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Graz: Europe's Cultural Capital of the year lacks Human Rights

This year, Graz celebrates itself as Europe „Cultural Capital“ and as „City of Human Rights“. And yet, Reality plays a different tune.

- During the last weeks, many Africans were (and still are!) not only pestered by the police, but also illegally checked and pictures were taken. All under the guise of fighting drug-dealing, black-skinned people were systematically held up by the police, some of them arrested - even more, they faced mistreatments and insults by racist remarks.
- A hole segment of the Cultural Capital's population is currently being brand-marked as drug dealers. It seems that the Africans here in Graz are being stripped of all their rights. Racist discrimination has become an everyday and very common occurrence - for example, the entry to some pubs and bars was openly denied to Blacks.
- Only a short time ago, the City council of Graz voted for a stricter police attitude towards so-called social fringe groups like punks: the city should be „cleansed“ from all the people whose looks and lifestyle don't fit the majority's and the city's image.
- In 2002 Graz also saw the birth of the „Bürgerwehr“, a „neighbourhood watch“ operating in those parts of the city where the aforementioned fringe groups are usually thought to be found. Its goals are to install „Law, Order and Security“, as its founders and organisers, the extreme right-wing Freedom Party (FPO), who also bankroll the whole thing, define them. And as one can expect of such a political party, the FPO does its best in its current election campaign in Graz (since City Council elections are held end of January) to raise racial prejudices and to criminalize black-skinned people.
- But Africans and punks are not the only ones in the line, the police does its best to suppress leftwing groups without party affiliation and tries to silence their members with a flood of cost-intensive and random charges and infringements. Only a short while ago, several people were charged fines for openly voicing their opinion, whose content - according to the verdict - „insulted the moral values“ of the supporters of a government party.
- In the local media, racist prejudice and agitation are even more enforced and, against this far-flung, one-sided coverage, there are barely possibilities to counter them.

Violations of Human Rights are being ignored in the „City of Human Rights“!