

Statement on Joerg Haider

February 8, 2000

As the public affairs arm of the organized Jewish community, representing some 80 synagogues and Jewish organizations in the San Francisco Bay Area, we are dismayed and outraged at the inclusion of the extreme-rightist Freedom Party of Joerg Haider in the government of Austria. This shocking development has raised serious questions about the direction of Austria's government as it relates to both the past and the future.

Mr. Haider has made appallingly sympathetic comments about Nazi Germany, and his Freedom Party has repeatedly resorted to attacks against different groups that can only be described as racist and xenophobic. These views properly belong at the absolute fringes of Austrian society, and not as part of the mainstream—which inclusion in the national government now assures. The signing of a declaration in support of democratic principles by Mr. Haider appeared to be aimed more at appeasing other countries similarly outraged than it did to addressing the real challenge Mr. Haider's views pose for sustaining democratic institutions.

Justifications are already circulating in defense of Mr. Haider's inclusion in Austria's government, particularly that his party was elected by a democratic process. We reject these arguments outright: the National Socialists were also democratically elected in Germany.

We support the decision by the United States, the European Union and the State of Israel to send a strong message about their concerns regarding the new coalition government in Austria and its role in the international arena. We fully share those concerns.

For more information on Joerg Haider, visit the [Anti-Defamation League](#) website.