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## **AUSTRIA: FAR-RIGHT POLITICIAN THREATENS TV MODERATOR**

- 25.04.2019

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Deutsche Welle (25 April 2019)

FPÖ General Secretary Harald Vilimsky told ORF moderator Armin Wolf that he could face "consequences" in a recent television appearance. Wolf had compared a flyer from an FPÖ youth wing to anti-Semitic Nazi propaganda.

Opposition lawmakers in Austria were outraged on Wednesday by the appearance of Harald Vilimsky, general secretary of the far-right Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ), on public broadcaster Österreichischer Rundfunk (ORF) where he threatened the moderator.

Vilimsky, an FPÖ candidate for the European Parliament, said during an interview on Tuesday with ORF moderator Armin Wolf that he could face "consequences" after Wolf questioned the far-right politician about a cartoon poster of the FPÖ youth wing in the southwestern state of Styria.

### **Controversial party poster**

In the interview on ORF channel ZiB2, Wolf first questioned Vilimsky over the "rat poem" by the deputy mayor of Braunau am Inn, Adolf Hitler's home town, which Austrian Prime Minister Sebastian Kurz deemed "racist." The mayor has since resigned over the poem.

Wolf then showed a cartoon flyer of the FPÖ youth league in Styria, which depicted a blonde couple in a traditional costume surrounded by sneering gray figures with oversized noses accompanied by the slogan "tradition beats migration." Wolf then asked Vilimsky how this depiction of migrants differed from the anti-Semitic depiction of Jews in the Nazi paper Der Stürmer (The Striker).

Vilimsky took exception to the comparison. "To draw this parallel, Mr. Wolf, is the last straw. Taking a picture of Der Stürmer, juxtaposing it with a youth poster and to suggest a link to national socialism — that is something that cannot go without consequences."

### **Africa's very own North Korea: Eritrea**

Eritrea ranks second-last in the World Press Freedom Index. Reports from the disastrous state of affairs in Eritrea are rare, and many journalists have been forced to leave the country. Radio Erena is the only one to broadcast independent information to the people of Eritrea — from Paris.

The ORF editorial board understood the FPÖ general secretary's statement as a "personal threat to ZIB2 presenter Armin Wolf."

"The ORF editorial board strongly condemns this attempt of personal intimidation," ORF said, adding that a political leader had never before made such a threat to a moderator.

However, Norbert Steger, a former FPÖ vice-chancellor and the current chairman of the ORF foundation board, described the comparison of the cartoon flyer and Der Stürmer as outrageous, saying it is "perverse that one always compares such lukewarm fans with Nazis." He also suggested that Wolf should run for the Social Democrats.

Austria's Social Democrats said that Vilimsky's remarks were another worrying step towards an illiberal democracy, media policy spokesman Thomas Drozda said.

### **FPÖ and ORF**

The FPÖ, a junior partner in Austria's coalition government, has feuded with ORF in the past, accusing the public broadcaster of left-wing bias.

The far-right party has long sought to do away with the licensing fee that funds the broadcaster. Last year, Steger threatened to dismiss one-third of ORF's foreign correspondents over displeasure with the broadcaster's reporting.

The row was listed as a reason why Austria fell five spots to 16th in the Reporters Without Borders' Global Press Freedom Index.

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