

# Finland seeks to curb online hate speech: prosecutor

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Finland's top prosecutor aims to impose clear legal boundaries on hate speech found on the Internet and to provide police with stricter guidelines, his office said Tuesday.

"The goal is to deal with those possibly problematic debates the police encounters" in online blogs and comments, Deputy Attorney General Jorma Kalske told AFP.

He added police encountered a "relatively substantial" amount of online material that could be considered [hate speech](#) and incitement against certain population or religious groups.

"It is a matter of drawing a line between voicing political opinions, expressing [freedom of speech](#) and what is called in colloquial language hate speech, which in criminal law terms is incitement to hostility against a population group," he said.

Kalske noted the anti-immigration discourse from some politicians could be seen as "incitement against a population or ethnic group or religion."

In [Finland](#), hate speech is today punishable with a fine or up to two years in prison, but no one has ever been incarcerated under the country's hate speech legislation.

The Attorney General's office is planning to present a new proposal clearing up what constitutes a hate speech crime in an online context

within the next couple of months. It is also considering heavier punishment for serial offenders.

News of the proposal comes on the heels of the deadly twin attacks in Norway on July 22, which sent [shock waves](#) through Northern Europe.

The [perpetrator](#) of the attacks, Anders Behring Breivik, a 32-year-old Norwegian rightwing extremist, had written in a manifesto posted online before the attacks that he was inspired by different far-right bloggers, including far-right Finnish parliamentarian Jussi Halla-Aho.

Behring Breivik first bombed government offices in Oslo, killing eight people, before going on a shooting rampage on the nearby island of Utoeya where the ruling Labour Party's youth wing was hosting a summer camp, killing another 69, many of them teenagers.

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