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## **Austria: Mgr Elbs (Feldkirch), “racism, antisemitism and exclusion of minorities are incompatible with Christianity”**

When it comes to human dignity, the Church must take a stand, because without human dignity and human rights, there can be no peaceful coexistence in a free state. This was stated by Bishop Benno Elbs of Feldkirch in a recent interview with the Vorarlberger Nachrichten newspaper. “Indeed, I believe it is right for us to speak up wherever democratic coexistence is at risk and hatred threatens to poison people's hearts”. “Political” should not be confused with “political party”, the bishop remarked. The reason for the interview was the recent statement by the German Catholic bishops taking a clear stance against right-wing extremism. “Right-wing extremist parties and those proliferating on the fringes of this ideology cannot be a place of political activity for Christians and cannot be elected”, the bishops wrote in their statement, opposing the far-right party Alternative for Germany (AfD). Mgr Elbs agrees with the content of the statement as “I also consider racism, antisemitism and the exclusion of minorities to be incompatible with the Christian vision of God and humanity”. The statement by the German bishops must be seen in the context of the internal political situation in Germany, “where antisemitic and anti-democratic incidents have recently become increasingly frequent and the political climate could turn upside down”. The Austrian Bishops' Conference, which begins its spring plenary session today, has repeatedly taken a clear stance against antisemitism and extremism in society, most recently in the autumn of 2023 on the occasion of the 85th anniversary of the Nazi pogroms of November 1938.

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