

# ‘22 July’ is a horrific tragedy in which children become political pawns



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It is never easy to depict a tragedy, especially when children are killed, but when British director Paul Greengrass, the man behind titles such as “Bloody Sunday,” “United 93” and “Captain Phillips,” takes up a subject such as the Norwegian neo-Nazi terrorist attack on a summer youth camp, it can be engaging without appearing overdone.

“22 July,” which premiered at the Venice film festival in September as a Netflix original and will be streamed on Oct. 10, gives not only a bird’s-eye view of the shootout on Utoya island on July 22, 2011, but also a moving personal account of the 69 boys and girls who died horrifically when terrorist Anders Behring Breivik entered the camp and began spraying bullets. It could not have been easy for Greengrass to tell the story in a country where the wounds of that bloody day have not quite healed.

So it is good that the movie allocates only a brief time out of its 143 minutes for the massacre, with the rest given to the lives of the killer, Breivik (Anders Danielsen Lie), as he stands trial, and a survivor, 17-year-old Viljar Hanssen (Jonas Strand Gravli). The teenager (a real-life character) survives the carnage with one eye gone and bullet fragments lodged in his brain that can kill him at any time.

Greengrass recreates the atmosphere of deadly tension as the killer in a policeman's uniform walks toward the children after shooting dead a couple of the camp's volunteers. Later, as the court proceedings go on, the film cuts to Hanssen's enormous suffering and painful recuperation.

The courtroom drama is intriguing, with Breivik seeking the services of a liberal lawyer, Geir Lippestad (Jon Jigarden), who is mystified at this request. Even more puzzling is Breivik's on-and-off plea of insanity. But the fact that his agenda was to keep immigrants out of Norway is painfully clear. However, with the current political thinking on immigration, Breivik's hate philosophy may appear less shocking than in 2011.

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