

Norway holds memorial services to mourn 76 victims of bombing and youth camp shooting

Written by BJOERN H. AMLAND and IAN MacDOUGALL
Friday, 29 July 2011 14:17



Mourners push the coffin of Bano Abobakar Rashid, 18, the first victim of the shooting rampage at Utoeya to be buried, during her funeral at a church in Nesodden, near Oslo, Norway, Friday July 29, 2011. (Lefteris Pitarakis/Associated Press)

Norway began burying the dead on Friday, a week after an anti-immigrant extremist killed 76 people in a bombing and shooting rampage.

Mourners of all ages vowed they would not let the massacre threaten their nation's openness and democracy.

An 18-year-old Muslim girl was the first victim to be laid to rest since the gunman opened fire at

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a political youth camp and bombed the government headquarters in Oslo.

After a funeral service in the Nesodden church outside the capital, Bano Rashid, a Kurdish immigrant from Iraq, was buried in a Muslim rite. Sobbing youth accompanied her coffin, which was draped in a Kurdish flag.

The attack will “not destroy Norway's commitment to democracy, tolerance and fighting racism,” Labor Party youth-wing leader Eskil Pedersen said at a memorial service in Oslo.

Mr. Pedersen, who was on the island retreat of Utoya when the gunman's attack began, said: “Long before he stands before a court we can say: he has lost.”

Pedersen said the youth organization would return to Utoya next year for its annual summer gathering, a tradition that stretches back decades.

Police said all those killed in the July 22 terror attacks in Oslo and on Utoya island have been identified and that those who had been reported missing have been accounted for.

Police also said Norway's security service will issue a new evaluation of the threat posed by extremists. Since the massacre, questions have persisted about whether authorities had underestimated extremist dangers in Norway.

At Friday's memorial service in Oslo at the assembly hall of the “People's House,” a community centre for Norway's labour movement, Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg said: “Today it is one week since Norway was hit by evil.”

The bullets struck dozens of members of the youth faction of his Labor Party, but they were aimed at the entire nation, Mr. Stoltenberg said, on a stage adorned with red roses, the symbol of his party.

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“I think July 22 will be a very strong symbol of the Norwegian people's wish to be united in our fight against violence, and will be a symbol of how the nation can answer with love,” he told reporters after the ceremony.

Members of the audience raised bouquets of flowers as each speaker took the stage, and some of them fought back tears as they spoke.

Another memorial service was being held at a mosque in an immigrant district of Oslo later Friday.

Anders Behring Breivik, a vehement anti-Muslim, was questioned by police Friday for the second time since surrendering to an anti-terror squad on Utoya, where his victims lay strewn across the shore and in the water.

The Norwegian Police Security Service said on Friday that Mr. Breivik probably acted alone in massacring 77 people last week and the killings have not raised risks of new attacks in Norway.

“It is most likely that the perpetrator planned and carried out the actions with no support from others,” it said in a report, saying the bombing and shootings were “unique both in a national and international context.”

“The terrorist acts bring no increase in the threat from known extreme right- or left- wing groups in Norway,” it said after reviewing the killings by Mr. Breivik, a right-wing anti-Islam zealot.

In a 1,500-page manifesto released just before the attacks, Mr. Breivik ranted about Europe being overrun by Muslim immigrants and blamed left-wing political forces for making the continent multicultural.

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Police also said they have identified all of the victims, 68 of whom were killed on the island and eight who died after a car bomb exploded in downtown Oslo.

Mr. Breivik has confessed to both attacks but denies criminal guilt because he believes he's in a state of war, his lawyer and police have said.

Police have charged Mr. Breivik with terrorism, which carries a maximum sentence of 21 years in prison.

However, it's possible the charge will change during the investigation to crimes against humanity, which carries a 30-year prison term, Norway's top prosecutor Tor-Aksel Busch told The Associated Press.

"Such charges will be considered when the entire police investigation has been finalized," he said.

"It is an extensive investigation. We will charge Breivik for each individual killing."

Prosecutors can also seek a special kind of sentence that would enable the court to keep Mr. Breivik in prison indefinitely.

A formal indictment isn't expected until next year, Mr. Busch said.