

Apology to Norway

By JPOST EDITORIAL
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We hope that the Norwegian government and people will accept the 'Post's apology and forgive us for any offense or hurt caused at this sensitive time.

A Jerusalem Post editorial published July 25 on the massacre in Norway three days earlier triggered an avalanche of critical talkbacks and letters to the editor.

Anders Behring Breivik confessed to detonating a car bomb outside Oslo's government headquarters that claimed eight victims and then shooting dead 69 people, many of them teenagers, at a summer camp on nearby Utoeya Island exactly two weeks ago.

The editorial squarely condemned the attack, saying that "as Israelis, a people that is sadly all too familiar with the horrors of indiscriminate, murderous terrorism, our hearts go out with empathy to the Norwegian people."

However, it also, inappropriately, raised issues that were not directly pertinent, such as the dangers of multiculturalism, European immigration policies and even the Oslo peace process.

"Your editorial, while insistently condemning the violence in Norway, shockingly and shamelessly attempts to offer justification for his extremist violent act of terror," wrote Esam Omeish in one of many letters to the editor, several of which were published in the paper.

Steve Linde, the editor-in-chief, immediately posted the following statement on our website, JPost.com: "As a newspaper, The Jerusalem Post strongly denounces all acts of violence against innocent civilians. This editorial is not aimed at deflecting attention from the horrific massacre perpetuated in Norway, nor the need to take greater precautions against extremists from all sides."

As Senior Contributing Editor Caroline B. Glick suggested in her column last Friday, the fact that Breivik's warped mind cited a group of conservative thinkers including herself as having influenced his thinking in no way reflects on them.

"As a rule, liberal democracies reject the resort to violence as a means of winning an argument. This is why, for liberal democracies, terrorism in all forms is absolutely unacceptable," she wrote.

"Whether or not one agrees with the ideological self-justifications of a terrorist, as a member of a liberal democratic society, one is expected to abhor his act of terrorism. Because by resorting to violence to achieve his aims, the terrorist is acting in a manner that fundamentally undermines the liberal democratic order."

It later emerged that Breivik, a Christian radical, had posted on the Internet an extremely anti-Muslim manifesto that supported far-right nationalism and Zionism.

He apparently feared that a "Muslim colonization" of Europe would destroy Norway.

This is certainly not the kind of support Israel needs. It is the type of Islamophobia that is all too reminiscent of the Nazis' attitude toward the Jews. Jews, Muslims and Christians in Israel and around the world should be standing together against such hate crimes.

Israel, it should be stressed, swiftly and strongly condemned the attack in Norway. Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu issued a statement saying that Jerusalem identified with the “deep pain and grief” of the Norwegian people.

The Foreign Ministry said that Israel “expresses its shock at the revolting terror attacks in Oslo, which have taken the lives of innocent victims.”

“Nothing at all can justify such wanton violence, and we condemn this brutal action with the utmost gravity,” the Foreign Ministry statement said. “We stand in solidarity with the people and government of Norway in this hour of trial, and trust Norwegian authorities to bring to justice those responsible for this heinous crime.”

President Shimon Peres telephoned Norway’s King Harald V to express Israel’s condolences.

“Your country is a symbol of peace and freedom. In Israel, we followed the events... in Norway and the attack on innocent civilians broke our hearts. It is a painful tragedy that touches every human being,” Peres said. “We send our condolences to the families that lost their loved ones and a speedy recovery to the wounded. Israel is willing to assist in whatever is needed.”

In today’s paper, we are publishing an opinion piece by Norway’s deputy foreign minister, Espen Barth Eide, in which he thanks Israeli leaders “for their kind and comforting words” but expresses dismay over comments made by two Jerusalem Post columnists.

At the same time, he titles his column, “A time to heal.”

We echo his wish, and hope that the Norwegian government and people will accept the Post’s apology and forgive us for any offense or hurt caused by our editorial and columnists at this sensitive time.