



Crime & Punishment

James Alan Fox on criminal behavior and the justice system

MURDER AND MAYHEM

The Norway massacre - An unspeakable horror

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Kudos to Norwegian Judge Kim Heger who decided to close his courtroom during the arraignment of the man accused of murdering scores of innocent victims last Friday. The move seems to have frustrated many members of the media and the general public who were eager to hear the defendant describe his motivation and thinking. However, the closed door approach likely disappointed the accused mass murderer even more. After all, he had reportedly been looking forward to the chance to expound on his viewpoint during his initial court appearance.

Taken altogether, the accused assailant's manifesto, video and photographs of him posing with his weapon suggest that the hideous massacre was as much about attention-getting and self-promotion as it was about promoting any particular extremist ideology. The defendant's actions prior and after the massacre reflect vanity, not insanity.

Going forward, as TV reporters and print journalists attempt to shed additional light on this horrific crime and the man believed to have perpetrated it, we must avoid giving the accused the limelight. Having the chance to articulate his grievances and expound on his ideas on a worldwide stage is clearly what this man wants, but far more than he deserves.

And in the meantime, we should strive not to allow the defendant's identity to become a name familiar around the world. This was an unspeakable crime, and so let the name of the accused be unspeakable as well.