



### Austria:

#### **AKP is already beginning election campaigns in Turkish communities**

Although the next parliamentary and presidential elections will not take place in Turkey until the middle of next year, the ruling AKP and thus President Erdogan already seem to be beginning to campaign the European diaspora. The ongoing economic and financial crisis on the Bosphorus, together with the Russian invasion of Ukraine are reasons why the party can no longer be sure of having a broad majority behind it in Turkey.

Therefore, the AKP sister organization in Austria organized a multi-day promotional tour of high-ranking representatives of the Erdogan party.



AKP deputies together with members of the government visited Turkish clubs, shops and

educational institutions in Vienna. The visit to "Maarif" in Vienna's Ottakring district, for example, shows the effort to ensure a lasting influence on the Turkish community.

The Ltd. is registered as a private tutoring facility, the real activity seems to be more in the religious-political area: the sole shareholder is Maarif Foundation, based in Istanbul, which was founded by the Turkish government to contain the Gülen movement.

"Our foundation passes on the knowledge stemming from the tradition of science and wisdom of Anatolia to young people all over the world. In this way, it contributes to raising

virtuous and qualified generations," President Erdogan said of the foundation.

According to research by Austrian media, Maarif Austria is headed by Bülbül Ersoy, a former official of the Islamische Föderation (IF), the regional offshoot of the Islamic Community Milli Görüs (IGMG). A meeting at the Vienna IF headquarters in the summer of 2021 is documented, at which Ersoy, Yusuf Yildiz from the Turkish Embassy and IF Education Officer Ali Kaya exchanged views "about the education of Austrian Turks". The Turkish Islamic Union (Atib), which like Milli Görüs only claims to represent religious interests, also appears in Maarif's network.

The success in the last national elections in Turkey was not insignificantly achieved by AKP supporters from abroad, especially from Germany, France, Scandinavia and Austria. The Turkish diaspora could thus be crucial for the political survival of Erdogan and his party.

### Turkey:

#### **New Turkish policy against the Muslim Brotherhood after Erdogan's visit to the Persian Gulf**

The announcement of the closure of the Muslim Brotherhood's "Mekameleen" channel in Turkey and the withdrawal of the broadcasting license show the Erdogan government's attempt to improve relations with Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates in the long term.

Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated television stations operating were part of Ankara's propaganda arsenal against Egypt and the Arab Gulf States. As of 2018, Ankara also used media politics to attack and pressure Saudi Arabia, trying to use the case of

murdered journalist Jamal Khashoggi to its advantage.



Ankara is now striving for reconciliation with Cairo, Riyadh and Abu Dhabi, also driven by the ongoing economic and

financial crisis in the country. This probably also included the publicly noticeable distancing from the Muslim Brotherhood.

Erdogan is now trying to further strengthen ties not only with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates but also with Egypt, even if it means further undermining the Muslim Brotherhood's regional propaganda operations.

In March, Ankara had already asked a Muslim Brotherhood ideologue, Yasser Al-Omda, to leave the country after he broadcast statements on TV criticizing Cairo's policies and calling for a "people's revolution" in Egypt.

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## **Human rights activist Kavala sentenced to life imprisonment**

A Turkish court has sentenced human rights activist Osman Kavala to life in prison for supporting the 2013 mass protests. The court found the 64-year-old entrepreneur and philanthropist guilty of attempting to overthrow the government and ruled out the possibility of parole. Seven other defendants were sentenced to up to 18 years in prison.

In his final statement, Kavala once again denied the charges. The allegations against him are not plausible. All he did was bring pastries and face masks to the protesters. It is an irretrievable loss for him that he has

already spent four and a half years in prison. "My only consolation is the possibility that my experience will contribute to a better understanding of the serious problems facing the judiciary," he said. Amnesty International criticized the conviction as "absolutely arbitrary". Kavala's lawyers said they would appeal.

Kavala was connected via video and has been in prison for more than four years



without a sentence. In 2020 he was acquitted of the charges in connection with the protests around Gezipark in Istanbul. However, he was immediately arrested again on other charges. The acquittal was later overturned.

The European Court of Human Rights ruled in 2019 that Kavala was being unjustly imprisoned in order to silence him and other human rights activists. The charges against him are not supported by evidence. Turkey argues Kavala's continued detention is based on allegations related to the 2016 coup attempt.

## **Council of Europe**

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### **President of the Parliamentary Assembly condemns verdict against Kavala**

In response to Osman Kavala's increased life sentence, Tiny Kox, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), issued the following statement:

"I am deeply disappointed by the life sentence that was handed down to Osman

Kavala by a court in Istanbul yesterday. The fact that he has spent almost five years in pre-trial detention and has now been sentenced to life imprisonment following a trial that was found to violate the European Convention on Human Rights is shocking.



I recall that the failure to execute the Strasbourg Court's judgment in the Osman Kavala case prompted the Committee

of Ministers of the Council of Europe to refer the case to the European Court of Human Rights under Article 46(4) of the Convention.

Mr. Kavala should be released without further delay."

In its decision of December 2019, the European Court of Human Rights already found that Osman Kavala's arrest and pre-trial detention took place without evidence of a reasonable suspicion that he had committed a criminal offense (breach of Article 5 § 1 of the Convention) and that it also had another purpose, namely to silence him and to dissuade other human rights defenders (a violation of Article 18 read in conjunction with Article 5 § 1).

### **France:**

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## **Study: How young Muslim women benefit from the headscarf ban**

In France, wearing a veil in public schools has been banned since 2004. A large-scale study now shows how young Muslim women benefited from it.

A new study by the "Paris School of Economics" is now providing clarity. It shows

that the headscarf ban has had a clearly positive effect: it acted as an educational offensive for young Muslim women and at the same time promoted their integration.

Specifically, the authors investigated whether the ban on religious symbols in schools "is a sign of intolerance that prevents Muslim schoolgirls from attending regular school classes, or whether it instead promotes their academic integration," as the authors writes.

In the study, scientists compared the school qualifications of French-born Muslim and non-Muslim women before and after the introduction of the ban on the veil.

It became apparent that since coverings of all kinds are no longer permitted, Muslim



schoolgirls are catching up – when it comes to school-leaving certificates, their gap to their non-Muslim colleagues has halved from 13.4 percent to 6.8 percent.

The effect was particularly large for girls and young women who come from very traditional families and whose fathers come from the Maghreb or the Middle East. The difference was significantly smaller for fathers from African countries.