

Norway: Extremism and Terrorism

On June 21, 2023, ahead of Oslo's LGBTQ+ Pride festival on July 1, the Norwegian Police Security Service (PST) announced that threats against the event had increased, specifically from right-wing extremists and radical Islamists. However, the PST determined that the threats posed no concrete danger and were more likely issued in an attempt to cancel the parade. On June 20, a man was reportedly detained in pre-trial custody for four weeks in Oslo for making threats against the Pride Parade via email and other digital forms. Pride celebrations, a time of the year commemorating the gay liberation movement and celebrating LGBTQ+ identities, have been targeted by violent extremists in the past couple of years. (Source: [Associated Press](#))

On June 25, 2022, a man with a gun carried out a shooting spree in Oslo, killing two and wounding 21 others. The 42-year-old suspect targeted popular LGBTQ+ venue London Pub, the Herr Nilsen jazz club, and another pub. Minutes after the attack began, police apprehended the assailant. Following his arrest, the perpetrator was initially charged with murder, attempted murder, and terrorism acts. Police labeled the attack an "act of Islamist terrorism." According to media sources, the suspected assailant, Zaniar Matapour, is a Norwegian citizen of Iranian origin. Security officials had previously questioned him in May but did not consider him a threat at the time. Additionally, security services had been aware of him since 2015 as a "suspected radicalized Islamist." Following the attack, Norway canceled its annual Pride parade at the advice of the police. On June 27, the Oslo District Court ordered Matapour held for four weeks on suspicion of murder and attempted murder. However, the court did not include terrorism charges as Matapour's motives, as well as whether he acted alone, remain unknown. On June 29, Norway's domestic security agency lowered its threat assessment to its second-highest level and warned the shooting could inspire others. On July 13, a court ordered Matapour be placed under psychiatric observation at Haukeland University Hospital in Bergen for at least eight weeks. As of 2023, no trial date has been set to persecute Matapour. (Source: [BBC News](#), [Reuters](#), [CBS News](#), [Associated Press](#), [Associated Press](#), [Agence France-Presse](#), [Reuters](#), [Associated Press](#))

The Oslo shootings come almost a year after another suspected act of Islamist terrorism. On October 13, 2021, a Danish man carrying a bow and arrow attacked the town of Kongsberg. The assailant, who is from the town, killed five and injured three others before being apprehended by police. Police believe the perpetrator, 37-year-old Espen Andersen Braathen, acted alone, but revealed the attack would be treated as an act of terror as the suspect had converted to Islam and was previously in contact with police due to concerns related to radicalization. Given the seriousness of the incident, the police in Norway—who do not usually carry firearms—were given the rare order to carry firearms as a precaution. On June 24, 2022, Braathen was sentenced to obligatory mental health care as a group of forensic psychiatric experts believed he suffered from chronic paranoid schizophrenia. (Sources: [CNN](#), [CNN](#), [Reuters](#), [Times of Israel](#), [Deutsche Welle](#))

Overview

The Norwegian Police Security Service (Politets Sikkerhetstjeneste or PST) reported in 2014 that the most important task would be "to prevent persons with close links to Norway from becoming involved in terrorist attacks." According to a PST press release in July 2014, "the terror threat from extreme Islamists against Norway and Norwegian interests is increasing." Since November 2014, PST chief Benedicte Bjørnland has raised the threat level three times. The second increase occurred in the aftermath of the January 2015 *Charlie Hebdo* attacks in Paris when it was reported that Norway and Denmark could be targeted next. The third increase occurred in April 2017, when the likelihood of an attack was raised from "possible" to "probable" after the discovery of a homemade bomb in Grønland, central Oslo. According to the PST 2019 threat assessment, "[e]xtreme Islamist groups will still represent the most serious terrorist threat in 2019." The PST also lowered the terrorist threat level to "possible," in the event that extreme Islamists attempt to carry out terrorist attacks in the country. (Sources: [Politets Sikkerhetstjeneste](#), [Politets Sikkerhetstjeneste](#), [BBC News](#), [The Local](#), [Politets Sikkerhetstjeneste](#))

The PST has identified the presence of an "extremist milieu in South-Eastern Norway," led by a few individuals who wield a great deal of influence. It is thought that between 60 to 150 Norwegians have emerged from this setting as radicalized fighters to join Islamic extremist groups in Syria and Iraq. (Source: [News in English](#))

On February 4, 2020, Hans Sverre Sjøvold, the new chief of PST announced that they believe that it is just as probable that a new terrorist attack will be carried out by right-wing extremists as by Islamic extremists. According to the PST, there has been an increase since 2018 in expressions of support for right-wing extremism throughout Norway, with right-wing attack most likely to be carried out by lone assailants targeting gathering places of Muslims and other non-Western immigrants. (Source: [Norway News](#))

Norway and Scandinavia's worst extremist attack occurred in July 2011, when far-right white supremacist Anders Behring Breivik detonated a car bomb and on the same day massacred teenagers and adults at the Norwegian Workers' Youth League's annual summer camp. Seventy-seven people

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were killed and over 300 wounded. Eighteen months later, five Norwegian Statoil employees were killed in the Algerian hostage crisis perpetrated by the Islamic extremist group al-Mourabitoun. In response to these attacks, and especially in view of extensive Norwegian oil interests around the world, Norway announced the creation of a new counterterrorism unit in early 2013. (Sources: [Telegraph](#), [New Yorker](#), [Guardian](#), [Wall Street Journal](#))

Radicalization and Foreign Fighters

Islamist Extremism

According to the PST, Islamist extremism continued to represent the most significant terrorist threat in 2018, particularly Islamist-inspired terrorist attacks by one or more individuals. Still, Norway lowered its overall terrorist threat level from “probable” to “possible” in evaluating the likelihood of an attack. Other European countries, including France, the United Kingdom, and Germany, face a greater threat from groups like al-Qaeda and ISIS. ISIS’s loss of territory in Syria and Iraq has also led to reduced radicalization efforts and support for radical Islamism in Norway. The presence of extreme Islamist milieus declined, especially compared to the period between 2012 and 2015. There have been fewer public demonstrations and propaganda activities since several key ISIS figures are either imprisoned or were killed in Syria and Iraq. Nonetheless, existing propaganda is still accessible and used to radicalize and plan attacks by small groups and lone individuals. The PST believes that radicalization efforts continue to occur primarily on the Internet, at asylum centers, in prisons, and at religious congregations that can provide a platform for foreign radical imams. (Sources: [Politiets Sikkerhetstjeneste](#), [Politiets Sikkerhetstjeneste](#))

The PST has identified the Oslofjord area of Oslo as the primary area for extremist radicalization and recruitment. The most notable Islamist group operating in Norway is the Ummah of the Prophet (*Profetens Ummah*), which is based in the east of the country close to Oslo. In 2010, Profetens Ummah emerged as an informal group demonstrating against the daily newspaper *Dagbladet*, which published a caricature depicting Prophet Mohammed as a pig. In September 2012, approximately 150 sympathizers of Profetens Ummah demonstrated in front of the U.S. embassy in Oslo in response to the controversial short-film *The Innocence of Muslims*. The group drew increasing attention through its conducting of street dawa to proselytize and provocative demands for so-called sharia zones. In December 2012, Profetens Ummah confirmed links with the now-banned British Islamist extremist group Islam4UK, led by radical preacher [Anjem Choudary](#).

Speaking to Norwegian tabloid *Verdens Gang*, Profetens Ummah spokesman Ubaydullah Hussain, a Norwegian of Pakistani descent, declared “absolute” support for the ISIS and his belief that sharia should be implemented in Norway. Hussain has been labeled the “door-opener and ISIL’s voice in Norway” by Norwegian state prosecutor Frederik G. Ranke. In February 2014, he was convicted of hate speech against Jews and given a 120-day prison sentence. In July 2014, Hussain was charged with incitement to violence but was later acquitted. In December 2015, he was arrested and charged for recruiting terrorists and helping foreign fighters by providing both equipment and advice. In what became Norway’s first trial over the recruitment of potential ISIS fighters, Hussain was sentenced to 9 years in prison in April 2017. The judgement was confirmed at the Borgarting Court of Appeal in January 2018. (Sources: [Dagbladet](#), [Politiets sikkerhetstjeneste](#), [NRK](#), [Hate Speech International](#), [The Local](#), [News in English](#), [Store Norske Leksikon](#))

Another prominent Norwegian-based Islamist group is Rawti Shax, a Sunni Muslim terrorist network that also maintains cells in other European countries including Germany, Greece, Italy and the United Kingdom, as well as Iran, Iraq, and Syria. It seeks the establishment of a caliphate in the Kurdish Region of Iraq (KRI) and the implementation of sharia. Its leader is the “celebrity jihadist” Mullah Krekar, a U.S.- and U.N.-sanctioned terrorist who found sanctuary in Norway as a Kurdish refugee and subsequently threatened the country’s Prime Minister Erna Solberg. In 2012, Krekar was sentenced to five years imprisonment for making repeated death threats against Norwegian politicians and the Kurdish people, and was released early in January 2015. In November 2015, 13 members of Krekar’s organization—as well as Krekar himself—were arrested in Norway, Italy, and Britain. The suspects are accused of recruiting for ISIS, and their sentences still pending. (Sources: [NBC News](#), [CBS News](#), [Terrorism Research & Analysis Consortium](#), [Reuters](#))

While “Norway seems an unlikely place for Islamist extremism... [and] does not have radical mosques,” approximately 100 fighters from Norway have traveled to Syria and Iraq, some of which have even assumed leadership positions with ISIS. According to the Norwegian Intelligence Service (*Etterretningstjenesten* or *E-tjenesten* or NIS) that figure was 150 as of the start of 2015. The Soufan Group issued an official figure of 81 by October 2015. In fall 2017, the PST registered its last attempt to join ISIS in Syria and Iraq. As of February 2019, approximately 30 Norwegian foreign fighters remain in the conflict area, but are unlikely to return to Norway. These numbers are fewer than other Nordic countries but not insignificant for a country of only 5 million that is known for its political tranquility. According to a September 2016 PST report, one in every five radicalized Muslim is a convert to Islam. Approximately 90 percent are not ethnically Norwegian, and 61 percent immigrated to Norway as children or youths.

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While the vast majority of radicalized Norwegians are young men, the Internet has apparently also facilitated the phenomenon of “a larger number of women...becoming more active members of the extreme Islamist Oslofjord milieu.” The report also noted that almost three-fourths of radicalized individuals started their radicalization following the start of the Syria conflict, and warned of a “large potential for radicalisation also in the future....” (Sources: [New York Review of Books](#), [Washington Post](#), [Soufan Group](#), [U.S. Department of State](#), [Politiets Sikkerhetstjeneste](#), [Russia Today](#), [Norwegian Government](#))

On January 20, 2020, Norwegian Foreign Minister Ine Eriksen Soreide announced that Norway would repatriate both a Norwegian woman linked to ISIS and her two children, one of which is gravely ill. Soreide claims the repatriation is based on humanitarian reasons to treat the sick child. The administration previously refused repatriating the mother—who is described as Pakistani but had married a Norwegian extremist killed in fighting—but relented for the best interest of the child. (Source: [Arab News](#))?

Far-Right Extremism

Right-wing extremism in Norway is characterized by unorganized and loosely connected networks, with the exception of the [Nordic Resistance Movement](#) (*Den nordiske motstandsbevegelsen*, or NRM). The NRM is a transnational, neo-Nazi organization with official chapters operating in Sweden, Finland, and Norway. Formed in 1997, the NRM seeks to merge all Nordic countries into a single, nationalist-socialist state, either by elections or through revolution. The group is openly racist, anti-immigrant, anti-Semitic, and pro-Hitler—and has carried out violence targeting gay people, ideological opponents, and Muslim refugees. (Sources: [Politiets Sikkerhetstjeneste](#), [Hate Speech International](#), [NRM](#), [National Vanguard](#), [Yle](#), [Valmyndigheten](#), [The Times](#), [Expo Idag](#), [Washington Post](#))

Far-right extremist groups have recently grown in numbers and increased their visibility offline and online by engaging in hate speech and issuing threats. However, the NRM and other far-right groups in Norway are unlikely to carry out major violent or terrorist attacks in the near future, according to the PST. Rather, these groups focus on organizational development and recruitment of new members. Still, some far-right extremists’ broad interpretation of self-defense could increase the propensity for violence in tense situations like public demonstrations. Moreover, the affinity of firearms and weapons by far-right extremists is also of concern. Norwegian far-right groups also direct their hatred and frustration towards government authorities for “allowing and facilitating the destruction of the Norwegian way of life and culture by various minority groups,” including non-Western immigrants, Muslims, Jews, and LGBTQ people. (Sources: [Politiets Sikkerhetstjeneste](#), [Politiets Sikkerhetstjeneste](#))

In the past decade, far-right extremists have taken to carrying out lone-wolf attacks, as seen by Philip Manshaus in 2019 and Anders Behring Breivik in 2011. Both fervently espoused anti-immigrant and far-right beliefs and often lacked remorse for their actions at their respective trials as they both claimed their only regret was to have killed more people. (Sources: [Independent](#), [New York Times](#))

Far-Left Extremism

Left-wing extremism is of marginal concern in Norway, despite some activity since 2017, including exposing and occasionally harassing those they define as neo-Nazis. Left-wing extremists usually resort to non-violent means, like disturbance of public order and counter-demonstrations. However, some see violence as an efficient method to reinforce their political convictions. The PST is also concerned about the increasing links between leftist extremist groups throughout Europe, some of which are highly violent European groups and may inspire Norwegians to pursue violent actions against opinion opponents. (Sources: [Politiets Sikkerhetstjeneste](#), [Politiets Sikkerhetstjeneste](#))

Major Extremist and Terrorist Incidents

Between 1970 and 2010, there were only 16 small-scale terrorist attacks that took place in Norway. In this span of 40 years, one person was killed and 13 injured. In fact, the Council of Europe’s Committee of Experts on Terrorism does not recognize these 16 acts as “terrorism” at all, stating in 2008 that “Norway has been spared acts of terrorism on Norwegian soil.” It was only in late 2014 that police began carrying guns. Norwegian police at Oslo’s airport and in major cities were again issued with firearms in response to a truck attack on April 7, 2017, that killed four people in Stockholm, Sweden, Norway’s neighbor. (Sources: [Huffington Post](#), [CODEXTER](#), [Reuters](#))

2019 Al Noor Islamic Center Shooting

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On August 10, 2019, a gunman inspired by white extremist attacks in Christchurch and El Paso attacks a mosque near Oslo. The suspect, Philip Manshaus, reportedly shot and killed his ethnically Chinese stepsister before driving to Al Noor Islamic Center nearby. Manshaus, wearing body armor and a helmet equipped with a GoPro, allegedly carried two shotgun-like weapons and a pistol. Manshaus broke through a glass door and fired shots before being overpowered by a 65-year-old member of the mosque who later sustained light injuries. (Source: [New York Times](#))

Police held Manshaus on suspicion of murder, as well as of breaching anti-terrorism law by spreading fear among the population. The Norwegian police security service, PST, claimed to have received a tip regarding Manshaus in 2018, but did not launch an investigation. According to reports, Manshaus maintained an active presence online, often expressing far-right, anti-immigrant views. (Source: [Reuters](#))

On May 8, 2020, trials began for Manshaus. At the trial, Manshaus claimed the attack was an act of “emergency justice” and that he was “ashamed” that he did not cause more harm. Manshaus acknowledged the attack but pled not guilty, justifying his actions due to his far-right beliefs. If found guilty, Manshaus faces 21 years in prison, with prosecutors considering a sentence that will place Manshaus in a mental facility for as long as he is considered a danger to others. Manshaus was sentenced to 21 years in prison on June 11, 2020. Manshaus must serve a 14-year minimum sentence, which is more than the minimum 10 years in the case of Anders Behring Brevik. (Source: [Independent](#), [Al Jazeera](#), [BBC News](#))

2011 Oslo and Utøya Attacks

On July 22, 2011, Anders Behring Breivik detonated a bomb adjacent to Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg’s office and the Norwegian Oil and Energy Department building. Eight people were killed and a further 15 injured. One and a half hours later, Breivik arrived on the small island of Utøya, which was hosting its annual summer camp for the Norwegian Workers’ Youth League (AUF). The AUF is a large political youth organization that is affiliated with Norway’s Labour Party. Dressed in the uniform of a policeman, Breivik methodically proceeded to massacre 69 participants who were mainly teenagers.

Hours prior to the attacks, Breivik disseminated his “manifesto” entitled “2083 – A European Declaration of Independence,” condemning multiculturalism, Islam, “cultural Marxists” and the Norwegian Labour Party. On August 24, 2012, Breivik was sentenced to the maximum permitted term under Norwegian law of 21 years in prison. The sentence may be extended by up to five years, for an indefinite number of times. Breivik has been held in near isolation in a prison in Skien, south of Oslo, due to concerns that he could radicalize others. In 2016, Breivik claimed that the conditions violated human rights, but Norway’s Supreme Court ruled otherwise, and the European Courts of Human Rights in Strasbourg also refused his appeal. Breivik was denied parole during a February 1, 2022, hearing, during which he raised a Nazi salute and displayed racist placards. (Sources: [Aftenposten](#), [Telegraph](#), [New York Times](#), [Washington Post](#), [New York Times](#))

In June 2021, the Center for Research on Extremism (C-REX) at the University of Oslo reported results from a survey of 2000 Norwegians seeking to gain insight into the population’s understanding of the July 22, 2011, attack. A little over 80 percent of those surveyed believed that right-wing extremist ideology was behind the attack, and accordingly 90 percent of respondents believed the terror attacks were a result of madness. However, around 27 percent of respondents reported to somewhat sympathize with Breivik’s story. Around 60 percent of those surveyed claimed Norwegian democracy was attacked while 55 percent believed the attack was aimed at the Labour Party. Additionally, 40 percent believed multicultural Norway was attacked, and that 20 percent believed the attack targeted the Norwegian political left. (Source: [Science Norway](#))

In Amenas Gas Plant Hostage Crisis

On January 16, 2013, then al-Qaeda-affiliated Algerian Islamist group, [al-Mourabitoun](#), infiltrated the Tigantourine gas plant near In Amenas in eastern Algeria, 800 miles from the capital city Algiers. The gas plant was part-owned by the Norwegian state-owned Statoil company (now Equinor). During the four-day siege, 13 Norwegian hostages were taken, four of whom managed to escape to a nearby camp. Out of the 40 workers killed by al-Mourabitoun, five were Norwegian employees. On January 19, Algerian forces ended the raid, killing or capturing the hostage-takers. Led by notorious Algerian extremist commander Mokhtar Belmokhtar, al-Mourabitoun pledged allegiance to ISIS in September 2014. (Sources: [News in English](#), [Global Terrorism Database](#), [Agence-France Presse](#), [Guardian](#), [RAND Corporation](#), [BBC News](#))

- On June 21, a week before the LGBTQ+ Pride festival on July 1, the Norwegian Police Security Service (PST) announces that threats against the event had increased, specifically from right-wing extremists and radical Islamists. However, the PST determines that the threats posed no concrete danger and were more likely issued in an attempt to cancel the parade. The day prior on June 20, PST detain a man in pre-trial custody for four weeks in Oslo for making threats against the Pride Parade via email and other digital forms. Source: [Associated Press](#)
- **June 25, 2022:** An armed man goes on a shooting spree in Oslo, killing two and wounding 21 others.

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The 42-year-old suspect targets popular LGBTQ+ venue London Pub, the Herr Nilsen jazz club, and another pub. Minutes after the attack begins, police apprehend the assailant. Following his arrest, the perpetrator is initially charged with murder, attempted murder, and terrorists acts. Police label the attack as an “act of Islamist terrorism.” According to media sources, the suspected assailant, Zaniar Matapour, is a Norwegian citizen of Iranian origin. Security officials had previously questioned him in May but did not consider him a threat at the time. Additionally, security services had been aware of him since 2015 as a “suspected radicalized Islamist.” The attack is carried out during Pride celebrations, a time of the year commemorating the gay liberation movement and celebrating LGBTQ+ identities. Following the attack, Norway cancels its annual Pride parade at the advice of the police. Additionally, Norwegian security authorities raise the country’s terrorism threat assessment to its highest level. On June 27, an Oslo District Court orders Matapour held for four weeks on suspicion of murder and attempted murder. The court does not include the terrorism charges as Matapour’s motives remained unknown. Matapour continues to refuse police questioning, making it difficult for investigators to determine his motives or whether he acted alone. On June 29, Norway’s domestic security agency lowers its threat assessment to its second-highest level and warned the shooting could inspire others. On July 13, a court orders Matapour be placed under psychiatric observation at Haukeland University Hospital in Bergen for at least eight weeks. Sources: [BBC News](#), [Reuters](#), [CBS News](#), [Associated Press](#), [Associated Press](#), [Agence France-Presse](#), [Reuters](#)

- **May 30, 2022:** Norway’s domestic security agency, PST, arrests a man in Oslo for having “expressed support” for al-Qaeda through Internet-based activities.
That same day, a Norwegian student in Bulgaria is taken into custody. Bulgarian authorities claim the suspect, who is connected to the Oslo detainee, is being investigated on charges of membership in a terrorist organization, preparing a terrorist attack, and inciting terrorism. According to Bulgarian authorities, the suspect was preparing a terrorist attack and engaging people in terrorist activities. The attack was reportedly planned to take place not in Bulgaria, but elsewhere in Europe. Sources: [Balkan Insight](#), [Arab News](#)
- **January 23, 2022 - January 25, 2022:** Oslo hosts three days of discussions between a Taliban delegation, western government officials, and Afghan civil society groups.
The Taliban delegation, led by acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi, met with western officials—including Britain, the European Union, France, Germany, Italy, and the United States—and Afghan civil society leaders to discuss the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan and human rights. Following the Taliban’s takeover of Kabul in August 2021, the Taliban has drastically curtailed the rights of women, and the country faces ongoing economic and humanitarian crises, as well as security and counterterrorism concerns. Sources: [Associated Press](#), [Al Jazeera](#)
- **October 13, 2021:** A Danish man carrying a bow and arrow attacks the town of Kongsberg.
The assailant, who is from the town, kills five and injures three others before being apprehended by police. Police believe the perpetrator, 37-year-old Espen Andersen Braathen, acted alone, but reveal the attack would be treated as an act of terror as the suspect had converted to Islam and was previously in contact with police due to concerns related to radicalization. Given the seriousness of the incident the police in Norway—who usually do not carry firearms—are given the rare order to carry firearms as a precaution. On June 24, 2022, Braathen is sentenced to obligatory mental health care as a group of forensic psychiatric experts believe he suffers from chronic paranoid schizophrenia. Sources: [CNN](#), [CNN](#), [Reuters](#), [Times of Israel](#), [Deutsche Welle](#)
- **June 30, 2021:** The Oslo District Court sentences a Syrian teenager to five years in prison for planning an act of terror and for supporting ISIS. The teen was first arrested in Oslo in February, after buying ingredients to make poison, donating \$146 to a website supporting ISIS, and downloading material on how to make and handle explosives. Additionally, the teenager posted a video on how to upload propaganda for the terrorist group. Although the teen claims he exaggerated his plans online to commit a terror attack, the judge presiding the case believes the defendant made “a conscious decision to [attempt to] carry out an act of terror.” Source: [Times of Israel](#)
- **October 22, 2019:** An armed man steals an ambulance in Oslo and drives it into a crowd, wounding three, including 7-month-old twins. The hijacker is wounded in a firefight with police who then arrest him and charge him with attempted murder. A woman at a nearby shopping center is also arrested in connection with the attack on a charge of illegal possession of a firearm. Police find a shotgun and an Uzi machine gun at the scene where the ambulance was stolen. Authorities do not immediately identify a motive for the attack. The attacker reportedly had previously distributed propaganda for the Nordic Resistance Movement, raising suspicion of a far-right motive, though he allegedly did not belong to the group. Sources: [BBC News](#), [Agence France-Presse](#), [Telegraph](#)
- **August 10, 2019:** A gunman inspired by white extremist attacks in Christchurch and El Paso attacks a mosque near Oslo.
The suspect, Philip Manshaus, reportedly shot and killed his ethnically Chinese stepsister before driving to the Al Noor Islamic Center nearby. Manshaus, wearing body armor and a helmet equipped with a GoPro, allegedly carried two shotgun-like weapons and a pistol. Manshaus broke through a glass door and fired shots before being overpowered by a 65-year-old member of the mosque who later sustained light injuries. On June 11, 2020, Manshaus was sentenced to 21 years in prison. Manshaus must serve a 14-year minimum sentence, which is more than the minimum 10 years in the case of Anders Behring Breivik. Sources: [New York Times](#), [Independent](#), [Al Jazeera](#), [BBC News](#)
- **January 17, 2019:** A woman is knifed by a 20-year-old Russian man.
The suspect told authorities that he wanted to kill as many people as possible. The PST investigate the incident as an act of terrorism. Source: [Reuters](#)
- **December 17, 2018:** Two Scandinavian female tourists—one Danish and one Norwegian—are stabbed to death in the Atlas Mountains of Morocco.
Authorities arrest four suspects, who allegedly pledged allegiance to ISIS earlier. On December 30, another suspect is arrested in connection with the murders and also accused of “involvement in recruiting Moroccan and sub-Saharan nationals to carry out terrorist plots in Morocco against foreign targets....” Sources: [Independent](#), [Guardian](#)
- Police arrest a leader of an Islamist extremist group.
Source: [U.S Department of State](#)
- **April 8, 2017:** Authorities discover a homemade bomb in Grønland, a busy area in downtown Oslo, and safely detonate the device.

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The following day, Norwegian police arrest a 17-year-old Russian man suspected of placing the bomb. The terrorist threat level is raised from “possible” to “probable.” Sources: [BBC News](#), [The Local](#)

- Authorities convict several Norwegians for supporting or aiding ISIS.
Source: [U.S Department of State](#)
- **January 12, 2016:** ISIS carries out a suicide bomb attack in Istanbul near the Blue Mosque, also a popular tourist site. The blast kills 10 and leaves 15 wounded, including a Norwegian national. Source: [BBC News](#)
- **November 18, 2015:** ISIS executes two hostages, including Norwegian national Ole Johan Grimsgaard-Ofstad, after demanding ransom from the government for his release.
Norway refused to pay the ransom. Sources: [Daily Mail](#), [Newsweek](#)
- **November 12, 2015:** European authorities arrest 13 members of Mullah Krekar’s Rawti Shax organization in Norway, Italy, and Britain. The suspects are accused of recruiting foreign fighters for ISIS. Source: [CBS News](#)
- The PST launches a national investigation of returned foreign fighters, charges 26 returnees, and subsequently convicts and imprisons several of them.
Source: [Office of the Prime Minister of Norway](#)
- **November 19, 2014:** Two Norwegian ISIS fighters are killed in Syria. One of them, Eritrean-born Hisham Hussain Ahmed, held a leadership position within the terrorist group. Source: [The Nordic Page](#)
- **June 14, 2014:** Two men attack Imam Nehmat Ali Shah outside a mosque in Oslo. They are sentenced to three years in prison by the Borgarting Court of Appeal in Oslo on February 7, 2019. Source: [Norway Today](#)
- Somali-Norwegian Hassan Abdi Dhuhulow, raised in Norway but living in Somalia since 2010, takes part in the Westgate mall terrorist attack in Nairobi, Kenya, killing 67 and wounding over 175. Al-Shabab claims responsibility for the attack. Sources: [Politiets Sikkerhets-Tjeneste](#), [CBC News](#)
- **January 16, 2013:** Al-Mourabitoun takes 13 Norwegian hostages at the In Amenas gas plant in Algeria. Five are killed. Sources: [Guardian](#), [BBC News](#)
- **July 22, 2011:** White supremacist and right-wing extremist Anders Behring Breivik stages two lone wolf attacks against government officials and young attendees of a Labour Party island summer camp outside Oslo. He murders 77 in total, mostly teenagers. In August 2012, Breivik is sentenced to the maximum permitted term under Norwegian law of 21 years in prison. Sources: [New York Times](#), [Washington Post](#)
- **February 4, 2006:** The Norwegian embassy in Beirut is stormed and set ablaze by mainly Sunni Islamic extremists. The attack was in response to the republication in Norwegian outlets of originally Danish cartoons of the Prophet Mohamed. Along with the Danish flag, Norwegian flags are also burned in the streets of Beirut. The editor of *Magazinet* and the head of the Norwegian press federation are later threatened by Islamic extremists. Sources: [Telegraph](#), [News in English](#)

Domestic Counter-Extremism

Intelligence and Security Infrastructure

The Norwegian Police Security Service (*Politiets Sikkerhetstjeneste* or PST) is Norway’s domestic security service, which is primarily responsible to prevent and investigate crimes that may pose a danger to national security. The PST operates parallel to the country’s police service and reports to the Minister of Justice. The Norwegian Intelligence Service (*Etterretningstjenesten* or *E-tjenesten* or NIS) is the country’s only foreign intelligence service and reports to the Minister of Defense. The Norwegian National Security Authority (*Nasjonal Sikkerhetsmyndighet* or NSM) is a cross-sectoral professional and supervisory authority, responsible for areas such as security administration, physical protection, document security, personnel security, as well as IT security certification and monitoring. The NSM reports to the Minister of Defense (military sector) and the Minister of Justice (civil sector). The Norwegian Defence Security Department (*Forsvarets Sikkerhetsavdeling* or FSA or NORDSD) is responsible for the operational security of the armed forces, including threats associated with espionage, sabotage, and terrorist acts that may affect military activities or national security. The FSA reports to the Minister of Defense. (Sources: [European Network of National Intelligence Reviewers](#))

On February 4, 2020, Hans Sverre Sjøvold, the new chief of PST announced that they believe that it is just as probable that a new terrorist attack will be carried out by right-wing extremists as by Islamic extremists. According to the PST, there has been an increase since 2018 in expressions of support for right-wing extremism throughout Norway, with right-wing attacks most likely to be carried out by lone assailants targeting gathering places of Muslims and other non-Western immigrants. On August 11, 2021, the PST reported a rise in reports of far-right radicalization among Norwegian teenagers and men. Throughout 2021, the PST received 400 to 500 reports of concern or tips about people that they later followed up with. Additionally, the number of tips or warnings about potential radicalization was reportedly much higher. If the tips the PST follows up with are deemed serious, the PST logs the incident to document whether the person of interest will have the intention and capacity to carry out a violent act of terrorism. (Sources: [Norway News](#), [Norway News](#))

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With 20,000 employees located in 30 countries, including in North Africa and the Middle East, operations of the state-owned Equinor company (formerly Statoil) continue to be of particular concern for Norwegian authorities. Following the 2013 Statoil attack in Algeria—that killed 40 people, including five Statoil employees—Norway established a counterterrorism unit led by the PST and with assistance from the NIS. In 2014, the Joint Counter Terrorism Center became fully operational, devoting significant resources to identifying, tracking, and taking action against Norwegian citizens intending to travel to and from Syria and Iraq to participate in fighting. (Sources: [Wall Street Journal](#), [Equinor](#), [European Commission](#), [U.S. Department of State](#))

Legislation

The 2011 Oslo and Utøya attacks prompted several changes to Norway’s terrorism law and emergency preparedness legislation. In 2013, Norway adopted provisions to close the “lone offender” loophole, which required proof of a large conspiracy for a terrorist conviction. The new law also criminalizes the receipt of terrorist training. Moreover, Norwegian laws criminalize conducting or planning to conduct a terrorist attack and providing support to a terrorist organization with money, material, recruitment, fighting, and related crimes. The maximum prison sentences are 30 years for serious terrorism offenses. In 2016, Norway adopted amendments to the Penal Code that strengthened its travel laws by criminalizing traveling or attempting to travel abroad to participate in military activities in an armed conflict, for example to fight on behalf of a “non-state actor.” (Sources: [U.S. Department of State](#), [U.S. Department of State](#), [U.S. Department of State](#))

In May 2016, Norway agreed to share fingerprint information in criminal investigations with the European Union and the United States as part of the Preventing and Combating Serious Crimes data-sharing agreement. Norway has also explored the opportunity to share Passenger Name Record (PNR) data with the EU and simultaneously developed a national PNR system. In November 2016, Norwegian police piloted an automated biometric identification system, which officials aimed to implement nationally in 2018. (Source: [U.S. Department of State](#))

Norway has adopted strong legislation against “hate speech,” even relative to other European countries. In February 2014, former Profetens Ummah chief Ubaydallah Hussain was convicted of hate speech against Jews and given a 120-day prison sentence. However, Hussain was released immediately because he had already served most of that time in custody. In a further case brought against Hussain by the PST, he was again arrested in October 2014 for incitements to violence. However, he was acquitted of all charges. According to Norwegian associate legal professor Bjørnar Borvik, “[t]here are reasons to believe that a change has come in the Supreme Court’s stance and that hate speech is less protected than it was earlier.” Despite Norway’s strong legislation, around nine out of ten cases are dismissed. This approach reflects Norway’s overall ethos in counter-radicalization efforts, which emphasizes “reform rather than punishment [...] to help guide young people away from radicalization and potentially negative influences, and to inspire them to achieve their goals through mainstream processes.” (Sources: [Politiets Sikkerhetstjeneste](#), [Associated Press](#), [Verdens Gang](#), [International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence](#))

In November 2016, the Norwegian government launched the 2016-2020 Strategy against Hate Speech. Part of the strategy aims to create arenas for dialogue and raise awareness of the consequences of hate speech, as well as facilitating the identification, investigation, and conviction of those who incite hatred. (Source: [Norwegian Ministry of Children and Equality](#))

Counter Terrorist Financing

Norway has been a member of the international Financial Action Task Force (FATF) since 1991. In its 2014 Norway country report, the FATF commended Norway for taking “good initiatives to combat money laundering and terrorist financing.” However, FATF also highlighted important weaknesses, including poor policy coordination and the lack of an overarching anti-money laundering (AML) strategy. On AML, the report specifically pointed to deficiencies regarding a possible terrorist/non-profit sector nexus, stressing “a lack of measures to ensure that terrorist organisations cannot pose as legitimate NPOs [non-profit organizations], or to ensure that funds/assets collected by or transferred through NPOs are not diverted to support the activities of terrorist acts or terrorist organisations.” The Norwegian government has since enacted legislation to tighten holes in possible NPO enabling of terrorist and extremist groups. However, for non-profits that are not classified as “foundations,” registration is not mandatory and fundraising is likewise recorded on an unregulated “voluntary register.” Ultimately, FATF concludes that “[g]iven the largely voluntary nature of registration of NPOs in Norway, sanctions appear to be limited to removal of benefits accruable to NPOs... [and] [i]t is not clear that the legislation explicitly provides for measures to sanction cases of non-compliance.” (Sources: [FATF](#), [FATF](#))

In March 2018, the FATF published an analysis report on Norway’s progress in addressing the technical compliance deficiencies identified in 2014 and indicated improvements in compliance. In October 2018, the Norwegian Anti Money Laundering Act and the Money Laundering Regulation entered into force, implementing most of the European Union’s 4th and 5th Anti-Money Laundering Directive of 2015 and 2018, respectively.

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While Norway extended the AML regime to additional service providers, like virtual currency exchange service providers, a central register of beneficial owners has not yet been established. A December 2019 FATF assessment praised Norway for continuing to improve its AML processes and raised its level of effectiveness from Moderate to Substantial. The FATF recommended Norway continue to focus on strengthening its effectiveness, including ensuring appropriate supervision, monitoring, and regulation of financial institutions and lawyers, real estate agents, and other non-financial entities. (Sources: [FATF](#), [FATF](#), [Wikborg Rein Advokatfirma](#), [FATF](#), [FATF](#))

Nordic Safe Cities

The Nordic Council of Ministers initiated Nordic Safe Cities in 2016, in an effort to strengthen collaboration and share best practices across Nordic cities to prevent the spread of extremism. Nordic Safe cities is an alliance of cities working together to safeguard citizens from extremist violence, hate, and fear. More than 40 cities and 800 experts are involved in the project as Nordic Safe Cities provides evidence-based advice, resources, and initiatives to address the ongoing threat of extremism. (Source: [Nordic Safe Cities](#))

European Relations

Although not a member of the European Union, Norway is part of the Schengen Area, which allows transiting throughout 26 European countries without formal border controls. However, Norway has implemented tighter border security during certain periods, most notably in July 2014 in response to unspecified but “credible terrorist threats.” Citizens returning to Norway were expected to show identification in the form of either a passport or international ID card, even for short trips to neighboring Sweden and ferry journeys to Denmark. (Sources: [News in English](#), [European Commission](#))

Norway also actively contributes to the EU’s Radicalization Awareness Network, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, as well as the Global Counterterrorism Forum. In 2017, Norway co-established the Group of Friends at the United Nations on preventing violent extremism and supported the publication of a U.N. study on foreign terrorist fighters. Norway also co-sponsored U.N. Security Council resolution 2178 on measures to address the threat posed by foreign terrorist fighters, and resolution 2396 on returning and relocating foreign terrorist fighters. (Sources: [U.S. Department of State](#), [Office of the Prime Minister of Norway](#))

International Counter-Extremism

Since the formation of the Global Coalition against Daesh in September 2014, Norway has contributed to the fight against ISIS on several fronts. Norwegian experts have been involved in analyzing ISIS’s sources of financing and helped blocking particularly those related to the oil and energy sector. The Norwegian military has provided training, advice, and operational support to Kurdish security forces in Iraq and local Syrian groups fighting against ISIS. Among the approximately 110 troops from Norway’s army and Special Forces are soldiers from the elite Telemark Battalion, which has been involved in the fight against the Taliban as part of NATO operations since 2003. Around 50 soldiers are reported to be taking part in the training mission in Iraq. According to a former U.S. Army sergeant, “this well-trained and disciplined unit of Norwegian soldiers would be able to make very short work of any ISIS soldiers they encountered.” The Norwegian military also deployed medical personnel to the coalition’s hospital in Erbil, and provided an estimated \$345 million dollars in assistance in 2017 to address the humanitarian crises in Iraq and Syria. In February 2018, the Norwegian Ministry of Defense announced its continued contribution to fight ISIS through the end of 2018, promising to maintain the number of troops at about the same level. Norway also expressed commitment to remain in Jordan for logistical support, and retain a limited number of staff officers at coalition headquarters. On June 24, 2021, the government of Norway donated \$8.3 million—and an overall donation of \$64.6 million since 2015—to the Funding Facility for Stabilization, a program headed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Iraq. The contribution is focused on stabilizing the five governorates liberated from ISIS, laying the groundwork for recovery, and safeguarding communities from the resurgence of violent extremism. (Sources: [European Commission](#), [Daily Mail](#), [Office of the Prime Minister of Norway](#), [Ministry of Defence of Norway](#), [UNDP](#))

Oslo hosted three days of discussions between a Taliban delegation, western government officials, and Afghan civil society groups that began on January 23 and ended on January 25, 2022. The Taliban delegation, led by acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi, met with western officials—including Britain, the European Union, France, Germany, Italy, and the United States—and Afghan civil society leaders to discuss the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan and human rights. Following the Taliban’s takeover of Kabul in August 2021, the Taliban drastically curtailed the rights of women, and the country faces ongoing economic and humanitarian crises, as well as security and counterterrorism concerns. Following the talks, the United States and Europe stated they told Afghan Taliban officials that humanitarian aid would be tied to an improvement in human

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rights in the country. However, critics of the peace talks claimed opening dialogue with the Taliban served as de facto recognition of the regime. (Sources: [Associated Press](#), [Al Jazeera](#))

Norway remains committed to cooperating with international partners in counterterrorism law enforcement. In early June 2023, the Government of Norway co-hosted the second annual meeting of the Counterterrorism Law Enforcement Forum (CTLEF) with the U.S. Justice Department's Office of Overseas Prosecutorial Development, Assistance and Training (OPDAT) and the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Counterterrorism (State CT). The meeting focused on countering racially or ethnically motivated violent extremism (REMVE). Participants included law enforcement, prosecutors, and other criminal justice practitioners from Europe and North and South America, as well as specialists from INTERPOL, Europol, the International Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law and other multilateral organizations to discuss how to monitor, manage, and counter REMVE threats. (Source: [U.S. Department of Justice](#))

Public Opinion

In February 2018, Statista released results from a survey used to show how Norwegians felt about a terror attack occurring within the next five years in their own country in 2017. The results showed that 37 percent were "very concerned," 29 percent were "concerned," and 33 percent were "not concerned." In June 2018, Norwegian media cited the results of the country's Armed Forces' population survey, which showed that Norwegians fear of terrorism and terrorist attacks has decreased since 2016. In fact, Norwegians have been more concerned about cyberattacks as well as general crime and violence in society than terrorism, according to the survey. (Sources: [Statista](#), [Norway Today](#))