

# Bombing, mass shooting kill at least 87 in Norway

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A bombing and mass shooting in Norway on Friday have left at least 87 people dead. Following a large explosion directed against government buildings in the capital, Oslo, a right-wing anti-Islamic extremist opened fire with automatic weapons on youth at a camp run by the ruling Labour Party on nearby Utoya Island.

At 3:30 p.m. Friday, powerful explosions rocked a government quarter in downtown Oslo that is home to the office of Norwegian Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg, the finance ministry and the country's biggest tabloid newspaper *Verdens Gang* (VG). Seven people died and 15 were wounded in the blasts.

Some two hours later, a massacre occurred at the youth camp, attended by about 600 people. The gunman, dressed as a police officer, fired repeatedly on a crowd of mostly 15- and 16-year-old campers, killing at least 80. More deaths are expected to be confirmed as police and rescue teams search the island and the surrounding lake for bodies and wounded survivors.

Police authorities subsequently arrested Anders Behring Breivik, a 32-year-old native Norwegian with known links to anti-Islamic Christian fundamentalist groups. Norwegian media said Breivik had many right-wing connections, including a Facebook account in which he described himself as a Christian conservative.

Norway's national broadcaster NRK and other media posted pictures of Breivik. According to Norwegian TV2, the suspect belongs to far-right groups in eastern Norway and may have registered two weapons—an automatic weapon and a Glock-type pistol—under the name of one of the groups. The Swedish news site *Expressen* said he was a self-described nationalist and had written a number of posts critical of Islam.

The island shootings were cold-blooded. Terrified witnesses described young people jumping into the lake or hiding behind buildings in a desperate attempt to

escape the gunfire. One, 21-year-old Dana Berzingi, said the fake police officer ordered people to come closer, then pulled weapons and ammunition from a bag and started shooting.

Another 15-year-old eyewitness, Elise, told the Associated Press: "He first shot people on the island. Afterward he started shooting people in the water." Others said the gunman repeatedly shot his victims to make sure they were dead.

Rune Thomas Ege, one of the only journalists on Utoya when the shootings took place, reported: "We saw people still being dragged out of the water. We saw people being taken care of by paramedics on the shore. There were some horrific scenes of the young kids, some crying, some shaking while watching paramedics trying to save their best friend's life."

Earlier, in the city, huge blasts blew out windows and caused structural damage. Images on Norwegian television showed the prime minister's office and other buildings heavily damaged, footpaths covered in broken glass and smoke rising from the area. "People are lying in the street covered in blood," Ingunn Andersen, a journalist with public radio NRK, said from the scene.

Before details about the alleged killer emerged, political leaders, both domestic and international, insinuated that the attacks were the work of Islamic extremists and declared that the violence underscored the need to prosecute the "war on terrorism."

President Barack Obama and European leaders swiftly vowed solidarity with NATO member Norway, whose Labour-Socialist Left-Centre coalition government has 500 troops in Afghanistan and is participating in NATO air strikes in Libya.

The Norwegian police had earlier in the year warned of right-wing anti-Islamic groups seeking provocations.

In an unclassified report released in February, Norway's intelligence police agency (PST) stated: "An increased level of activity among some anti-Islamic groups could lead to increased polarisation and unease, especially during, and in connection with, commemorations and demonstrations."

Friday's atrocity occurs under conditions where governments and media outlets across Europe, including the Scandinavian states, have condoned or encouraged anti-Muslim racism and anti-immigrant chauvinism. This appeal to the most reactionary and backward sentiments is aimed at diverting popular opposition to austerity measures and the growth of social inequality.



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