

UPDATE: Free Speech Turns Deadly at Lars Vilks Event in Copenhagen: 3 Dead including possible Gunman and five wounded



Danish Police Searching for Gunman after Attack on Free Speech event at Krudttønden Café

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Source Martin Vesty/Scanpix

Today's deadly assault by a masked gunman who sprayed more than 40 rounds of automatic fire into a Café in Northern Copenhagen. The exchange of gunfire by the gunmen with Danish security police took the life of 55 year old documentarian and filmmaker, Finn Noergaard at the Free Speech, Blasphemy and Islam event where both Swedish Artist Lars Vilks the honoree and the French Ambassador were present. They were unhurt in the attack. Three security police were injured in the shootout at the Krudttønden Café. :[Listen](#) to this BBC recording of a speaker at the Krudttønden Café when gunfire sent everyone to the floor. According to a later [reports](#) from *AFP*, *Reuters* and *BBC*:

A second ,perhaps related, incident, close to Copenhagen's main synagogue in the city center, saw a [37 year Jewish man, Danish economist and security guard,](#) Dan Uzan, ,shot in the head, who subsequently died of wounds, and two policemen were injured, police said in a statement early

Sunday. The *BBC* [reported](#) “early on Sunday, police said they had shot dead a man who opened fire on them near a railway station in the neighbourhood of Noerrebro where they had been keeping an address under observation.”

Danish Prime Minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt [described](#) the assault as “a terrorist attack”, while the United States branded it “deplorable”..

French ambassador to Denmark Francois Zimeray, who had been present at the debate but was not hurt, told AFP the shooting was an attempt to replicate the January 7 attack on the Charlie Hebdo magazine in Paris which killed 12 people.

“They shot from the outside (and) had the same intention as Charlie Hebdo, only they didn’t manage to get in,” he said by telephone from the venue.



Portrait

Vilks Self

Mohammed as roundabout dog

We [interviewed](#) Vilks when he appeared at Rabbi Jonathan Hausman’s Massachusetts synagogue in 2010 during a tour of the US under the auspices of the International Free Press society.

He discussed several attacks on him, including a firebombing attack by jihadis at his home in Sweden. This followed the publication in 2007 of his Mohammed as a roundabout dog sketches and assault against him at an Uppsala University lecture. We noted his *raison d’être* for the Mohammed cartoon:

Vilks created the Mohammed sketch for an exhibition in Sweden entitled "Dog in the Roundabout." He explained that Sweden's road/highway system is dotted with roundabouts (rotaries). Often, parks are created in such rotaries or there is simply open area in which people take their dogs for walks. In 2006, there was a national competition to create dogs in roundabouts. With his artist's eye, Vilks drew dogs in the roundabout. He then began to play with different forms of dogs...solid form, blurry form, different sizes, dogs in different settings, interchanging the body of a dog with the head of a man, Mohammed. Vilks has stated that this series of drawings stirred the ire of the Muslim world. The catalyst for his sketches was the growing violence and changes in Swedish cities caused by Muslim immigrants who displayed unbridled anti-Semitism and anti-Western animus.

See a separate interview with Vilks in our collection, [The West Speaks](#). Today's fatal attack at the Krudttønden Café unfortunately reminds us that blasphemy under Sharia can result in death.

Update from Nidra Poller in Paris:

Now the Danish police are saying there was just one gunman. They have published CCTV photos of him. They describe him as "North African origin." The event was a tribute to Charlie Hebdo. Debate is lively in France and we're not hearing the "nothing to do with Islam" melody. Europeans are aware that all our liberties are under attack. It's not just a question of blasphemy. That's just the beginning.

The Local in Denmark has [updates](#):

Update, 6.18pm: The civilian killed in Saturday's shooting attack was a 40-year-old Danish citizen, police have said. Police added that they have founded the suspected getaway vehicle but two suspects are still at large.

Update, 6.08pm: Reports of up to 200 shots fired

The French Ambassdor to Denmark told AFP from inside the

venue that shots rang out in the midst of a debate on Islam and free speech in Copenhagen.

“They fired on us from the outside. It was the same intention as [the January 7 attack on] Charlie Hebdo except they didn’t manage to get in,” Francois Zimeray said by telephone.

Swedish artist Lars Vilks, the author of controversial Prophet Mohammed cartoons published in 2007 that sparked worldwide protests was also at the debate.

Three police officers were reported wounded outside the building, Danish media reported, quoting eyewitnesses.

Zimeray said earlier on Twitter that he was not harmed.

“Intuitively I would say there were at least 50 gunshots, and the police here are saying 200,” he told AFP.

“Bullets went through the doors and everyone threw themselves to the floor. We managed to flee the room, and now we’re staying inside because it’s still dangerous. The attackers haven’t been caught and they could very well still be in the neighborhood.”

A Femen activist, Inna Shevshenko, said on Twitter that there were several dozen people in the room.

French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius condemned the attack, saying in a statement that France “remains by the side of the Danish authorities and people in the fight against terrorism.”

Vilks has been under police protection since his 2007 cartoons were published.

The French president’s office said Interior Minister Bernard Cazeneuve was headed to the scene.

Update, 5.57pm: Police have confirmed that one civilian has died and three police officers are wounded. Police continue to hunting for two suspected gunmen in a dark Volkswagen Polo. The suspects were said to be wearing all black and speaking Danish.

Vilks himself was unhurt in the attack.

Police say they believe Vilks, known for his depictions of the Prophet Muhammad, was the target of the attack. He was attending a debate on the theme of ‘Art, blasphemy and freedom of speech’ at the Krudttønden cultural centre in the Østerbro area of the Danish capital. The attack took place after a speech by the French Ambassador to Denmark.

Delegate Dennis Meyhoff Brink, a satire researcher, told Jyllands Posten that he heard 30 shots over a two minute period. Danish security police then ordered everyone to remain inside. According to reports, the focus of the attack was on the entrance to the building, and the gunman did not enter the main hall.

“[Security police] came running through the room brandishing guns, and they took Lars Vilks out a back door.”

According to Brink, the shots were fired just as the

French Ambassador, François Zimeray, had finished speaking. Zimeray immediately took to Twitter to confirm that he was still alive:

Copenhagen police confirmed to the Berlingske newspaper that three officers were wounded in the shooting and that two suspected gunmen were at large. The suspects wore black and spoke Danish.

The meeting was held under tight security, with delegates subject to searches as they entered the building.

The newspaper Ekstra Bladet writes that the police are treating the attack as an act of terrorism.

Helle Merete Blix, one of the organizers of the meeting, told Danish channel TV2 News that the meeting continued following the drama:

“We couldn’t get away, so the debate meeting carried on,” she said.

More soon