



## Shooting attack carried out by an ISIS supporter in Vienna (initial overview)

November 4, 2020

### Overview

► On the evening of November 2, 2020, a shooting attack was carried out against passersby in the Vienna city center **by a young ISIS supporter**. Four people were killed and over 20 were wounded. **ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack**. In the ITIC's assessment, this was not an ISIS, preplanned and orchestrated attack, but **a local initiative**. However, **the perpetrator may have had accomplices in Austria or even outside the country**. According to media reports, following searches carried out in Vienna, 14 suspects were detained for questioning, and **the Austrian police is still checking whether the perpetrator had accomplices**<sup>1</sup>. In searches conducted at the same time in Switzerland, Swiss police detained two men who may have been associated with the perpetrator.



**ISIS's claim of responsibility for the shooting attack in Vienna and a picture of the perpetrator (Amaq News Agency's announcement as posted on Telegram, November 3, 2020)**

► The Vienna shooting attack demonstrates that **the ISIS brand name and its Salafist jihadi ideology are still considerably attractive for young Muslims leaving in European**

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Schmidinger, an Austrian expert on Middle Eastern affairs, estimates that there are hundreds of ISIS sympathizers in Vienna (AFP, November 4, 2020).

**countries.** The attack in Vienna, for which ISIS claimed responsibility – the first of its kind in nine months<sup>2</sup> – demonstrates that **ISIS remains the leading global jihadi organization whose supporters' activity extends beyond the core countries and also takes place in Western countries.**

► ISIS took advantage of the attack in Vienna and the previous attacks carried out by jihadi elements in France (Paris, Nice and Lyon), for which no jihadi organization has claimed responsibility, **to enhance ISIS's propaganda campaign against France and the Western countries. As part of the campaign, ISIS called on its supporters to target Western countries, mainly France, by various means** (including stabbing, ramming and shooting attacks, and activating IEDs). ISIS also called on its supporters **to target French companies and French interests in Muslim countries** (see appendix). In the ITIC's assessment, all this is intended **to make sure the current wave of jihadi terrorism continues and to enhance ISIS's ability to attract supporters.**

## Initial overview of the attack

**On November 2, 2020, a shooting attack was carried out in the Vienna city center.** The attack began at around 22:00, when a young man opened fire on passersby and later at police officers. The terrorist was shot and killed by police within 9 minutes. The attack was carried out in an entertainment zone, where there are bars and restaurants. **The timing** was the eve of the second lockdown in Austria due to COVID-19. The scene of the shooting was near Vienna's main synagogue and several other Jewish institutions, but the synagogue was apparently not the target of the attack (it was closed at the time). The shooting was carried out on crowded main streets, **apparently in order to cause as many fatalities as possible.** The terrorist was reportedly wearing a dummy explosive belt<sup>3</sup>. **Four people were killed** (an older man and woman, a young passerby, and a waitress). **In addition, 23 people were wounded, seven of them seriously** (according to another version, 17 people were wounded).

<sup>2</sup> The previous attack for which ISIS claimed responsibility was carried out in Britain **on February 2, 2020.** A Muslim terrorist, a released prisoner with a jihadi ideology, carried out an **ISIS-inspired** stabbing attack in London. Three passersby were wounded, one of them severely. See the ITIC's Information Bulletin from February 6, 2020, "ISIS-inspired stabbing attack in London."

<sup>3</sup> Two terrorists who carried out **stabbing attacks in London** (inspired by ISIS) **wore dummy explosive belts**, apparently as a means of intimidation and deterrence (a stabbing attack on February 2, 2020 in south London, and a stabbing attack on the London Bridge on November 29, 2019).



**Right: The terrorist during the shooting spree in the heart of Vienna (The Truth@samir51974454 Twitter account, November 3, 2020). Left: People fleeing for their lives during the shooting spree (Liana ANT Twitter account, November 3, 2020)**

### Initial information about the perpetrator

► According to the initial information, the perpetrator was **Kujtim Fejzulai**, codenamed by ISIS as **Abu Dujana al-Albani**, a **20-year-old of Albanian descent who grew up in Vienna**. Fejzulai, who held dual citizenship, Austrian and North-Macedonian, was born in Mödling, in south Vienna. In his youth he expressed great interest in political Islam. Starting in 2016, he underwent religious radicalization. **In September 2018, he tried to cross the border from Turkey into Syria to join ISIS. Two days after arriving in Turkey, he was caught and deported to Austria.** According to the Austrian press, the Austrian Interior Minister has said that since 2011, about 300 people have left Austria on their way to Syria in order to join ISIS. About 50 of them were killed, and about 100 returned.

► On April 25, 2019, Kujtim Fejzulai was sentenced in Austria to **22 months in prison**. He was released on December 5, 2019, under a law relating to the rights of 18-20 year olds. He was released on condition that he be under the constant supervision of the probation service and participate in a de-radicalization workshop held in collaboration with the Austrian Justice Ministry. According to the Austrian Interior Minister, he deceived the workshop facilitators by hiding the early signs of his radicalization (The Guardian, November 3, 2020)<sup>4</sup>.

### ISIS's claim of responsibility

► The day after the attack, on November 3, 2020, ISIS issued several statements, including a **claim of responsibility** for the attack. The claim of responsibility included several details about the attack. **Following are the highlights of ISIS's statements:**

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<sup>4</sup> This raises questions about the effectiveness of the de-radicalization workshops. This issue should be examined by the authorities in the various countries.

- ◆ **Abu Dujana al-Albani**, who was killed in the attack, is a “soldier of the Caliphate” who fired small arms and a pistol and stabbed **crowds of Christians (originally “Crusaders”) in Vienna** on November 2. According to ISIS, he killed and wounded about 30 people, including a [police] officer and policemen (Telegram, November 3, 2020).
- ◆ According to an additional claim of responsibility issued by ISIS’s news agency, the perpetrator **used an assault rifle and a handgun**. He exchanged fire with Austrian police and was shot dead (Amaq News Agency, as posted on Telegram, November 3, 2020).
- ◆ The Amaq News Agency released a short (44 seconds) video showing Abu Dujana al-Albani **pledging allegiance to ISIS’s leader** (“the Caliph of the Muslims, Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurashi”). Abu Dujana is shown holding an assault rifle, a pistol and a machete. He ends his remarks with **an ISIS slogan**: “The State of Islam remains intact, with the help of Allah [...]” Abu Dujana’s Arabic sounds fluent, which is not typical of a young man who grew up in Austria (video distributed by the Amaq News Agency, Telegram, November 3, 2020). The pledge of allegiance was filmed and posted by Abu Dujana to his Instagram account apparently a short while before the attack<sup>5</sup>.



**Abu Dujana al-Albani, perpetrator of the shooting attack in Vienna on November 2, 2020, while pledging allegiance to ISIS, holding a pistol, a Kalashnikov rifle and a machete (from a video by the Amaq News Agency posted on Telegram, November 3, 2020)**

<sup>5</sup> According to Austrian Interior Minister Karl Nehammer, the perpetrator posted his photo with the **weapons on his Instagram account before the attack** (The Guardian, November 3, 2020). It appears that the perpetrator uploaded the photo a short while before carrying out the attack. ISIS hastened to make propaganda use of the pledge of allegiance the day after the attack.

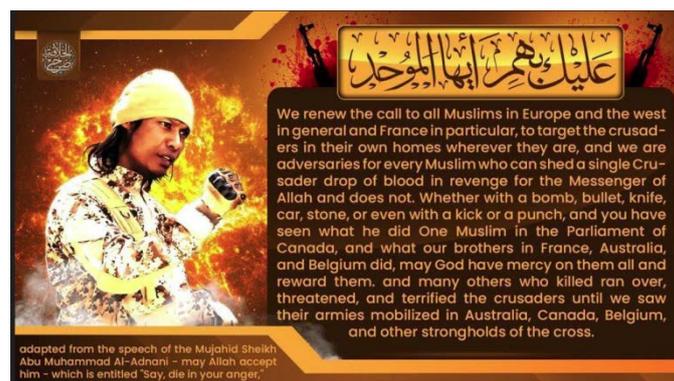
## Appendix

### Examples from the propaganda campaign of ISIS and its supporters against the West, especially against France

- ▶ An editorial in ISIS's Al-Naba' weekly attacks Muslims who warn France. The author claims that, as in the past, they will once again praise it and support its leaders. The editorial adds that **Western countries will not change their policy towards Muslims as long as there is no significant threat to their interests and the lives of their residents.**
- ▶ The author calls for targeting **Europeans**. Specifically, he calls for **targeting large French companies operating in Muslim countries and threatening France's interests in those countries.** Only in this way, according to the author, will the (Western) governments and companies refrain from insulting Muslims and will even enact strict laws in this regard (Al-Naba' weekly, according to Telegram, October 29, 2020).

### Call to carry out terrorist attacks in Western countries, especially in France

- ▶ An ISIS-affiliated media outlet calling itself the "Cry of the Caliphate" posted a poster on Telegram **calling for the resumption of terrorist attacks in the West, especially in France, as "revenge for [the insult to] the Prophet Muhammad."** He calls for carrying out the attacks in every possible way: using **bombs, knives, bullets, vehicles and even kicking or punching** (Telegram, October 31, 2020).



Poster calling for terrorist attacks in Western countries, especially in France (Telegram, October 31, 2020)

### Call by ISIS supporter to boycott French products

- ▶ ISIS has joined a campaign by Islamist organizations calling for a boycott of French products. An ISIS supporter published two posters. One of them reads: "Boycott French

