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Austrian deputy leader endorses far-right term 'population replacement'

Friday 10 May 2019, by [OLTERMANN Philip](#) (Date first published: 29 April 2019).

Heinz-Christian Strache says term associated with extreme right is a 'term of reality'.

Austria's deputy leader has said his party is fighting against a "replacement" of the native population, endorsing a term usually employed by the extreme right, as the country's rightwing populists double down on their rhetoric before the [European elections](#).

Heinz-Christian Strache, the deputy chancellor in Austria's conservative-nationalist coalition government and the leader of the far-right Freedom party (FPÖ), told the Krone newspaper on Sunday that his party was "consistently following the path for our Austrian homeland, the fight against population replacement, as people expect of us."

When the interviewer interjected to say "population replacement" was a term associated with rightwing extremists, Strache replied that it was "a term of reality", adding: "We don't want to become a minority in our own country. That's legitimate and fair and deeply democratic."

The term "great replacement", which originated in a 2012 book of the same title (*Le Grand Remplacement*) by a French author, Renaud Camus, has been taken up by rightwing extremist groups and was the title of a "manifesto" written by the gunman who carried the attacks in Christchurch, New Zealand, in March.

Strache's use of the term was praised in a video by Martin Sellner, head of the Austrian branch of the far-right Identitarian Movement, which the Austrian government is contemplating [banning over its links](#) to the Christchurch gunman.

Strache has previously been accused of failing to contain and discipline rightwing extremists in his party. Last week, the FPÖ's youth wing was criticised over an anti-Islam leaflet with the slogan "Tradition beats immigration", which was said to echo visual tropes used in Nazi propaganda.

When a prominent TV presenter, Armin Wolf, confronted an FPÖ MEP, Harald Vilimsky, with a photomontage of the leaflet and an antisemitic cartoon, the far-right party reacted with an attack on Wolf. One FPÖ-appointed governor of the public broadcaster suggested Wolf should "take a sabbatical".

This month, the [deputy mayor of the town of Braunau am Innresigned](#) after publishing a poem in an FPÖ-affiliated publication that appeared to mimic the language and ideas of Adolf Hitler's Mein Kampf.

In his interview on Sunday, Strache accused politicians and journalists who criticised his party's recent scandals of "dirty campaigning" before the elections for the European parliament in May.

The FPÖ transport minister, Norbert Hofer, repeated his party leader’s message in a separate interview with Profil magazine, saying he was concerned that “mass immigration is turning [Austria](#) into a country with a Muslim majority”.

People of Muslim faith make up 8% of Austria’s population, according to the Vienna Institute of Demography’s most recent [survey](#), from 2017. The figure had doubled since the previous Austrian census, in 2001, and the institute gave what it called a “realistic” range of 14% to 20% for the Muslim population by the year 2051, depending on levels of immigration.

Catholics make up the largest part of Austria’s population, at 64%, and people without any religious affiliation made up the fastest-rising population group in the last survey, at 17%.

Philip Oltermann

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