

Thousands protest COVID lockdown in Vienna despite police ban



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Vienna, February 1 (RHC)-- An estimated 5,000 people took part in another massive demonstration in Vienna against COVID restrictions, this time without police permission. Police had banned all major demonstrations planned for the weekend across the federal capital. Meanwhile, the Archdiocese of Vienna had warned of a corona demonstration disguised as a Christian procession.

Police forces reported numerous arrests as demonstrators defied calls to disperse, to keep the required distance and to wear face masks. Protestors called the government-imposed lockdown dictatorial and argued it wouldn't work in stopping the virus's spread.

The Sunday rally had been proposed by the right wing opposition Freedom Party, the FPÖ. The demonstration was among 15 banned by authorities to avoid any major danger to public health and although party leaders called for compliance, their supporters still turned up. Local media also reported the presence of far-right and neo-Nazi groups. The ruling party said the FPÖ had reached a new low by embracing right-wing extremists and coronavirus deniers.

Austria's third hard lockdown is expected to end on February 7th and while trade unions warn of mass bankruptcy if the country doesn't reopen, virologists say the current number of infections is still too high. Authorities are counting on further vaccinations and tests, along with an isolation policy to keep the situation under control.

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