Copenhagen shootings: Who benefits?

February 14 2015. A “lone gunman” allegedly attacked the cultural center Krudttønden and the community house of a Synagogue in the Danish capital Copenhagen. One film instructor and a guard were killed. February 15 a specially trained police task force shot and killed the alleged young Palestinian perpetrator. February 19 a high-ranking delegate of Palestine’s governing Fatah party arrived in Denmark to lobby for a recognition of Palestine. As it was the case with the Charlie Hebdo and Kosher Supermarket shootings, the attacks and death of the alleged perpetrator prompts questions while information is not forthcoming.

On Saturday, February 12, at approximately 15:30 CET a “lone gunman” attacked the cultural center Krudttønden (Powder Keg) in Copenhagen with an automatic rifle. The attack took place during an event on free speech and blasphemy. Among the speakers were the French Ambassador to Denmark, Lars Zimaray, and the Swedish Mohamed Cartoonist Lars Vilks. Both had special bodyguards from Denmark’s domestic intelligence service PET assigned to them.

An exchange of gunfire between police and the assailant in the foyer reportedly stopped the alleged terrorist from reaching the room where the event took place. A 55-year-old Danish film maker was shot dead. Three police officers were injured. The lone gunman fled in a dark Volkswagen Polo.

Police and PET initiated a manhunt, the Polo was discovered at about 17:00 o’clock CET. A Taxi driver reported that he had driven a young man who fit the description of the assailant to an address at Svanevej in Copenhagen. Video footage would show that a young Danish-born Palestinian arrived at the address at 16:15 and left again at 16:37. A specially trained police task force kept the area around Svanevej under surveillance since 23:00.

At about 01:00 Sunday morning the same gunman shot and killed a 36-year-old guard at the Copenhagen Synagogue’s community house. While the Synagogue in Krystalgade at that time already was under special protection and considered a potential target it was alleged that the 22-year-old perpetrator fooled police and the guards by acting as if he had been out drinking. Two more police officers were injured.

Police would report that the alleged gunman returned to the Svanegade area on Sunday morning at about 4:30 – 5:00 o’clock. The specially trained police task force “Indsatsstyrken” reportedly shouted at the gunman who, rather than following police orders, opened fire at the police officers. Police would report that the officers returned fire, fatally injuring the young man who was identified as Omar Hamid Abdel Hussein.

The 22-year-old Omar Hamid Abdel Hussein was released from prison two weeks prior to the shootings. His lawyer, Rolf Lindgren Gregersen would confirm the identity of the deceased, alleged terrorist. He would report that Hussein had been held in pre-trial detention since January 2014 after he had stabbed a 19-year-old boy in a metro train. He was sentenced to two years but his case was to be reviewed by the High Court. The stabbing was reportedly a revenge because El-Hussein had earlier been stabbed. His release was reportedly ordered because time already spent in prison would possibly exceed a High Court ruling.

Religious Radicalization in Prison. People who knew Omar Hamid Abdel Hussein would describe him as “not interested in religion” and as active and open-minded young man who loved sport until he was assaulted and
stabbed. Reportedly lacking help to come over the psychological trauma, he began smoking Cannabis. Most clinical psychologists with experience in psychological trauma or substance use would describe the use of the drug under such circumstances as an attempt to self-medicate while media sensationalized the news as if “he was in a “cannabis psychosis”.

A concerned mother would contact nsnbc international and report that her son, also from an immigrant background, also was attacked and did not receive adequate help, had it not been for a local police officer who took their boy under his wings and helped him. The experience of Hussein is, in other words, not an isolated incident.

Omar Hamid Abdel Hussein became reportedly interested in radical Islam or Islamism while he was in prison. Prison personnel would recognize the change of Hussein’s behavior as so drastic that a warning was sent to Denmark’s domestic intelligence service PET. That means, PET was informed about the fact that the now deceased, alleged terrorist had become radicalized in prison. The case prompts a number of serious questions and answers have not been forthcoming. Among them are:

- How can it be that a specially trained police force shot and fatally injured Hussein at about 4:30 on Sunday morning, in an area which the task force had held under observation and controlled since 23:00 Saturday evening. Why were specially trained police officers incapable of incapacitating the alleged, 22-year-old terrorist without fatally injuring him?
- Was PET in contact with Hussein prior to, during or after his one year in prison? If so, why, if not, why not?
- Was Hussein in contact with an Imam while he was in prison. If so, is that Imam associated with the Islamic Faith Society of Denmark which the United Arab Emirates and others have designated as a Muslim Brotherhood-linked terrorist organization. The organization is working legally in Denmark.
- Why was a psychologically traumatized, reportedly radicalized young man released from prison while he had no home, no solid social network, and without the care that social services normally would provide for young people in his demographic and social group?

So far, any attempts to elicit additional information resulted in references to official police press releases. That is, all information about the alleged, deceased terrorist is tightly controlled and filtered.

Shooting happened only days before the arrival of a high-level Palestinian delegation. The shootings happened on February 12 – 13. On February 19 Faraj Zayoud, the person in charge of the Palestinian Fatah party's European Relations Department headed by Dr. Nabeel Shaat arrived for a three-day's visit to Denmark. On Faraj Zayoud's agenda during his visit to the Danish capital Copenhagen and the second-largest city, Aarhus, were meetings with members of the Danish Parliament's Select Committee on Foreign Relations.

The position of the Danish, Social Democratic government of PM Helle Thorning Schmidt is that Denmark should wait with a recognition of Palestine until Palestine would be recognized within the framework of a European Union initiative. The government has, however, increasingly come under pressure from Denmark's liberal Radical Left, the UFG, the leftist Unity List and the Socialist People’s Party on whose support the government often has to rely. Denmark’s Conservative Party, the Liberal Alliance, the neo-liberal “Venstre” (The Left) and the nationalist Danish people's Party, for their part, would oppose a recognition of Palestine. It is needless to say that the shootings, only days before the arrival of the Palestinian delegate strongly biased the discourse and reduced the political maneuvering room of the government.

Role Models and Moral Justification for Islamist Terrorism. While it will take time to get to the bottom of the above mentioned questions there is one point that is certain already. The position Danish governments have taken with regard to the wars on Libya and Syria since 2011 cannot other than provide a moral justification for young Muslims to become radicalized and to join the “global jihad” in all of its forms and manifestations.

Demonizing the Libyan and Syrian governments while positioning overtly Al-Qaeda and Muslim Brotherhood-linked terrorist organizations as “opposition” will by many young Muslims, especially by those who are socially vulnerable, those who are marginalized, those who are identity seeking, be interpreted as an indirect moral justification to join Al-Nusrah, or ISIS in Libya, Syria and Iraq. Usually, and despite one-sided media coverage, most of those young men and women are well aware of the fact that core NATO member States as well as Gulf Arab States overtly or covertly support these organizations and describe them, all dependent on utility, as moderate opposition or as radical terrorists.

It may also be worth noting that the former Danish Prime Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen, under whose term Denmark participated in the 2011 war on Libya, is known for having supported the very Taliban Danish troops later
In fact, Lars Løkke Rasmussen was one of Denmark’s most successful fund-raisers for the Taliban during the 1980s. Ironically, in 1988 Lars Løkke Rasmussen took to Afghanistan where he posed for a photographer, clinching an AK 47 while standing beside his Taliban friends. The concerned face of the person to his left suggests that Løkke Rasmussen was more qualified as fund-raiser than he was at safely handling a firearm. Be it as it may, the hypocrisy and double standards of the former PM also serve as moral justification for many of those who are vulnerable for becoming radicalized. One question one may want to add to the questions above is, who benefited from the shootings and who benefits from blatant double standards? Proper, independent investigative journalism will get to the bottom of the other questions and no answer is, in this case saying as much as as political doublespeak.

Dr. Christof Lehmann an independent political consultant on conflict and conflict resolution and the founder and editor in chief of nsnbc, exclusively for the online magazine “New Eastern Outlook”.