

Beat: Miscellaneous

Austrian girl who joined ISIS in Syria 'wants to come home'

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USPA News - One of two Austrian girls who abandoned their families to join Islamic State jihadists in northern Syria has become "disillusioned" and wants to return home, local media reported on Friday. The other girl is not willing to return back to her family yet.

Samra Kesinovic, 17, and Sabina Selimovic, 15, reportedly became radicalized after clerics at a mosque in Vienna preached to them about the 'evils of their lifestyle.' The clerics persuaded them to go to Syria, after which they left their homes shortly after Easter and traveled to Turkey before crossing the border into Syria. In a note the teens left behind, Samra and Sabina told their parents to not look for them. "We will serve Allah and we will die for him," they wrote. But a report from Austrian daily newspaper *Äf-sterreich* said both girls, who are believed to be in Islamic State-controlled Raqqa in northern Syria, are now in contact with family and friends after becoming "disillusioned" with their new lives. Both girls are said to have been married off to jihadists since their arrival in Raqqa and are now pregnant. The *Äf-sterreich* newspaper, citing sources close to the case, reported that Samra, who left when she was 16 but turned 17 last month, had expressed her wish to return home to her family. Her friend Sabina, who turns 16 in February, told relatives that she was "not yet ready to return" to Austria. Karl-Heinz Grundböck, a spokesman for Austria's Interior Ministry, could not confirm *Äf-sterreich's* report but indicated that it would be difficult for Samra to return home. "In case someone wants to return from this region, there could hardly be a support of the Austrian authorities," he said. The Islamic State (IS), which was previously known as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/ISIS), is an al-Qaeda splinter group which declared itself an Islamic caliphate earlier this year after seizing much of northeastern Syria and making huge gains in parts of Iraq. Their rule has been marked by brutal violence - such as beheadings and crucifixions - of anyone opposing the "caliphate." Since early August, U.S. forces have carried out hundreds of airstrikes in Iraq to protect U.S. interests and to assist Iraqi forces as they attempt to fight off ISIS. A coalition of countries - including France, the United Kingdom, and Australia - have since joined that effort. The United States - along with several Arab countries - have also launched a separate air campaign against ISIS in northern Syria.

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