within the last few years.

Our claims and concerns over the growing number of attacks against the Muslim community in Austria is now fully constated by the data presented by the Austrian

Ministry of the Interior in this summer. (full data available at [www.bmi.gov.at/cms/bmiverfassungsschutz](http://www.bmi.gov.at/cms/bmiverfassungsschutz;);))

In 2008 there have been less than 400 attacks against migrants and Muslim people, or buildings. In 2009 the number of registered attacks increased to 453 cases, and in 2010 the police noticed 580 attacks. These figures are clear and the number of attacks is constantly increasing, which gives concern to many Muslim people living in Austria.

- Nov.2010 Spraying attack with anti Islamic parols to the mosque of Schwaz / Tyrol, small damage of property occurred,
- 16.1.2011 Arson attack to the mosque in Kufstein / Tyrol: fire did not spill over to the apartment of the sleeping imam, small damage of property occurred.
- Dec.2010 Arson attack to a Tunisian culture and Islamic organisation in Vienna, no injured, damage of property occurred,
- 23.07.2011 a bloody slaughtered pork was put into a mosque in Vorarlberg, together with anti Islamic parols

As these examples should illustrate, very often the attacks seem to be not very brutal and dramatic. Most times small damage to the property and anti Islamic parols are the only outcome of the registered hate attacks. But after each attack, the muslim people remember the brutal arson attacks in Belgium and Germany with many deaths and destroyed families. Fortunately, until yet in Austria no persons have been killed by the numerous attacks. But the question here is, how many muslims must die or get injured, before the responsible politicians and media responsible are undertaking effective measures against the increasing islamophobia and hate attacks against the Muslim community in Austria.

Therefore we address the Austrian ministry for interior and the other responsible state authorities to take the following measures, to protect the lives and property of the Muslims living in Austria:

1. Installation of a permanent monitoring and reporting platform under the ministry of interior, which is also responsible for the publishing and distribution of the outcomes, increasing the awareness in the public opinion.
2. Higher Security measures for the Islamic mosques, because at the moment there are no visible measures at all. Very often mosques lie outside the city centres and therefore are afield, because local authorities bann them to regions where they do not disturb. This makes them more vulnerable to such attacks.
3. Effective Measures against public hate paroles ant anti Islamic hate speeches before and during election campaigns.
4. To provide tools and a training of elementary school teachers, so that they can easilly adopt pedagogical methods in their classes to raise awareness of Islamophobia.
5. A harder punishment and prosecution of people involved in hate attacks against islamic centers and people, to avoid the increasing number of attacks.