



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on July 27, 2011

Political Opportunism Follows Norway Tragedy

But across the world, “experts,” journalists, politicians — just about everybody with an opinion, really — was already either on offense or defense. The media-driven witch-hunt began almost instantly.

Israel haters and Palestinian activists are trying to pin the killer on Israel. Anti-Christian zealots are screeching about the “dangers” of Christianity. Leftist political opportunists are working fiendishly to link the terror to right-of-center parties and activists across Europe. And critics of Freemasonry are hyping his membership in Oslo’s Masonic lodge.



Meanwhile, all of those groups are trying to put as much distance as possible between themselves and the ideas — or at least the methods — supposedly espoused by the killer in police custody.

The Norwegian Order of Freemasons, for example, promptly issued a [press release](#) expelling Anders Behring Breivik as soon as his name was publicly released. The “grand master” said Breivik’s values were contrary to those of Masonry and pledged to cooperate with authorities as needed.

Christians across the world were quick to point out that the teachings of Jesus Christ — “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you” (Matthew 5:44), for instance — are diametrically opposed to such violence. Of course, the killer wasn’t even a true Christian by his [own admission](#), but that hasn’t stopped the press.

Libertarians, conservatives, neo-Nazis, nationalists, racist groups, Masons, Muslims, Zionists, neo-cons, collectivists, anti-immigration activists — every group with the slightest connection to ideas even remotely along the lines of the killer’s has issued statements. As if “ideas” could somehow be responsible for the rampage.

The reason for the frightened frenzy, however, is simple. Despite calls for calm, mourning, and rationality, a sizeable segment of the media and political establishment began manipulating the tragedy almost instantly, seeking to score points for their pet causes or against their perceived political opponents.

The cries have almost become hysterical — particularly vicious against anyone [perceived to be anti-Muslim](#), anti-“multiculturalism,” or anti-immigration. And the political blame game is still growing.

“Right-wing extremists” should not be allowed to have gun licenses, [suggested](#) a Norwegian academic in one of the nation’s big newspapers. Despite the fact that Norway has extraordinarily strict [gun control](#), anti-gun zealots around the world are also exploiting the tragedy. “The staggering toll of young lives taken by a gunman at the Utoya youth camp reminds us all, once again, that guns are the enablers of mass killers,” the U.S.-based Brady Campaign [said](#) in statement. In [Australia](#) and other nations, activists were on the attack as well.



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Calls for more “hate crimes” prosecutions and tighter policing of the Internet have also exploded, even though in much of Europe broad swaths of political discourse have already been criminalized. Some countries, such as Finland, have just announced that they would be scrutinizing the web more closely.

Editorials [urging](#) a Europe-wide “crackdown” on “right-wing extremism” have appeared, too. They went hand-in-hand with the announcement that the European Union’s police agency would be [creating](#) a new taskforce to focus on “non-Islamic extremism” in Northern Europe.

In the United Kingdom, anti-immigration activists are under extraordinary pressure as authorities investigate potential links between the Norwegian terrorist and groups like the English Defence League (EDL). Pressure groups are [calling](#) for the EDL to be classified as an “extremist” organization and for a march it was planning to be prohibited.

Across Europe, a host of political parties, ranging from mainstream Christian Democrats to smaller nationalist parties, are also under intense fire. The media has been waging an unprecedented campaign to demonize them. Incredibly, politicians such as Geert Wilders of the Dutch Freedom Party are even being partly blamed for the atrocity by some of the more extreme commentators. “I would say Wilders is not legally guilty,” historian Dirk-Jan van Baar was [quoted](#) as saying in Dutch state media. “But as a politician he must be perfectly aware that there is such a thing as political responsibility.”

Other “analysts” cited the political climate of increasing concern about Muslim immigration. “It’s part of a growing atmosphere in Europe,” political scientist James Cohen with the American University in Paris [told](#) the *New York Daily News*. “It’s part of the terrain from which men like (Breivik) are gaining their inspiration.”

There will, of course, come a time to discuss policy. But the shameful and immediate opportunism of many media outlets and leftist groups has already started to spark a backlash worldwide.

“Liberals should stop using this tragedy to score points against conservatives,” [wrote](#) Tim Stanley in the U.K. *Telegraph*. “It’s in very poor taste and reflects a profound confusion of priorities.”

A column in Australia’s *Herald Sun* newspaper entitled “[Leftist glee is ghoulish](#)” summed up the media’s general response well, citing more than a few mainstream news outlets and radical leftists that seized the opportunity to “smear their political enemies.” But, the piece noted, “attempts to now smear into silence ... must not succeed.”

Of course, before much was known about the attack, some “neoconservatives” were already using the tragedy to advance their own political agendas — more war in the Middle East and a beefed up global terror war. But once information about the killer emerged, libertarians and anti-war activists tried to pin the blame for the tragedy on “neocons” for allegedly inciting hatred against Muslims.

There have been some voices of moderation amid the hysterical finger pointing, however. “In general, invoking the ideological meanderings of psychopaths is a stalking horse for narrowing permissible dissent,” [wrote](#) the Cato Institute’s Gene Healy in a column for the *Washington Examiner*. “There’s little to be learned from the acts of ‘the obsessed and deranged.’ But these incidents ought to teach us not to use tragedy to score partisan points.”

In Norway, various policy debates have started to pick up steam. Many Norwegians, for example, are outraged that the admitted terrorist could be released in as little as 15 to 30 years under current law. The question of how it could have taken police more than an hour to arrive at the shooting spree has sparked hard questions as well.



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Right now, the terror investigation is still ongoing. The potential existence of a broader conspiracy — the killer in custody claims there are other “cells” waiting to unleash more bloodshed — is still being looked at.

The government, meanwhile, has promised to review security procedures while saying that “more democracy” is the answer. There will undoubtedly be changes coming soon, but the ruling Labor Party has promised that the nation will not abandon its values over terrorism. How the tragedy will affect the rest of the world remains to be seen.

Photo of Anders Behring Breivik: AP Images



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