

Norwegian mass murderer Breivik sentenced to 21 years

Jordan Shilton
25 August 2012

The Oslo District Court yesterday ruled that fascist mass murderer Anders Behring Breivik was sane and handed down the maximum sentence of 21 years imprisonment for his twin terrorist attacks on July 22, 2011. A mass shooting of social democratic youth on the island of Utoeya and an earlier car bomb led to the deaths of 77.

Announcing the decision, Judge Elisabeth Arntzen sentenced Breivik to “preventive detention”, which means the period of his jail term can be extended as long as he is deemed a danger to society.

The ruling does not alter the fact that Breivik’s trial was the culmination of an official cover-up set in motion the day of his arrest. The question of his sanity, which dominated the trial, was a diversion introduced to prevent an honest examination of what was clearly a politically motivated crime. There is every possibility that the killings were carried out with the aid of far-right sympathisers across Europe.

The state-backed prosecution insisted throughout that Breivik was a madman acting in isolation who should be confined to a mental institution.

This would not wash, given the overwhelming public support for Breivik to be declared criminally responsible for the terrorist attacks. Recent polls showed 75 percent of Norwegians in favour of Breivik being declared sane, while only one in ten believed he was insane. The danger that a verdict of insanity would have provoked a public backlash, with uncomfortable questions being raised for the authorities, would have been in the minds of the court as they deliberated.

Even so, the trial itself ignored any line of inquiry that dealt with Breivik’s acts for what they were: fascist terrorism.

Two conflicting psychiatric assessments of his state of mind were released prior to the proceedings, the first

declaring him to be a paranoid schizophrenic, while the second stated he was sane.

This allowed Breivik’s political motives to go unchallenged. On the second day of the trial in April, he delivered a lengthy speech in which he defended his mass slaughter, stating that he would do it all again if given the chance. Breivik said he was part of an anti-Islamic, anti-communist “resistance” movement, fighting against “Marxist dictatorship” in Norway and that the July 22 massacre was a “sophisticated and spectacular political attack”.

Nothing that followed in the trial or in any of the official investigations attempted to deal with the implications of such claims. Breivik’s explicit political agenda was dismissed as the views of a “lone wolf”.

All of the information that has come to light since July 22, 2011 testifies that such claims are without foundation. Just hours after carrying out the massacre, it emerged that Breivik had sent a 1,500-page “manifesto” to one thousand contacts over the internet, all members of far-right groups in Norway and across Europe whom Breivik addressed as “Western European patriots”.

A significant number of these were in the leadership of the British-based English Defence League (EDL), an organisation with which Breivik had close ties. He had also spent some time in Sweden and had connections with the extreme right there. He was a member of the online forum Nordisc, where discussions took place on the ideological content of the far right and the planning and conducting of acts of violence.

In Norway, Breivik had been a member of the far-right Progress Party from 1997 to 2007. Progress has been integrated entirely in to the political establishment, with its vicious anti-immigrant rhetoric and Norwegian nationalism being adopted by the

Labour Party in many government policies.

Breivik's manifesto detailed his fascist world view, as well as his preparations for the attacks. Between 50 and 60 percent of the material he used was drawn from mainstream political leaders and commentators, underscoring the fact that right-wing conceptions had been promoted widely within the establishment. One of the most revealing moments in Breivik's trial came when he declared in his testimony that "[France's Nicolas] Sarkozy, [Germany's Angela] Merkel and [Britain's David] Cameron have all noted that multiculturalism doesn't work".

The desire to absolve the political elite in Norway and Europe of any responsibility for the systematic promotion of far-right ideas was the main driving force of the official cover-up. None of the figures to whom Breivik sent his manifesto were questioned or charged with any crime, even those who were explicitly mentioned by Breivik as having been present at meetings at which plans for attacks were discussed.

To have pursued these links would have meant acknowledging the existence of an organised right-wing extremist network across Europe, encouraged by the official political establishment, in turn undermining the claim that Breivik could not have been detected prior to July 22.

The presentation of Breivik as a solo terrorist has also been critical to the official whitewash of the role of the police and intelligence forces. Evidence confirms that the police were contacted on several occasions in the months prior to July 2011 with information about Breivik's preparations, once even by Breivik himself! But no action was taken against him, despite the fact that he had bought large quantities of explosives from a Polish businessman and that he had warned police of his intention to carry out a terrorist attack. The available evidence even led the official inquiry to note in its report that police could have detected Breivik before July 22.

Authorities in Britain failed to take notice of Breivik's ties to the EDL, and did nothing in response to a 2002 meeting in London between extremists from across Europe dedicated to the preparation of terrorist attacks. Breivik's claim that this meeting helped found an organisation called the Knights Templar, committed to a "cultural-conservative revolution" in Europe, was dismissed as a figment of his imagination.

The EDL is heavily infiltrated by the police and other security agencies and acts as a mechanism for creating provocations in Muslim communities and then gathering intelligence on activists and youth involved in counter-protests.

The approach taken towards Breivik flies in the face of the one adopted in regard to other terrorist acts.

The day before Breivik was sentenced, a report in *Le Monde* cited police having concluded that Mohammed Merah, who killed seven people in three attacks in Toulouse earlier this year, was "no lone wolf". The police based their conclusions on the fact that he had made over 1,800 phone calls to 180 contacts in 20 countries.

The only difference between Merah and Breivik is that one is an Islamic fundamentalist and the other a Christian fascist. Yet, despite Breivik's involvement in far-right activism and discussion throughout Europe, polar opposite conclusions have been drawn regarding whether or not each belonged to an organised group.

As the recently published official investigation into the July 22 attacks declared, "It is necessary to repeat that it is the perpetrator and no one else who is to blame for the loss of 77 precious human lives, for physical and mental harm and for great material devastation". This is a whitewash of years of anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim propaganda and policies by every major government and political party in Europe.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact