

## **Concerning Increase in Reports of Anti-Muslim Racism Dokustelle Austria warns of Societal Division**

The Documentation and Counselling Centre Islamophobia and Anti-Muslim Racism (Dokustelle Austria) explicitly draws attention to the rise in racism, the increasing risk of social division and the instrumentalization of suffering regarding current global and related local events.

Since October 2023, the Dokustelle Austria has recorded more cases than in the months of January to September this year combined. This significant increase reflects worrying trends and the realities of life for Muslims in Austria.

Dokustelle Austria has received numerous reports occurring in **public spaces**, such as graffiti and defacement of residential complexes and Muslim institutions, including calls for the murder of Muslims. Dokustelle Austria, furthermore, receives reports of verbal and non-verbal assaults. Attacks on visible Muslim women are particularly frequent, for example, they are told to “go back to where they came from.”

From the **field of education**, Dokustelle Austria receives reports from students and parents. For example, children and youth are asked by school staff to position themselves in a certain way on current political events.

Dokustelle Austria also registers increasing trends of **repression** – including intimidating or generalising statements by politicians and increased official inspections of Muslim institutions and associations. In addition, the Dokustelle Austria is informed about the silencing of public figures who show solidarity with those affected.

In some cases, generalised suspicions of Muslims are normalised in **Austrian media coverage**. A particular increase can be seen on **social media**, especially in online comments that equate Muslims with violence and terror. Muslims are dehumanised, subjected to animal comparisons that violate their human dignity and portrayed as “ready to murder.” Islam and therefore Muslims are labelled as “inherently incapable of peacefulness”. On the one hand, these cases attribute to Muslims the sole responsibility for anti-Semitism in Austria in a generalised racist manner. On the other hand, Dokustelle Austria receives online comments in which anti-Muslim racist and anti-Semitic narratives are reproduced and disseminated.

Further, statements by politicians and media coverage directly influence the everyday lives of those affected in Austria. Anti-Muslim racist attacks and the hostile

climate place a heavy burden on Muslim communities and individuals as well as on people who are perceived as Muslim.

The Dokustelle Austria supports those affected and offers ongoing psychosocial and legal counselling, especially in challenging times like these. As the only counselling centre in Austria with years of special expertise in working with anti-Muslim racism, the counselling team supports clients and partners by raising awareness in solidarity, in contacts with clients, partners, and throughout society.

It is currently particularly important that politicians take responsibility. To offer support to all people in Austria, it is necessary to refrain from reproducing discrimination, to set an example in terms of minimising division and to ensure a fair distribution of resources. It must be ensured that communities are not left alone with fear, worries and discriminatory narratives.

The team at Dokustelle Austria also appeals to civil society actors – particularly in the areas of anti-discrimination, human rights, fair education, and social work – as well as to public figures and to all individuals in society to counteract all forms of discrimination and societal division. With social solidarity for a society free from systematic oppression and discrimination!