

Spain extradites Austrian author for Holocaust denial

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A right-wing Austrian author convicted of neo-Nazi activities was extradited Thursday from Spain to serve a prison sentence for denying the existence of the Holocaust and claiming the Nazis never used gas chambers.

Gerd Honsik, 65, was flown from Madrid to Vienna late Thursday to serve out an 18-month prison sentence stemming from his 1992 conviction, public broadcaster ORF said.

He also may face new charges, as authorities said they believed he had committed more offenses since Austria enacted a landmark law in 1992 making it a crime to deny the Holocaust or promote Nazi propaganda.

Honsik was arrested Aug. 23 in the southern Spanish city of Malaga on a Europol warrant issued by the Vienna public prosecutor's office. He had fled to Spain after his 1992 conviction for writings that defended Adolf Hitler's Third Reich.

A judge was to rule within 48 hours on whether Honsik would be placed in preliminary detention, said Gerhard Jarosch, a spokesman for the public prosecutor's office, according to the Austria Press Agency. Jarosch said it was not likely Honsik would be freed.

Austrian Justice Minister Maria Berger expressed "great joy over the effectiveness of the European arrest warrant in dealing directly with neo-Nazis," according to a statement.

Between 1986 and 1989, Honsik published writings disputing that the Nazis killed hundreds of thousands of Jews at Auschwitz and other concentration camps during World War II. Among his books is one titled "Absolution of Hitler." Authorities said they suspected he had committed similar offenses since 1992.

"Since his conviction and his flight to Spain, he has committed many acts of Nazi propaganda on the Internet that we have to investigate," APA quoted Jarosch as saying.

Austria's law making it a crime to deny the Holocaust applies to "whoever denies, grossly plays down, approves or tries to excuse the National Socialist genocide or other National Socialist crimes against humanity in a print publication, in broadcast or other media."

The crime is punishable by up to 10 years in prison.

British author David Irving was convicted under the law in February 2006 and sentenced to three years in prison. He served 13 months and was released in December on probation.



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