

Austrian Mauthausen Committee

www.mkoe.at

Is the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ) respecting human rights? Are extreme right-wing statements and actions of politicians of the Freedom Party only rare individual cases? Or do they appear permanently?

Is the FPÖ capable of governing? Or does everything suggest that as a governing party with extreme right activities it would cause severe damages?

In a concise and clear manner, the Austrian Mauthausen Committee displays around 60 relevant cases of the most recent past. These cases are very well documented and were always reported by the media.

This collection is far from complete, it could even include much more relevant cases for the same period of time. Nevertheless, it gives clear answers to the questions raised above.

February 2013:

Individual case 1

FPÖ municipal councillor Fabian Wetter from Franking is posting a photo on Facebook, which shows the German Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel with the Star of David and the insulting remark "traitor to the country". As soon as this is known to the public, he resigns from the FPÖ.

Individual case 2

In 2002, FPÖ municipal executive board member Michael Gruber from Aurolzmünster had insulted the director of the Documentation Centre of Austrian Resistance (DÖW) with using the word "Judenschwein" (Jewpig) and threatened to kill him. For this reason, Gruber has been sentenced because of National Socialist reactivation and dangerous threat to a conditional prison term of 18 months. When this gets known to the public, he resigns from the FPÖ.

January 2014:

Individual case 4

The previously convicted Michael Gruber from Aurolzmünster who had been sentenced because of National Socialist reactivation and dangerous threat, and who resigned from the FPÖ a year ago, is part of the list of candidates of Freedom Party employees for the Chamber of Labour elections in Upper Austria. The regional chairman of the Freedom Party employees, Manfred Pühringer, calls this an "error".

Individual case 5

The regional chairman of the Freedom Party employees in Upper Austria, Manfred Pühringer, is posting an insult on Facebook directed to a municipal councillor of the SPÖ with Bosnian Serb roots (who had shortly before been a victim of an assassination), by calling him "hand granates Yugo".

February 2014:

Individual case 6

In the federal state parliament, the FPÖ Carinthia is the only party that rejects the erection of a memorial for the victims of the Nazis at the former Gestapo headquarters in Klagenfurt.

Individual case 7

The weekly paper "Zur Zeit", which is edited by the right-wing populist EU member of parliament Andreas Mölzer and redacted by the Freedom Party member of the national parliament Wendelin Mölzer, is mocking the social democratic resistance fighter Richard Bernaschek, who had been murdered by the SS, with stating that he had been "overtaken by the grim reaper" in Mauthausen.

March 2014:

Individual case 8

The German daily newspaper "Süddeutsche Zeitung" reveals that during a panel discussion right-wing populist EU member of parliament Andreas Mölzer compared the European Union with the "Third Reich" and called it a "Negro conglomerate".

April 2014:

Individual case 9

When it gets known to the public that the right-wing populist EU member of parliament Andreas Mölzer also attacked the Austrian national soccer team member David Alaba with racist statements, he is forced to resign.

June 2014:

Individual case 10

The FPÖ municipal councillor and local party chairman for Groß-Enzersdorf, Rudolf Fischer, disseminates racist propaganda on Facebook. He is posting: "Human beings are like bananas... nobody wants the black!"

Individual case 11

The provincial party secretary of the FPÖ Lower Austria and member of the national parliament Christian Hafenecker dismisses those who criticise racist propaganda as being "moralizers".

September 2014:

Individual case 12

The deputy federal party chairman Johann Gudenus expresses in a meeting of right-wing conservative and extreme right-wing politicians in Moscow a warning against a “lobby of homosexuals”, which may be extremely powerful with having its own newspapers and TV stations. The goal of this lobby would be to reach the equality of homosexuals. “It is hard to imagine where this all is going lead,” says Gudenus.

January 2015:

Individual case 16

The local FPÖ party chairman of Bad Aussee, Hans Wunner, has to resign when it gets known to the public that he is also actively working for the neo-Nazi “European Action” of Holocaust denier Bernhard Schaub.

Individual case 17

The FPÖ regional party chairman for Vorarlberg, Dieter Egger, created an uproar with an anti-Semitic statement: It should be clear to the director of the Jewish Museum in Hohenems, Hanno Loewy, “that decisions are made in the town hall and not in the Jewish quarter”.

Individual case 18

During its city council elections, the FPÖ Heidenreichstein is agitating against asylum seekers, claiming that they had “abused a prostitute” so that she had to be “brought to the hospital”. According to the county police commander, this claim is “simply wrong”.

March 2015:

Individual case 19

FPÖ Member of the national parliament Barbara Rosenkranz is listed among the speakers of the extreme right German magazine “Zuerst!”. Among the speakers, there is also the Russian right-wing extremist Alexander Dugin, as well as the German revisionist of history Walter Post, who denies the war guilt of Hitler’s Germany.

Individual case 20

The deputy federal party chairman of the FPÖ Johann Gudenus denies of having agreed to take part at a European neo Nazi meeting in St. Petersburg. Only when the APA publishes his own letter as a proof, he claims of having had “memory gaps” and says that shortly after his acceptance he had cancelled the commitment.

April 2015:

Individual case 21

The FPÖ city party chairman of Eisenstadt, Géza Molnár, is insulting the ÖVP because of a Public Viewing for the Eurovisions Song Contest by stating that the party would have a “degenerate soul”, because it is making “a penetrating parade of queers to a major event in the city of Haydn”.

June 2015:

Individual case 23

The FPÖ deputy district leader of Vienna-Ottakring, Christian Hein, is thanking the violent neo Nazi gang “Unsterblich” on Facebook for having supported his soccer team.

Individual case 24

The FPÖ federal party chairman Heinz-Christian Strache uses the amok drive in Graz of a mentally ill person for agitation: “The perpetrator is from Bosnia. A religiously motivated attack cannot be excluded.” This attempt to use a person’s afflictions to score political points sparked several outraged reactions.

Individual case 25

The Ring of Freedom Youth (the youth wing of the FPÖ) Burgenland is organising an event together with the extreme right “Identitarians” in Eisenstadt. The federal state chairman of the Freedom Youth, Werner Wassicek, emphasises that he is looking forward to invite “the ‘Identitarians’ to a red-blue Burgenland”.

July 2015:

Individual case 26

The FPÖ delegate to the county parliament of Tyrol, Hildegard Schwaiger, is forced to resign when it gets known to the public that she is the administrator of the racist Facebook-Group “Stop the asylum flood - also in Tyrol”.

August 2015:

Individual case 27

The FPÖ municipal councillor, Markus Ripfl, from Orth an der Donau is insulting the SPÖ, ÖVP and the Green Party on Facebook as being a “trio of betrayers of the nation”. In the Nazi era, the term „betraye of the nation“ (Volksverräter) was used for enemies of the regime. Ripfl had already attracted attention by using right-wing extremist symbols, such as the Kühnen salute (a variation of the Hitler salute) and the Celtic cross.

Individual case 28

Secretary General of the FPÖ, Herbert Kickl, criticised the European Convention on Human Rights, and stated that it would create a “gateway for illegal mass immigration” and should be changed or replaced for that reason. Minister of Justice, Wolfgang Brandstetter, replied that whoever questions

the European Convention on Human Rights is acting outside the constitutional arch and would be a “gravedigger of the Western World”.

Individual case 30

FPÖ municipal councillor candidate Ralph Schäfer from Wels gets known to the public as the founder of a “vigilant group”. With this self-declared “vigilant group”, he would like to combat “burglar gangs from abroad”. It also gets known to the public that Schäfer glorified Hitler’s deputy Rudolf Heß as “martyr” and thus had to stand trial because of National Socialist reactivation. The process ended in an alternative measure.

Individual case 31

On the FPÖ affiliated website „unzensuriert.at“, an anonymous neo Nazi is insulting the director of the Jewish Museum Vienna, Danielle Spera, and the historian Oliver Rathkolb with the Nazi term “Volksschädlinge” (parasites to the nation). The website operators do not even remove this posting after the Austrian daily newspaper “Kurier” reported about it.

October 2015:

Individual case 32

The chairwoman of the FPÖ parliamentary group Sabina Kracher is writing on Facebook about refugees: “To many parasites are actually killing the host!” Even though city party chairman of the FPÖ, Wolfgang Mayer, has no problems with this comparison, Kracher resigns a few days later.

Individual case 33

FPÖ member of the national parliament Susanne Winter likes an anti-Semitic posting on Facebook, which is directed against „rich Zionist Jews“. With public criticism getting stronger and stronger, the FPÖ excludes Winter from its party. Nevertheless, she remains in the National Council.

Individual case 41

FPÖ treasurer from Zams, Patrick Oberprantacher, is attaching a quote to a picture of his federal party chairman Heinz-Christian Strache, which was used by the Nazi propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels: “Now, people rise up, and let the storm break loose!”

April 2016:

Individual case 42

The FPÖ municipal councillor Markus Ripfl from Orth an der Donau, who is also the chairman of the FPÖ student ring at the University of Vienna and Member of the extreme right student fraternity “Olympia”, is the person responsible for the invitation of Hungarian neo Nazis. The event of the “Olympia” is called “Revolution in Hungary – a role model for Austria?”

February 2016:

Individual case 40

FPÖ member of the national parliament Wolfgang Zanger is one of the speakers at a demonstration against refugees of the extreme right-wing "Identitarians" in Judenburg.

Individual case 43

The Viennese FPÖ city councillor Anton Mahdalik equates the followers of his party to the persecuted and victims of the Nazi regime.

June 2016:

Individual case 44

The FPÖ Vienna refuses to name a school after the Nazi victim Friedrich Zawrel. As a child, Zawrel had survived the killing machinery of the Nazis in the euthanasia institution "Am Spiegelgrund". Municipal councillor Dietrich Kops and FPÖ municipal councillor Werner Grebner are insulting the deceased by calling him a "criminal".

Individual case 45

With the motto "Patriotic Spring", the FPÖ invites representatives of several extreme right-wing parties from other countries of the EU – among them Marine Le Pen from the French Front National – into the FPÖ's parliamentary club, taking the 1st anniversary of the existence of the EP parliamentary group "Europe of Nations and Freedom" (of which the FPÖ is a part, together with the other parties) as an occasion.

September 2016:

Individual case 47

Elmar Podgorschek, FPÖ member of the Upper Austrian country council, agitates on Facebook against refugees. Among others, he claims that the country's crime rate is exploding. The police disagrees: the number of crimes had declined. Podgorschek does not want to accept this fact and states that in his view "civil war is pre-programmed".

October 2016:

Individual case 48

At a folk festival, municipal councillor Andreas Lehner from Kremsmünster, insults the owner of a kebab stand in a racist way and smashes a window of the booth. Afterwards, he hurts an intervening police officer. When this gets known to the public, Lehner resigns and makes his FPÖ membership dormant. Later, he was sentenced to a conditional imprisonment of six months.

Individual case 49

FPÖ Secretary General Herbert Kickl speaks at the extreme right-wing congress “Defenders of Europe” in Linz, which is target of broad international protests. Organisers of the congress are the extreme right-wing fraternity “Arminia Czernowitz”, whose most prominent members are the deputy mayor of Linz from the FPÖ party, and Detlef Wimmer, the FPÖ party leader of the city.

November 2016:

Individual case 50

Manfred Haimbuchner, the FPÖ deputy federal state chairman of Upper Austria, honours the NSDAP politician and SS brigade leader Anton Reinthaller in a speech. In 1950, Reinthaller was sentenced to three years imprisonment for high treason, and in 1956, he became the first federal party chairman of the FPÖ.

December 2016:

Individual case 51

An FPÖ delegation travels to Moscow to conclude a “working agreement” with the party of Russian President Vladimir Putin. The delegation includes among others FPÖ federal party chairman Heinz-Christian Strache, the third president of the National Council Norbert Hofer, the deputy federal party chairman of the FPÖ Johann Gudenus and Stefan Magnet. In the past, Magnet was an activist of the extreme right-wing “Bund Freier Jugend” (Association of Freedomite Youth).

January 2017:

Individual case 52

FPÖ municipal councillor Andreas Freis from Aschach an der Steyr is insulting on Facebook the new Federal President Alexander Van der Bellen and his wife in an extremely aggressive manner. With regards to the Green Party, Freis writes that he would have loved to “strangle those idiots”. He suggests that a female journalist should be raped. When this gets known to the public, Freis resigns and makes his FPÖ membership dormant.

March 2017:

Individual case 53

FPÖ member of the national parliament Roman Haider enforces the termination of a lecture given by the extremism expert Thomas Rammerstorfer at a secondary school in Linz, of which also Haider's son is a student. Rammerstorfer had mentioned the FPÖ in the context of right-wing fraternities. The director of the school reports of massive threats by the liberal politician. Later on, the Province School Board comes to the conclusion that the termination was actually not admissible.

Individual case 54

The FPÖ Upper Austria has set up a “reporting office” on its website: It calls upon students to denounce teachers who express themselves critically about the FPÖ.

April 2017:

Individual case 55

Franz Schardinger, member of the FPÖ district party leadership of Imst, congratulates Adolf Hitler on his birthday:

“Happy Birthday, Adolf!” After the Green Member of the national parliament, Harald Walser, informed the public about it, the FPÖ excluded Schardinger. How the people inside the party are really thinking about this matter, has been revealed by Anneliese K. on Facebook: “Franz we accept and we love you, FPÖ Imst...” Franz Schardinger has already attracted attention by posting torture and murder fantasies.

Individual case 56

The FPÖ city councillor of Linz, Markus Hein, announced a new edition of the extreme right-wing congress “Defenders of Europe” at the end of September in the Redoutensäle in Linz. Like his city party chairman Detlef Wimmer, Hein is also a member of the extreme right-wing fraternity “Arminia Czernowitz”. Later, the Congress will be postponed to March 2018, probably due to the National Elections in October.

June 2017:

Individual case 58

FPÖ federal party chief Heinz-Christian Strache calls for a restriction of human rights in order to combat terror effectively. Strache refers to a statement by conservative British Prime Minister Theresa May.

July 2017:

Individual case 59

It gets known to the public that FPÖ member of the national parliament Johannes Hübner gave a speech at the 2016 annual convention of the extreme right-wing “Gesellschaft für Freie Publizistik” (Society for Open Journalism). Hübner, who is also the foreign policy spokesman of his party, said about the creator of the Austrian constitution: “Hans Kelsen - actually Hans Kohn, but he called himself Kelsen.” This anti-Semitic reference goes back to the leading Nazi legal practitioner Carl Schmitt. After massive protests, Hübner declined another candidature.

Only individual cases, as the FPÖ and their trivialisers are claiming? Yes, they are individual cases. But not rare or untypical. Extreme right statements and actions do happen in the FPÖ permanently and at all levels.

Which conclusions can we draw from these reported cases?

» The FPÖ wants to restrict human rights. Federal Party Leader Heinz-Christian Strache as well as secretary general Herbert Kickl have explicitly declared that.

» The FPÖ is insulting, mocking and slandering different-minded people. The party deliberately ignores the limits of democratic discussion and does not even stop to do so with regards to the deceased, like Nazi victim Friedrich Zawrel.

» The FPÖ is taking action against the freedom of opinion. Most recent proofs can be found in the forced termination of a lecture at school and the establishment of a “reporting office” for denunciations of politically undesirable teachers.

» The FPÖ agitates in a very vicious way against refugees and minorities. Racism is the order of the day. They deliberately stir up prejudices and disseminate enemy images. Anti-Semitism also resurfaces over and over again.

» The FPÖ is working closely with right-wing extremist forces in Austria and abroad, as well as with the authoritarian Putin regime in Russia.

» The FPÖ shows time and again a close proximity to the Nazi ideology.

These anti-democratic machinations in the FPÖ only have consequences, when they become known to the public, and if the party leadership is afraid of disadvantages. It is doubtful if the proclaimed resignations can really be taken seriously. One case shows that a previously convicted neo Nazi after his resignation appeared again on the list of FPÖ candidates.

During the last month, there have been intensive debates about a possible participation of the FPÖ in the government. Deputy federal party chairman of the FPÖ, Johann Gudenus, who’s fraternity name is “Wotan”, summed it up, to where such a participation could lead:

“If HC Strache would be Federal Chancellor, then, if required, the watchword might also be:

‘Cudgel, out of the Sack!’”

Acknowledgement

The Austrian Mauthausen Committee would like to thank several personalities and institutions for their intensive support with the research for this information leaflet, especially the Documentation Centre of Austrian Resistance (DÖW)

Editorial deadline: August 10, 2017

IMPRINT:

Media owner: Austrian Mauthausen Committee, 1020 Vienna

Homepage: www.mkoe.at

e-mail: info@mkoe.at

ZVR: 545896703