

Alleged terrorist gunman shot dead in Copenhagen

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On Sunday, Danish police identified a gunman accused of attacking a café debate on free speech and then a synagogue in Copenhagen on Sunday as Omar Abdel Hamid El-Hussein.

The gunman was shot and killed by police Sunday morning, near a railway station in the Norrebro district of Copenhagen. He was reportedly returning to an address that was already under police surveillance. Police Commissioner Thorkild Fogde said that, “when the suspect was shot and killed during police action, he was armed with pistols.”

Once again, a man involved in a deadly terrorist attack was known to the police and security services. He was also “on the radar” of the intelligence services. He reportedly was 22, born in Denmark and known to police due to his connection with criminal gangs and convictions for violent offences and dealing in weapons. The head of Danish intelligence told reporters that police were working to determine whether he had travelled to Syria or Iraq.

The shooting at the café took place on Saturday between 3:30 and 4:00pm. The 55-year-old film director Finn Nørgaard died as a hail of 40 bullets were fired at a cafe hosting Swedish cartoonist Lars Vilks, who has received death threats for depicting the Prophet Muhammad.

Vilks was unhurt, but three police officers were wounded.

The gunman fled in a carjacked Volkswagen Polo that was found later by police a few kilometres away.

Just after midnight, about a half hour’s walk from the café, Dan Uzan, a male volunteer guarding a bat mitzvah party at a synagogue in Krystalgade, was shot in the head. He died later, and two police officers were wounded. Copenhagen police spokesman Allan Wadsworth-Hansen said that the gunman opened fire at

the two police officers, who were wounded in the arms and legs.

The claim that the café event promoted freedom of speech is a fraud. Vilks was to be the main speaker in the café debate, entitled “Art, Blasphemy and Freedom of Expression.” In 2005, Denmark’s *Jyllands Posten* pioneered the type of anti-Muslim provocation that last month provoked three Islamist gunmen to kill 17 people at the offices of *Charlie Hebdo* and in a siege at a kosher grocery store. *Jyllands Posten* published 12 cartoons, most depicting the Prophet Muhammad, citing this as a contribution to “free speech”.

In 2007, Vilks drew drawings depicting Muhammad as a dog, triggering death threats and forcing him to live under police protection in Sweden since 2010. Two years ago, a woman was jailed for 10 years in the United States for plotting to kill him. Yet once again, as with *Charlie Hebdo*, security at the controversial debate appears to have failed calamitously. French ambassador Francois Zimeray had opened the debate, praising Denmark’s support for freedom of speech following the Paris attacks, only minutes before the shooting began.

In the period initially following the attack, the media had also cited fears of another right-wing gunman like Anders Behring Breivik, who murdered 77 people in 2011, mostly youth attending a camp organised by Norway’s ruling Labour Party.

Once again, events follow a pattern strikingly similar to the attack on *Charlie Hebdo*:

- * A provocation is staged based on whipping up hostility to Muslims.

- * Police, aware of the sensitivity of the event, fail to prevent an attack.

- * The alleged attacker or attackers is shot dead.

- * The police and security services admit to having

known the alleged attacker and their having been placed under surveillance.

The pattern is repeated also in the launching of a massive police clampdown. In Copenhagen, this involved parts of the capital being cordoned off and at least one raid on an Internet café.

Prime Minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt described the shootings as “a cynical act of terror against Denmark” and “our values.” This is in keeping with the Danish ruling elite’s right-wing record. It has repeatedly exploited anti-Islamic and anti-immigrant rhetoric to stir up divisions and divert attention away from the deepening social crisis facing the working class.

One of the pioneers of this strategy was former Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen, who went on to become NATO Secretary General and lead the aggressive drive against Russia over Ukraine.

Rasmussen, prime minister from 2001-09, introduced anti-terror legislation in 2002, tightened immigration regulations in line with the demands of the far right and attacked social programmes. In 2005, he backed the publication of the Muhammad caricatures and subsequently used this issue to justify a close alliance with US imperialism, which saw Denmark send troops to Iraq.

In 2008, virtually all major media outlets joined in reprinting the *Jyllands Posten* cartoons, only days after two foreign nationals had been arrested on terrorism charges. This included *Politiken*, the country’s nominal “left,” liberal publication.

Danish ruling circles continue to fan the flames of anti-immigrant chauvinism. In December, *Jyllands-Posten* published a study claiming that there were over 30,000 illegal immigrants in the country, and that this posed a serious problem for the welfare system. The study claimed that this number had doubled from 2008, but failed to mention that since then, immigration laws have been tightened significantly, with the implementation of a new points system that is one of the most stringent in Europe.

The Social Democrat-led government has shown no let-up in enforcing a brutal immigration policy. When former Justice Minister Karen Hækkerup took office in 2013, she declared that successful integration is only possible through limited immigration.

“It is important for Denmark’s cohesiveness that we have a tough policy on immigration,” Hækkerup said.

“For a little nation to integrate its foreigners so they become Danes and part of Denmark, the numbers matter.”

In October 2014, after Hækkerup resigned to take up a job in the private sector, her successor, Mette Frederiksen, advocated the use of ankle tags on illegal immigrants. “I don’t have any problems using that tool,” she said. “If it is correct that it has never been used, then it should be in that report that I will receive from the authorities.”

Such policies have encouraged the most right-wing elements. Following the example of the anti-Muslim Pegida protests in Germany, the first such march took place in Copenhagen last month, drawing a crowd of several hundred.



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