

Swedish papers limit web comments to stem racism

August 30 2011, By MALIN RISING , Associated Press

(AP) -- Three of Sweden's biggest newspapers are changing their websites to monitor instant, anonymous comments from readers - a move designed to crack down on Internet expressions of racism and hatred.

The tabloid Expressen said Monday it will start monitoring all comments before, instead of after, they are published and remove those that are libelous, or contain threats or racist remarks.

The dailies Aftonbladet and Dagens Nyheter, meanwhile, said Tuesday they will close down comment fields completely until they have installed new systems that require readers to log in through [Facebook](#) or an email account before making a comment.

The decisions follow a debate raised after the July 22 terror attacks in Norway that left 77 people dead about the harsh words and racism that flourishes among some anonymous commentators on the Internet.

When confessed killer Anders Behring Breivik's manifesto became known after the terror attacks, many recognized his xenophobic arguments from reader comments and chat forums, Aftonbladet's Chief Editor Jan Helin wrote in a comment.

"The debate that has followed the [terror attacks](#) in Norway has made an impression on us. It is not possible to remain unaffected by that," Helin said.

Bjorn Hedensjo, head of Dagens Nyheter's website <http://www.dn.se> , said the newspaper's monitors haven't managed to keep up with the flow of comments on its site and have discovered posts several days later that violate its policies.

"Of course we are disappointed with having to take this step, the ideal is obviously a free and open debate that doesn't even require monitoring," he wrote in a comment. "The reality, unfortunately, is different: Ours and other's comment fields have been abused by a small group of people who express racist views, among other things."

Hedensjo said he is not sure the new system will work perfectly, but that the newspaper believes it can raise the quality of the debate by encouraging people to make comments using their real name.

Expressen's Chief Editor Thomas Mattson pointed out the new monitoring plan doesn't mean readers are banned from discussing issues such as the integration of immigrants.

"We are making this change because far too many write 'off-topic,'" he wrote. "It is not fair that people who we write about, or interview should risk being subjected to Internet hatred in the comments, or that far too many discussions about completely different topics should become dominated by xenophobic debaters."

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