

Austria: Freedom of expression 2023

Amnesty International (April 2024) wrote about human rights in AUSTRIA 2023 (in full see "The State of the World's Human Rights", <https://cdn.amnesty.at/media/11748/amnesty-jahresbericht-2023.pdf?mode=pad&rnd=133582715680000000>):

FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

At several protests in Vienna, the capital, police prevented journalists from observing and reporting protests.

Decision-makers publicly suggested criminalizing climate activists for their forms of protest and civil disobedience, in particular for blocking streets.

On 11 October, police banned a pro-Palestinian protest in Vienna, citing national security concerns. Despite the ban, the protest took place.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

In October, a freedom of information law was proposed that fell short of international standards because it exempted most municipalities from an active obligation to publish information of general interest.

There was a worrying increase in the number of attacks on press freedom and strategic litigation against public participation (SLAPP) suits against journalists and human rights activists.

UNLAWFUL USE OF FORCE

Police accountability for unlawful use of force remained inadequate. In March, the police used pepper spray and batons unnecessarily and disproportionately against climate activists at a protest in Vienna. Parliament approved a police oversight body to be established in 2024, although there were concerns over its independence. Police were still not required to wear identification badges, which continued to impede accountability