



Christian cleric Anne Marie Tronvik and Muslim imam Ghulam Abbas lead the funeral ceremony of Bano Rashid, 18, at Nesodden church near Oslo July 29, 2011 (Reuters)

Lesson from Norway: Imam and Priest Lead Funeral Prayers, Prime Minister Addresses Central Jamaat Mosque

<http://hakimabdi.com/post/8345477808/lesson-from-norway-imam-priest-lead-funeral-prayers>
accessed 19 August 2011

Norway began burying her dead on Friday. The first funeral of Anders Behring Breivik's 76 victims was held, when Bano Rashid, an 18-year-old former refugee, was buried. Bano and her parents, Kurds by origin, had fled Iraq in 1995, to live in Nesodden, south of Oslo.

Bano was said to be a gifted student whose dream was to be a lawyer. She was also active in politics; her membership of the Labour Party youth wing was the reason she had attended the party's youth camp on the island of Utøya. There, in 90-minutes of carnage, Breivik, a Christian fundamentalist, whose aim was to rid Europe from Islam and multiculturalism, gunned down Bano and 75 others, mainly teenagers. Earlier, he had detonated a car bomb in Oslo, killing eight.

It was a day of national mourning, but also rich in symbolism. In death, as in life, Bano Rashid herself was a potent symbol of Norway's stubbornly liberal, inclusive, cultural mores; at her funeral service both Islamic and Christian prayers were offered for her soul.

Hundreds of mourners then followed her coffin, draped in the Kurdish flag, out of the Lutheran church and into the Muslim section of the churchyard where she was laid to rest.

"Seeing the imam and the priest walking together from the church was a mighty image, the strongest message that can be sent to counter the forces we have been witness to" said Jonas Gahr Stoere, Norway's Foreign Minister, who was among the mourners.

Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg made a moving speech at a memorial to the victims: *"Evil has brought out the best in us. Hatred engenders love. We have memorials in churches and in mosques, in Parliament and in the government headquarters, on the*

streets and in squares.” His speech was followed by a minute’s silence during which the audience held aloft red roses. The flower has become another potent symbol: of Norway’s grief but also of her determination to maintain its deeply rooted values.

Afterwards, in yet another symbol aimed at unifying his country, and of contempt for the gunman’s beliefs, the Prime Minister attended a service in the Central Jamaat Mosque after having earlier attended a Christian funeral for the first victim of last weekend’s massacre to be buried.

Here is the Prime Minister’s full speech at the mosque:

Dear all of you,

Today the first two victims of the terrorist attacks are being laid to rest.

One of them is 18-year-old Bano Rashid from Nesodden.

Her family fled from Iraq in 1996. They found a safe haven in Norway.

Bano did well at school and was planning to study law. She dreamt of a future in Norway’s parliament.

Her dream was shattered by the gunman on the island of Utøya.

I am full of admiration for her parents, Beyan and Mustafa.

This is what Beyan said to the newspaper Aftenposten:

“The answer is not hatred, but more love.”

Today, her family has said farewell to Bano in a ceremony that was both Norwegian and Kurdish.

The other is 19-year-old Ismail Haji Ahmed from Hamar.

Ismail was an irrepressible performer and an enthusiastic dance instructor. He inspired a great many people. And brought joy to even more.

I mourn Bano and Ismail.

They have given the new expanded concept of the Norwegian “we” a face.

We will be one community. Across religion, ethnicity, gender and rank.

Bano is Norwegian. Ismail is Norwegian. I am Norwegian.

We are Norway. And I am proud of this.

I am also very proud that the Norwegian people have passed the test.

The very heart of our democracy has been attacked.

But this has only strengthened our democracy. Brought us closer together.

The immediate shock and devastation brought us together.

Later, we came together in protest. We filled the streets with roses and torches and put a protective arm around democracy.

I am inviting the whole nation to come together as the Norwegian “we”.

The newspapers today are showing pictures of an imam and a bishop embracing each other.

This should be a source of inspiration. We are all Norway.

Our fundamental values are democracy, humanity and openness.

With this as a platform, we will respect differences, human dignity and equality. And each other.

And we will face the debates. We will welcome them. Even the difficult ones.

We will all expect one another to champion the fundamental values of the Norwegian “we”.

This is how we will deepen and develop our response to terrorism and violence.

The answer is even more democracy. Even more humanity. But never naivete.

It is up to us to write the next chapters of Norway’s history.

There will be a Norway before and Norway after 22 July.

We have already staked out the course. Norway will be recognisable.

The rest is up to us.

Standing here on holy ground, it is important to affirm that we respect one another’s beliefs.

Against that backdrop, diversity must be allowed to blossom and to colour the picture of the Norwegian “we”.

This is how we will honour the memory of Bano, Ismail and the others who died in the attacks on Utøya and Oslo.