

Oslo mosque targeted in attempted far-right terrorist attack

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On Sunday, 21-year-old Norwegian Philip Manshaus appeared in court on charges of murder and terrorism, one day after he attempted to carry out a fascist assault on the Al-Noor Islamic Centre in Bærum, Oslo. He was ordered detained for four weeks while awaiting trial.

Wearing body armour and carrying two shotguns and a handgun, Manshaus entered the Oslo mosque on Saturday afternoon by shooting through its locked glass outer door, with the aim of killing those inside. The attack was only thwarted because one of the three worshippers present, identified as Mohamed Rafiq, an ex-member of the Pakistani armed forces, tackled and apprehended him. Rafiq and two other people were able to subdue Manshaus until police arrived.

While only three people were present at the time of the attack, more than a dozen had been praying in the mosque for the Eid al-Adha Islamic holiday only 10 minutes earlier. Had Manshaus struck a short time before, a large number of people may have been killed. Manshaus is also suspected of murdering his 17-year-old adopted Chinese stepsister, whose body was found at the family home on Saturday.

The attack came one week after the August 3 shooting at an El Paso, Texas Walmart by Patrick Wood Crusius, also aged 21, killing 22 people.

Manshaus had posted on an anonymous online message board named “Endchan” with a link to his Facebook profile the same day. In it, he stated that the attack was part of a “race war,” and, like Crusius, that he was inspired by Brenton Tarrant, who murdered 51 people in an attack on two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, on March 15. Manshaus refers to Tarrant as “Saint Tarrant.”

The post makes an appeal for others to carry out similar far-right attacks, stating, “If you are reading this you have been elected by me.” Manshaus attempted to livestream the attack using a GoPro camera, but the stream appears

to have failed for technical reasons.

Saturday’s attack occurred in the same city where Norwegian neo-Nazi Anders Breivik detonated a car bomb on July 22, 2011, killing eight people and injuring 209. Less than two hours later, dressed in a fake police uniform, Breivik shot and killed another 69 people in an attack on the Norwegian Labour Party’s youth camp on the island of Utoya. Both Tarrant and Manshaus cited Breivik as a role model. Manshaus’ Instagram account contains three pictures: two of himself, and one of Breivik performing the Nazi salute in court.

According to police reports, Manshaus has also stated his admiration for Norway’s Nazi collaborationist president in World War II, Vidkun Quisling.

In response to the attack, Norwegian Prime Minister Erna Solberg condemned Manshaus’ actions and committed to “fight hatred and anti-Muslim attitudes.” The government’s response is aimed at covering up the fact that it bears political responsibility for promoting the anti-immigrant hysteria and chauvinism which breed such fascist atrocities.

The Norwegian political establishment has rapidly worked to promote the Progress Party (PP), the right-wing populist party of which Breivik himself had been a member. Despite only receiving 16 percent of the vote in the last federal election, seven of Norway’s 22 cabinet positions are occupied by members of the Progress Party.

In 2017, Prime Minister Solberg appointed Sylvie Listhaug of the PP to the post of justice minister. In 2018, Listhaug stated that the Labour Party, whose youth camp was targeted by Breivik, cared more about terrorists’ rights than about national security. After resigning over the issue and being criticized publicly by Solberg, Listhaug was welcomed back into the cabinet less than a year later.

On Friday, a day before Manshaus’ attack, Immigration Minister Joran Kallmyr of the PP argued that the

Norwegian-flagged Ocean Viking, which had just rescued 85 refugees in the Mediterranean, should not be allowed in Europe but should instead send its passengers back to Africa, as the alternative “action will be an extension of the refugee route instead of a rescue operation.”

Kallmyr’s comments are entirely in line with the policy of the European Union (EU), which funds Libyan detention camps where, as it has been irrefutably established, refugees face slavery, rape and murder. No substantive differences exist between the outbursts of Kallmyr and Italian Interior Minister Matteo Salvini and the agenda of Berlin and Paris to force refugees to stay in Africa, save the crudeness with which they state their views. Kallmyr’s statements only underscore the fact that EU attacks on immigrants are a key means for the political establishment to promote and legitimize the extreme right across the continent.

The Norwegian government is also attempting to cover up the very real questions posed by the warning that the state had received about Manhaus’ views in advance of the attack.

On Sunday, the head of the Norwegian police service, Hans Sverre Sjøvold, was compelled to admit that the police received a tip as early as 2018 identifying Manshaus as a threat, which inexplicably was never followed up by police.

He justified the police’s refusal to take any action by claiming that “experience shows that very few go from word to action.”

This is the latest example of far-right terror attacks proceeding despite police having received prior warnings about the attacker. Prior to the shooting in Christchurch, Tarrant had made many public statements voicing hatred of immigrants, Muslims and socialists, including threats of violence (see “Warnings of New Zealand neo-Nazi attack were ignored”). Breivik had made a phone call to the Norwegian government services threatening a mass attack in March 2011, four months before the massacre.



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