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Austria mulls dissolving far-right movement over Christchurch links

Friday 29 March 2019, by [OLTERMANN Philip](#) (Date first published: 27 March 2019).

Chancellor confirms financial link between Identitarian Movement and attack suspect

The Austrian government is investigating the possibility of dissolving the far-right Identitarian Movement after it emerged the group had received a large donation from the alleged gunman in the [Christchurch](#) mosque attacks.

Austria's chancellor, Sebastian Kurz, on Wednesday confirmed there was [a financial link](#) between the man accused of killing 50 people at two mosques [in the New Zealand city](#), and the Austrian branch of the far-right movement, which claims to want to protect Europe's "cultural identity" from Islam.

"Our position is very clear," said Kurz. "No form of extremism must be allowed to have a place in our society, whether it be radical Islamists or rightwing fanatics."

The vice-chancellor, Heinz-Christian Strache, of the far-right Freedom party, the junior coalition partner to Kurz's conservative Austrian People's party (ÖVP), added: "Any connection to the brutish murders in Christchurch has to be ruthlessly cleared up."

Strache has previously shared videos by the Austrian branch of the Identitarian Movement on his Facebook page, and in 2016 appeared to praise the group as "young activists from a non-leftwing civil society". However, at a press conference on Wednesday Strache insisted: "The Freedom party has nothing to do with the Identitarians."

The pan-European movement, originally derived from France's far-right and anti-immigrant youth movement Génération Identitaire, has found fertile ground in [Austria](#), where a student, Markus Willinger, wrote its manifesto in 2013. Since 2014, Austria's office for the protection of the constitution and counter-terrorism has monitored the Identitarians over links to neo-Nazis.

The idea of the "great replacement" – one of the central tenets of the group's ideology, which claims Europe's white Christian population is being systematically replaced by non-Europeans – is also the title of the [Christchurch attacker's manifesto](#).

Hansjörg Bacher, the spokesman for prosecutors in Graz, said Martin Sellner, the head of the Identitarian Movement in Austria, received €1,500 in early 2018 from a donor with the same name as the man charged with murder following the Christchurch attack.

On Tuesday, Sellner said on social media that police had searched his apartment the previous day and seized electronic devices after he received a "disproportionately high donation" from a person with the same surname as the suspected Christchurch shooter. He also said an email in which he had thanked the man for his donation had been merely a formality, and claimed there were no

further links to [New Zealand](#).

Legal experts in Austria have cast doubt on whether the government could easily dissolve the Identitarian Movement, since a donation alone would not be enough to prove a formal link to a criminal.

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The Guardian

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