

Moscow Offers Norway a Hand

By [Alexander Bratersky](#)

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A woman laying flowers beneath a Norwegian flag flying at half-mast outside the country's embassy on Sunday. **Vladimir Filonov**

Pointing to its own struggle with extremism, the government has offered condolences and assistance to Norway in its investigation into a suspected ultranationalist who has admitted to going on a bombing and shooting rampage that killed at least 93 people.

One official also insisted that a similar attack could not happen in Russia, even as ultranationalists warned that an ongoing state crackdown could backfire by encouraging one of their own to take matters into his own hands.

A bombing shook government offices in downtown Oslo on Friday, killing at least seven people. Shortly afterward, a man dressed in a police uniform went on a shooting rampage at a summer camp run by the ruling Labor Party on a small island near the capital, killing 86.

Anders Behring Breivik, 32, told police that he had acted alone and had planned the “gruesome but necessary” attacks for years to promote his ideals of “cultural conservatism.”

He earlier published a 1,500-page manifesto online that denounced multiculturalism, "cultural Marxists" and "economical Marxism," which, he wrote, had destroyed Russia.

Breivik will appear in court on Monday. He faces 21 years in prison — the strictest punishment the Norwegian legal system has for convicts.

Breivik, although linked in years past to right-wing extremists, appears to have no current ties to organized groups, legal or illegal. Nevertheless, President Dmitry Medvedev offered Russia's help.

"The president has offered any kind of help that Russia could offer Norway in overcoming this tragedy," Medvedev's spokeswoman Natalya Timakova said in televised comments Saturday.

Mikhail Margelov, chairman of the Federation Council's International Affairs Committee, said the help could include investigative assistance, seeing Russia's vast experience with extremism. "Unfortunately, we have built up a sad experience in dealing with this," said Margelov, RIA-Novosti [reported](#).

Norwegian police have not commented on the offers.

Medvedev and Prime Minister Vladimir Putin have both expressed condolences, and dozens of people have laid flowers at Norway's embassy in Moscow and consulate in St. Petersburg.

The director of a summer camp closely linked to the ruling United Russia party at the Tver region's Lake Seliger said a similar attack could not happen there. Seliger has a security staff of more than 100 people and a three-tier access system that cannot be traversed without a valid identification and a luggage check, the director, Alexei Volokhov said Sunday, RIA-Novosti [reported](#).

A remotely similar incident — with a vastly different ideological background — took place in Moscow in 2003, when two female Islamist suicide bombers blew themselves up at the Krylya rock festival, killing 20. The bombers failed to pass entry checkpoints, which officials said helped avoid a much higher death toll.

Although Islamists, not ultranationalists, have been blamed for most attacks in Russia, representatives of the country's far-right groups said the Norwegian events might be used by the authorities as a pretext to further suppress them.

"Reaction from authorities around the world indicates this," Dmitry Bakharyov, a representative of Slavic Force, a successor to the banned Slavic Union, said by telephone Sunday.

Slavic Force declared Breivik as "the white hero" on its web site and accompanied a report of the Norwegian attacks with a quote from the Norwegian online newspaper Nettavisen: "It was expected, it was only a question of when it would happen."

Bakharyov blamed Norway's liberal immigration policies for the tragedy. "Norway is one of those countries that shelters Chechen radicals," he said, referring to dozens of Chechens who have moved to Scandinavia since the end of the second Chechen war in the mid-2000s.

Breivik "was not connected to any radical group, he just didn't like the existing situation where his country invites all kinds of immigrants from anywhere," said Bakharyov, whose day job is a lawyer.

Curiously, the Norwegian far right was closely involved with a Slavic Union member, Vyacheslav Datsik, last year. Datsik, a former mixed martial arts champion and convicted robber, fled a psychiatric facility near St. Petersburg and was detained in Norway carrying a gun whose origin he never managed to adequately explain. Aided by local ultranationalists, he unsuccessfully sought asylum and was deported to Russia in March.

Alexei Baranovsky, a leader for Russian Verdict, a public group that provides legal support to rightwing radicals, said he did not expect the government to take a tougher stance on Russian ultranationalists after Norway.

"The screws are wound to the max and being tightened still more, so you don't need an external pretext," said Baranovsky, whose group helped ultranationalists Nikita Tikhonov and Yevgenia Khasis during their trial, which ended with lengthy sentences for both in April. The couple was found guilty of killing human rights lawyer Mikhail Markelov and reporter Anastasia Baburova in 2009.

But, Baranovsky added, the Norwegian massacre is an illustration of how state policies might backfire and urged the authorities to take note. "Maybe some politicians should consider the turn that the nationalist opposition might take if it's not allowed into the parliamentary race," he said. State Duma elections will take place in December.

In the 2000s, the Kremlin regularly faced accusations of "flirting" with ultranationalism, including by creating the nationalist Rodina party just two months before Duma elections in 2003. But the Kremlin later purged Rodina from politics, merging it into the pro-Kremlin Just Russia party in 2006.

Ultranationalists accused in the killings of dark-skinned migrants have also gone on trial in recent months, including a trial that ended last month with the jailing of most members of the paramilitary National Socialist Society.

There are no nationalist parties in the Norwegian parliament, unlike in Finland, where the rightwing True Finns party won 39 seats earlier this year, Baranovsky said. The election victory gives nationalists a voice in the political process that keeps growing dissatisfaction in check, he said. He did not comment on deadly Finnish school shootings in 2007 and 2009, the first of which was also carried out by a man with extremist views. The second has been called a copycat crime.

Law enforcement officials will step up surveillance of rightwing groups following the Norwegian attacks to maintain calm ahead of the Duma elections and the presidential vote in March, said Alexei Mukhin, an analyst with the Center for Political Information. He said Russia's ultranationalists are unlikely to follow Breivik's example for fear of retaliation, but a copycat attack from "a crazy person" could not be ruled out.

"You can't protect yourself from crazy people," he said.

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