

'They are trying to silence our views', Danish far-right say after Norway attacks

Written by AFP / The Swedish Wire

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COPENHAGEN, August 4, 2011 (AFP) - After the twin attacks in Norway by a right-wing extremist, a far-right party in neighbouring Denmark complained Thursday that opponents were trying to stifle its anti-immigration views.

"Our political opponents are trying to make our views illegal.... They are trying to silence our views," Danish People's Party (DPP) foreign policy spokesman Soeren Espersen told AFP in an interview Thursday.

He lamented that his party, which has been an ally of Denmark's centre-right government for the past decade, was wrongly being made a scapegoat because it held some views also espoused by Anders Behring Breivik.

The 32-year-old Norwegian has confessed to killing 77 people in two attacks in Norway on July 22 as part of what he described as a "crusade" against a "Muslim invasion".

Espersen acknowledged some of the views were the same, but insisted his party did not condone violence and could in no way be held responsible for Behring Breivik's actions, as some, including Denmark's iconic director Lars von Trier, have hinted.

Like the Norwegian killer, "we want mass immigration to be stopped," Espersen said, but stressed that "for us, there is a Berlin Wall between the political debate and violence. We do not accept violence."

"We have had people in our party who have said idiotic things, and we have thrown them out," he said.

"There is no doubt about where our limit goes. Violence is not acceptable."

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As a government ally, the DDP has since 2001 pushed Denmark to introduce some of the most restrictive immigration policies in Europe. More recently it pressured Prime Minister Lars Loekke Rasmussen's coalition to reinstate controversial permanent customs controls at Denmark's borders with Germany and Sweden.

Espersen however flatly rejects that such policies and the party's anti-immigration and anti-Muslim rhetoric were extreme or could in some way fuel extremist views and actions.

"We think, for instance, that the (centrist) Social Liberals, who want to devolve all our sovereignty to the European Union, have extreme views," he said.

DPP head Pia Kjaersgaard reportedly blasted the head of Norway's populist right-wing Progress Party, Siv Jensen, this week for telling the media she regretted the tone of the political debate leading up to the attacks.

On July 22, Behring Breivik confessed to killing eight people by setting off a bomb in Oslo's government quarter and then went on a shooting rampage on the island of Utoeya, where the Norwegian Labour party's youth wing was holding a retreat, killing 69, many of them teenagers.

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