

Nordic Resistance Movement

AT A GLANCE

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HOW TO CITE

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SUMMARY

Formed: December 1997¹

Disbanded: Group is active.

First Attack: October 12, 1999: Björn Söderberg, a Swedish left-wing union organizer, was murdered outside of his apartment in Stockholm by Swedish members of the SRM’s youth organization. He had tipped off a left-wing newspaper that his colleague on the board of a local union was an active neo-Nazi, costing the man his job and position at the union. Three men were convicted on charges related to the murder. There is no publicly available evidence that central SRM leadership was involved in planning the murder, but researchers have observed that individuals or clandestine “action groups” often carry out illegal activities with tacit support from central leadership, while absolving SRM/NRM of responsibility as an organization.²

Last Attack: July 12, 2022: A 32-year old NRM “support” member committed a fatal knife attack against Dr. Ing-Marie Wieselgren, a Swedish psychiatrist. She is believed to have been targeted due to her public-facing advocacy for issues in psychiatry. The perpetrator has been charged for terrorism and awaits trial as of August 2022. There is no publicly available evidence that central SRM leadership was involved in planning the murder, but researchers have observed that individuals or clandestine “action groups” often carry out illegal activities with tacit support from central leadership, while absolving SRM/NRM of responsibility as an organization.³

OVERVIEW

The Nordic Resistance Movement is a pan-Nordic neo-Nazi organization operating in Scandinavia, primarily Sweden, Norway, and Finland. Founded in 1997 as the Swedish Resistance Movement before changing its name in 2016, the group has continually expanded and is currently the leading hub for neo-Nazi activism in most of the countries it operates in. NRM advocates for the overthrow the current democratic governments, the expulsion of all people not of Scandinavian or closely related descent, and the establishment of a fascist Nazi state working for the benefit of white citizens.

NARRATIVE SUMMARY

Modern Naziism in Sweden can be traced back to a lack of post-WWII denazification. Nazi groups have persisted with some continuity since the first one was founded 1924.⁴ The Nordic Resistance Movement, now the leading organization in Nordic Nazism, was born out of Sweden's extreme right wing. The groups early membership came from other neo-Nazi groups, namely White Aryan Resistance (VAM), the neo-Nazi newspaper founded by Klas Lund, *Folktribnunen*, and National Youth, which would eventually turn into NRM's youth wing. National Youth was founded to be a more "respectable" and elite type of right-wing extremist, different from the skinhead "hooligans" who dominated the scene at the time. The Sweden Democrats, Sweden's far-right political party, gave them a small donation as they were starting out.⁵

Klas Lund came into public consciousness as a white supremacist figure in 1986. 18 year-old Lund and several other skinheads beat a man to death for trying to stop them from harassing a group of young immigrants. He founded the Swedish Resistance Movement (later the Nordic Resistance Movement) in 1997, to further his goal of creating an elite, fanatical vanguard to push Nordic Naziism forward, and eventually overthrow the Nordic democracies that are currently in power.⁶

The organization officially changed its name from the Swedish Resistance Movement to the Nordic Resistance Movement in 2016. When referring to all activities undertaken prior to 2016, this profile will use "SRM." For all activities after 2016, this profile will use "NRM."

SRM differentiated itself by being more radical than other groups, and by having a strict hierarchical structure with numerous leadership positions. This structure largely persists. Individuals are not selected for leadership democratically, but by proving their loyalty to the organization. SRM argued that they needed a strong hierarchy so that they could readily replace the government when the time comes.

The group is organized into "nests," each of which include "combat groups" made strictly of full members. Membership to SRM/NRM is exclusive, with three tiers. Supporting members, the lowest, contribute financially and may remain anonymous. Affiliates, the next level up, are formal members on a voluntary basis. To become a full member, the highest tier, one must pass strict physical and devotional criteria. New recruits are interviewed and vetted thoroughly to clear out "weaklings and cowards" before they are allowed to join. They practice martial arts to prepare physically and

mentally for any threats, and must unquestioningly support everything the SRM/NRM does or promotes. The organization also developed an ethos that does not shy away from violence, hence the martial arts training, discussion of an inevitable “race war,” and tacit approval of violent actions by members.⁷

The gender makeup is overwhelmingly male: 83% of active members are men, and 17% are women. Over half of active members have been convicted of crimes, and over 60% of those were violent crimes or weapons offenses. Average membership age ranges from 31-35.⁸

On October 12, 1999, a Swedish union organizer named Björn Söderberg was murdered outside of his apartment by members of SRM’s youth organization. He had tipped off a syndicalist newspaper that his colleague on the board of a local union was an active neo-Nazi, costing the man his job and position at the union. Three men were convicted on charges related to the murder, and the extreme right garnered national attention.⁹

In 2000, SRM created a web portal where they sold publications, white power music, and various magazines. They also continued printing their newspaper *Folktribunen*, and in 2003 began publishing a second newspaper, *Nationellt Motstånd*, as well. During this time, SRM did not use the “Nazi” label for strategic reasons, despite citing prominent Nazis as philosophical inspiration and promoting Nazi viewpoints. In the early years, they referred to their active members as “patriots.”¹⁰

In 2003, former members of the Norwegian skinhead group the Boot Boys formed a branch of SRM in Norway. Following a high profile murder by the group in 2001, the new Norwegian branch receded due to the imprisonment of several leading figures.¹¹

In 2005, the Swedish Resistance Movement took credit for the vandalization of an LGBTQ-oriented restaurant in Stockholm. That year, the European non-profit Expo published research connecting SRM to several violent attacks against people who were LGBTQ, immigrants, or political opponents.¹²

In 2006, SRM leadership decided to “come out of the closet” about their Nazism, and began openly using the National Socialist label, instead of the “patriot” euphemism.¹³

The Finnish branch of NRM was founded by Mikko, whose last name is not publicly available. He was previously involved in Nazi-oriented online forums, and in the Summer of 2008, he was invited to Sweden for SRM’s March of the People demonstration. He was arrested at the demonstration for fighting against counter-protestors, and received a “fight diploma” from SRM’s leadership. After continuing to develop a relationship with SRM leadership, he eventually was given permission to start a Finnish branch. He appointed Esa Holappa as the leader of the organization while remaining behind the scenes himself — a stark departure from the insistence on openness that is central to the Swedish branch.¹⁴

In 2008, a Finnish man known only as “Mikko” began developing a relationship with SRM leadership, traveling from Finland to attend in-person demonstrations and

maintaining regular communication. Near the end of 2008, Mikko received permission from central SRM to found the Finnish branch. Esa Holappa, a far-right associate of Mikko, was appointed as leader, and was one of the few members who operated openly under his own name, unlike in other SRM branches. The Finnish Resistance Movement immediately became the most militant Finnish Nazi organization. The Finnish branch was historically more decentralized than other SRM branches, encompassing a greater range of ideology compared to the strictly enforced conformity of the Swedish branch.¹⁵

During the early 2010's the Nazi movement in Sweden (encompassing groups besides solely SRM) saw a small amount of growth in followers, activities, and visibility. However in 2015, the other prominent neo-Nazi group in Sweden, the Party of the Swedes, dissolved. This left SRM as the most important neo-Nazi group in Sweden, and the main hub for such ideas. The Norwegian and Finnish branches serve a similarly central function to the neo-Nazi movement in their respective countries.¹⁶

Throughout this time period, SRM members from primarily the Swedish and Finnish branches perpetrated several violent attacks. They incited riots at protests, music festivals, and Helsinki Pride, got into violent altercations with left-wing militants, and assaulted journalists and political opponents. Many of these altercations ended in serious injuries, arrests, and criminal charges.¹⁷

In 2010, Haakon Forwald, best known as a former member of the Swedish black metal band Dissection, re-founded the Norwegian branch of NRM. He began as the only Norwegian member of SRM in Sweden, but after several failed attempts to contact the former leaders of the Nordic branch, he was given permission to take on leadership himself. The website initially only contained articles from the Swedish site translated into Norwegian, but the group's activity slowly increased. After 2016, they began engaging in more public-facing activities. However the Norwegian branch remains largely dependent on the Swedish parent organization, with many of their activities populated by Swedish membership.¹⁸

In 2012, the second murder associated with SRM was committed. Two Swedish SRM members stabbed Joakim Karlsson eight times in the chest outside of a grocery store in Vallentuna. A CCTV recording showed how the victim was stabbed, kicked and trampled upon. Only one of the perpetrators was arrested, while the other remained on the run, and remains on Interpol's most wanted list as of 2022.¹⁹

In 2013, Henrik Jarsbo, a former member of the Danish National Socialist Movement (DNSB) founded the Danish branch of SRM. While the website became the most developed of any branch, there was little activity otherwise. By 2016, the website was shut down.²⁰

In 2014, the Finnish branch of SRM began organizing vigilante patrols in Helsinki in response to reports of multi-ethnic gangs in the city.²¹

Also in 2014, SRM members took advantage of an election loophole to elect a member of SRM to a municipal council seat in Ludvika, and another as a substitute in Borlänge.

Swedish elections allow citizens to vote solely for a party, or to vote for a party *and* for particular candidates to represent that party. Eighteen SRM members voted for the Sweden Democrats and put Pär Öberg as a write-in candidate; since Sweden Democrats only put 5 candidates forward but won 7 seats, Pär Öberg was automatically chosen to fill a spot.²² The election of militant Neo-Nazis sparked national outrage.²³ This generated considerable excitement among the organization, and Pär Öberg became the head of SRM's new parliamentary wing. They registered as a formal political party in July 2015.²⁴

SRM experienced significant growth during this time. The influx of refugees in 2015, primarily escaping from Syrian Civil War, led to increased interest in xenophobic organizations and ideas across Scandinavia. Many people feared the migrants would decrease the availability of jobs and change Sweden's culture. NRM's membership and members' willingness to demonstrate in public increased, and third of active members in 2015 were new recruits.²⁵

Simon Lindberg was appointed the leader of SRM in 2015, after Klas Lund resigned.²⁶ He implemented a notable shift in strategy from Lund, taking the group in a much more public-facing direction. Under Lindberg's leadership the group has emphasized maximizing growth, public visibility, and political representation, and has significantly loosened restrictions for membership.²⁷

Also in 2015, several Nazi groups from across Europe and alt-right groups from the U.S. gathered in St. Petersburg to create a joint strategy. While there, RIM offered several groups paramilitary training, including NRM. Several members have reportedly taken this offer up, although others (particularly in the Finnish branch) have actually fought against Russia alongside the Azov Movement.²⁸

In 2016, the Swedish Resistance Movement officially changed its name to the Nordic Resistance Movement (NRM). The name change was declared in association with chapters in Norway, Finland, and Denmark, signaling their shift to represent "protecting the Aryan race" in all of Scandinavia. However the Swedish branch remained central to the organizational structure, with nation-specific (Norway, Finland, etc) leadership acting as subordinates to the overarching NRM leadership.²⁹

On November 12, 2016 the group organized a march in central Stockholm, which Expo estimated had 600 participants.³⁰

In December 2016, the third murder associated with NRM occurred. Members of NRM-Finland attacked an anti-racist activist for openly disapproving of the group during a rally in Helsinki, violently beating him and kicking him to the ground. NRM-Finland's web page then posted a video of the activist lying on the ground, and called the attack a "disciplinary measure," and honored the perpetrator with an award. The activist died six days later from head injuries, and one NRM member was convicted for aggravated assault.³¹ This spurred the Finnish district court to enact a temporary ban in NRM-Finland, which the group continually appealed.³²

On September 30, 2017, on the Jewish holy day Yom Kippur, NRM-Sweden organized a demonstration that was intended to pass by a synagogue. A Swedish court blocked them from passing by the synagogue, shortening their legal demonstration route. When they were unable to diverge from the court-ordered route, NRM members fought with the police. 35 participants were arrested, including NRM-Sweden leader Simon Lindberg.³³

A 2017 report by European non-profit Expo named NRM as the primary force responsible for a rise in neo-Nazi activity in Sweden in 2016.³⁴

NRM's Iceland chapter was also founded in 2017, although its first demonstration wasn't held until September 2019, in Reykjavik. The Danish branch of NRM was also re-founded in 2017, under new leader Martin Durvad. The Danish and Icelandic NRM branches are the smallest.³⁵

In 2018, NRM reached the peak of its support.³⁶ Buoyed by their growth in support, they launched an election campaign and ran candidates on their own tickets in the 2018 parliamentary elections. However they received only 0.03% of the total votes, and even in the local municipality of Ludvika, where NRM has the greatest support, they only received 1.3% of the total votes. NRM leadership had been predicting huge wins, and their failure in the election caused rifts within the organization. Many began to question Lindberg's strategy of public-facing action. The Swedish Defense University and Expo interviewed local civil servants and security officials about NRM's activity, who reported a decline in NRM's base activism and local influence following the electoral defeats.³⁷

In August 2019, prominent NRM members attempted a coup of the organization, hoping to return Klas Lund to power. They were unhappy with the electoral defeat and disapproved of Lindberg's strategy, wanting to return the organization to its more radical, violent, and elitist roots. While Lindberg managed to retain power, many prominent members from several different national branches left NRM to form the splinter group, Nordic Strength. Nordic Strength is currently present in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark.³⁸

NRM attempted a second political campaign in the 2019 general EU elections, but received only 644 total votes.³⁹

In November 2019, NRM organized an attack against Jewish targets on the anniversary of Kristallnacht. They desecrated 84 Jewish cemeteries in Denmark with green paint, and other Jewish institutions and businesses were vandalized with Star of David stickers and antisemitic graffiti. While it was meant to be anonymous, two NRM leaders were convicted in connection to the attack, and messages on their phones were found from central NRM leadership. The event caused some NRM-Denmark leaders to defect.⁴⁰

In 2020, NRM-Finland's appeals against their ban finally reached the Finnish Supreme Court. The court officially ordered the shutdown of NRM's Finland chapter.⁴¹ The group set up a new Nazi organization, "Kohti Vapautta!" (Towards Freedom!) in anticipation of

the ban. However, even while the 2020 court proceedings were still underway, officials were discussing banning KV as a follow-up organization as well.⁴²

NRM's response to the 2020-2021 COVID-19 pandemic was to incorporate the onset of the violence into their existing conspiracy theories, accusing the media and the UN of trying to scare people into uniting into a global federation.⁴³ Additionally, they have staged actions protesting vaccination, claiming the vaccine is not properly tested.⁴⁴ However, despite being critical of government responses, the central organization has not followed the example of many other right-wing movements in denying the existence of the virus. NRM-Sweden canceled a rally they had been planning out of concern for "contaminating hundreds of nationalist-minded people," and Simon Lindberg encouraged listeners of their podcast not to take unnecessary risks.⁴⁵

Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 raised concerns among scholars of far-right extremism that the fight could become a training ground for groups to practice their military skills and build networks — similar to jihadists exploiting the conflict in Syria, or even white supremacists in the 2014 Ukraine conflict. However, these fears have largely not materialized. The influx of foreign fighters has been much smaller than anticipated, and NRM was quoted as saying that "neither side is worth fighting for and dying for."⁴⁶

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

A. LEADERSHIP

Klas Lund: Klas Lund was the founder of the Swedish Resistance Movement, which later became the Nordic Resistance Movement as they expanded to other Nordic countries. Lund came into public consciousness as a white supremacist figure in 1986, when 18 year-old Lund and several other skinheads beat a man to death for trying to stop them from harassing a group of young immigrants. He then went on to be arrested several more times, gain a leadership role in White Aryan Resistance (VAM), found a neo-Nazi newspaper called Folktribunen, and create the Swedish Resistance Movement. Through his writings in Folktribunen, Lund established his idea that an "elitist" organization with strong hierarchy and select, dedicated members would be the best way to advance the aims of white supremacy. He led SRM (later NRM) from 1997 to 2015, at which point he resigned. After NRM failed in the 2018 Swedish elections, he attempted to regain leadership, and then left NRM with around 40 allies to create the splinter group Nordic Strength.⁴⁷

Simon Lindberg: Simon Lindberg was appointed the leader of SRM (later NRM) in 2015, after Klas Lund resigned.⁴⁸ He implemented a notable shift in strategy from Lund, taking the group in a much more public-facing direction. Under Lindberg's leadership the group has emphasized maximizing growth, public visibility, and political representation, and has significantly loosened restrictions for membership.⁴⁹ He has helped to expand their propaganda network, and the group has added 19 additional Swedish-language podcasts and web TV channels.⁵⁰ During NRM's

political push in 2018, Lindberg promised spectacular results in the elections. When this failed to materialize, he came under harsh internal criticism and suffered an attempted coup by supporters of the former leader, Klas Lund. While Lindberg retained control of NRM, the group was significantly weakened.⁵¹

Pär Öberg: Pär Öberg was elected to municipal office in Ludvika as a write-in candidate during the 2014 elections, where he served until his electoral defeat in 2018.⁵² He has since served on NRM-Sweden's leadership council, as head of the political division⁵³

Emil Hagberg was reported to be the spokesman of NRM-Sweden in 2016, and appears to have been part of the movement since at least 2013. However, in 2021 the Counter-Extremism Project reported Hagberg to be the "former" spokesperson for NRM, implying he may no longer hold a position of leadership.⁵⁴

Haakon Forwald: Haakon Forwald is the founder and leader of NRM-Norway. He is best known as a former member of the Swedish black metal band Dissection. He attempted to join the Norwegian branch of NRM, but upon realizing it was defunct, joined the Swedish branch and eventually re-started the Norwegian branch in 2010. The group has slowly grown since then.⁵⁵

Tommy Olsen: Tommy Olsen is the deputy leader of NRM-Norway, and is responsible for leading the group's in-person actions. He also coordinates local nest leaders. He has a past in white supremacist movements tracing back into the 1990's, and was previously sentenced to prison for stabbing two immigrants in 2002.⁵⁶

Otto Rutanen was reported to be a leader in NRM-Finland as of 2018.⁵⁷

Antti Niemi was reported to be a leader in NRM-Finland as of 2018.⁵⁸

Esa Holappa: Esa Holappa was the first leader of SRM's Finnish branch, although he did not technically found the chapter. Holappa became involved with SRM online, when he was in his early teens. He befriended a man known only as Mikko, who went on to found the Finnish branch with the permission of the central Swedish leadership in 2008, and appointed Holappa as the leader. Holappa was one of the only members to operate openly under his own name. Upon its foundation, the Finnish Resistance Movement immediately became the most militant Finnish Nazi organization. Holappa was the group's leader from 2008 until 2014, when he left the movement due to a change of heart. He has since spoken out against the group to several media outlets, and says that his position was mostly as a figurehead so that the real leadership could work behind the scenes. He is considered a traitor and an oath breaker by current NRM members.⁵⁹

Mikko: The Finnish branch of NRM was founded by a man known as Mikko, whose last name is not publicly available. He was previously involved in Nazi-oriented online forums, and in the Summer of 2008, he was invited to Sweden for SRM’s March of the People demonstration. He was arrested at the demonstration for fighting against counter-protestors, and received a “fight diploma” from SRM’s leadership. After continuing to develop a relationship with SRM leadership, he eventually was given permission to start a Finnish branch. He appointed Esa Holappa as the leader of the organization while remaining behind the scenes himself — a stark departure from the insistence on openness that is central to the Swedish branch.⁶⁰

B. NAME CHANGES

- December 1997: Swedish Resistance Movement, or Svensk motståndsrörelsen (SRM)⁶¹
- 2016: Nordic Resistance Movement (NRM). The name change was declared in association with chapters in Norway, Finland, and Denmark, signaling their shift to represent “protecting the Aryan race” in all of Scandinavia.⁶²

C. SIZE ESTIMATES

This section is referring to estimated “full” members of the organization. Delineation of membership tiers can be found in the Narrative Summary.

Across all branches:

- 2017: 250-300 (Hate Speech International)⁶³
- 2021: 1000 (Scandinavian Political Studies)⁶⁴

Swedish Branch:

- 2017: 159 (Hate Speech International)⁶⁵
- 2018: Several hundred (University of Oslo)⁶⁶
- 2019: 150-300 (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung)⁶⁷
- 2021: The European Center for Populism Studies cited NRM-Sweden’s claim to having a few hundred members.⁶⁸

Finnish Branch:

- 2016: 60-70 (YLE)⁶⁹
- 2017: Up to 70 (Hate Speech International)⁷⁰
- 2018: Less than a hundred (University of Oslo)⁷¹
- 2022: 200-400 (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung)⁷²

Norwegian Branch:

- 2017: A few dozen (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung)⁷³
- 2018: A few dozen (University of Oslo)⁷⁴
- 2020: Less than 50 (Perspectives on Terrorism)⁷⁵

D. RESOURCES

Social Media:

Since Simon Lindberg's ascent to power in 2015, NRM has taken on a more public-facing strategy than ever before and emphasized its social media presence. They now have almost 20 different podcasts and TV channels.⁷⁶ While it is difficult to track their direct social media following since they are now banned from many popular sites, in July 2018 NRM's Youtube account had 11,600 subscribers and a cumulative total of 6.4 million views on all of its videos.⁷⁷

NRM also has their own news website, Frihetskamp. While the site claims to receive 60,000 unique visitors each month, there is no publicly available third party source to verify this.⁷⁸

Financing:

NRM states that all of their funding comes from "member donations and sympathetic individuals and organizations." They request donations through their media website, Frihetskamp.⁷⁹ Many major fundraising sites and banks have shut down any NRM-linked accounts, so much of their funding now comes through cryptocurrency.⁸⁰ While several of the group's predecessors in the white supremacist wing of Scandinavia were known for robbing banks to fund their activities, there is no publicly available evidence that NRM has continued this practice.⁸¹

E. GEOGRAPHIC LOCATIONS

Disclaimer: This is a partial list of where the militant organization has bases and where it operates. This does not include information on where the group conducts major attacks or has external influences.

The Nordic Resistance Movement has official chapters operating in Sweden, Finland, and Norway. They also have branches in Denmark and Iceland, although they are significantly smaller and less active, leading to some doubt over whether they can be considered branches.⁸² NRM also has a significant social media following in Russia.⁸³ Their website states that the group has "no immediate plans to expand outside of the North," but they have translated their political program into English and encourage foreign adherents to "get organized."⁸⁴

Swedish members in particular seem to have a large influence over the movement, with large social media followings. Across the international alt-right, people frequently single out Sweden as an example of a former global power that has lost preeminence because of an influx of foreigners.⁸⁵

The Counter-Extremism Project reports that there are 300,000-400,000 unique visitors per month to the NRM website, and their YouTube page had 11,444 subscribers before being deleted.⁸⁶

STRATEGY

A. IDEOLOGY AND GOALS

NRM is first and foremost a Neo-Nazi organization. They are explicitly against democracy, immigration, multiculturalism, “Zionism” and “globalism” (by which they mean Judaism), capitalism, communism, feminism, and LGBTQ rights.⁸⁷ They see both gender equality and homosexuality as a threat to the traditional family structure, which therefore constitutes a threat to their ideal of the Nordic homeland. NRM members also believe that people’s identities are closely tied to territories and cultures, and that races are biologically different. They take ideological inspiration from several antisemitic and ultra-nationalist historical figures, including Adolf Hitler, Danish Nazi ideologue Povl Riis-Knudsen, and Romanian Christian fascist Corneliu Codreanu. They appreciate the project of Nazi Germany and see themselves as enacting the modern version of the ideology. They also do not engage in organized religion, and see Christianity (and all other non-pagan religions) as a foreign-imposed belief system. In fact, they make a point of celebrating pagan holidays and claim imagery from traditional Norse mythology as their own.⁸⁸

NRM’s long-term goal is to overthrow the current Democratic systems in the states where they operate. They hope that their own organization will take their place, with authoritarian Nazi leadership that governs all of Scandinavia strictly for the benefit of white citizens. For the most part, they believe that all Nordic peoples are racially related, and hope to deport all citizens who are not of Nordic or closely related descent.⁸⁹ However some parts of the Swedish movement see even their Finnish counterparts as “ethnic hybrids” who don’t belong in Scandinavian culture. Partially for this reason, the Finnish chapter puts less emphasis on achieving a unified Nazi state.⁹⁰ Still, NRM leaders generally unify their membership under these goals. In order to achieve them, they believe that a race war is inevitable, and that they must overcome a global “Zionist” elite that supposedly controls the entire Western world. In this process, they also hope to replace the EU with a European geopolitical alliance that is free from U.S. influence, in most cases preferring to partner with Russia.⁹¹

NRM members generally see Russia as an “ideal society” that such nationalists turn to, where strong norms of masculinity and authoritarianism prevail.⁹² However, this is not unilaterally true. Russia is one subject where the Finnish branch is philosophically divided from the other branches. While prominent NRM-Sweden member Emil Hagberg has been quoted saying that he would rather see Sweden occupied by Russia than be under its current government, members of the Finnish branch have also fought against Russia in the 2014 Ukraine conflict.⁹³

In the short term, their goals are to recruit members who meet their qualifications, and to create greater societal acceptance for their ideology. Since 2015, they have focused increasingly on the geographical spread of their message, including international contacts, and on their local influence, even running candidates for political office.⁹⁴ Through their media site, Frihetskamp, they aim to “challenge” mainstream media, which they believe is controlled by Jewish globalists.⁹⁵

B. POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

In the Swedish municipal elections of 2014, SRM members took advantage of an election loophole to elect a member of SRM to a municipal council seat in Ludvika, and another as a substitute in Borlänge. Swedish elections allow citizens to vote solely for a party, or to vote for a party *and* for particular candidates to represent that party. Eighteen SRM members voted for the Sweden Democrats and put Pär Öberg as a write-in candidate; since Sweden Democrats only put 5 candidates forward but won 7 seats, Pär Öberg was automatically chosen to fill a spot.⁹⁶ The election of militant Neo-Nazis sparked national outrage.⁹⁷ Although SRM was still explicitly anti-democratic, this inspired them to establish a parliamentary wing of the movement in 2014. Their goal was to work inside the system without accepting it.⁹⁸ They registered as a formal political party in July 2015.⁹⁹

However, election results since then have spoken to the organization’s low levels of broad support. When they tried running candidates on their own tickets in the 2018 parliamentary elections, they received only 2,106 votes (0.03% of the total votes). Even in the local municipality of Ludvika, where NRM has the greatest support, they only received 215 votes (amounting to 1.3% of total votes), and Pär Öberg lost his municipal council seat.¹⁰⁰ In the 2019 general EU elections, after the Nordic Strength split, NRM received only 644 votes. A report by the Swedish Defense University noted a decline in NRM’s base activism following their defeats in the 2018 elections.¹⁰¹

C. TARGETS AND TACTICS

NRM often targets people involved in left-wing politics, journalists, feminists, immigrants, Jewish people, and the LGBTQ community. This includes online attacks, threats, following people to their cars, and occasionally planned physical violence. On several occasions, NRM members have intentionally escalated legal demonstrations to violent altercations, attacking counter protestors, police, and others they regard as the political enemy. On these occasions they have used pepper spray, knives, fireworks, and other hand weapons.¹⁰² There have even been bombings one at a left-wing cafe which thankfully caused no injuries, and another at an immigration center where a guard was injured.¹⁰³ In fact, NRM does not shy away from violence: part of becoming a full member is receiving martial arts training, and many make a point of arming themselves. As of 2017, a quarter of NRM’s members had been convicted of a violent crime.¹⁰⁴ The organization has made it clear that they do not intend to escalate terrorism or other more violent tactics, as long as they are permitted to operate openly. The ban in Finland doesn’t appear to have resulted in large-scale use of terrorist tactics thus far. However, it

is important to keep in mind that their eventual goal is a violent overthrow of the democratic order, spurred by a race war; use of extreme violence is not beyond their ideology, rather it is currently impractical.¹⁰⁵ There is not publicly available evidence for some attacks by NRM to have been planned on an organizational level. Many attacks are by individual members after receiving tacit support from the organization to do so. There has been mention of clandestine “action groups” in NRM writings, which may be designed to allow NRM to carry out illegal (and even deadly) activities without taking credit as an organization.¹⁰⁶

Propaganda distribution is an important tactic for NRM. In addition to spreading word of their movement, it provides an opportunity for members to collaborate on tangible projects, and showcase their activities online by filming and photographing events. Additionally, it serves to intimidate minorities and other people that NRM considers their enemies, such as hanging signs that read “Refugees are Not Welcome.” Members will travel in units to targeted communities to distribute leaflets in mailboxes, paste stickers around the area, and hang banners. In 2020, physical propaganda distribution constituted 70% of their activities for the year.¹⁰⁷ As a group, they also regularly engage in martial arts training; reading fascist literature and watching propaganda films; recreational events to build camaraderie; and rallies and uniformed marches.¹⁰⁸ They have also vandalized Jewish cemeteries.¹⁰⁹ The Israeli embassy in Helsinki has been vandalized with swastikas, images of Hitler, and NRM stickers more than 20 times since 2017.¹¹⁰ Provocative public acts are meant to garner attention and create political leverage.¹¹¹

NRM exploits public opposition to Sweden’s open door policy for Muslim asylum seekers to expand their ideas into general society.¹¹² NRM enters mainstream discourse about immigration in order to normalize their own more radical ideas. Particularly since 2015, NRM has utilized social media to spread its message, and much of this discourse has been online. They use memes and humor to further normalize their ideas. They have also replaced traditional Nazi imagery (ex. swastikas) with symbols from Norse paganism, in order to make their communications more palatable to an everyday audience. Additionally, online activity has allowed them to create international contacts, and spread their influence abroad.¹¹³

MAJOR ATTACKS

Disclaimer: These are some selected major attacks in the militant organization's history. It is not a comprehensive listing but captures some of the most famous attacks or turning points during the campaign.

October 12, 1999: Björn Söderberg, a Swedish left-wing union organizer, was murdered outside of his apartment in Stockholm by Swedish members of the SRM’s youth organization. He had tipped off a left-wing newspaper that his colleague on the board of a local union was an active neo-Nazi, costing the man his job and position at the union. Three men were convicted on charges related to the murder. There is no publicly available evidence that central SRM leadership was involved in planning the murder, but researchers have observed that individuals or clandestine “action groups”

often carry out illegal activities with tacit support from central leadership, while absolving SRM/NRM of responsibility as an organization.¹¹⁴

September 1, 2007: SRM members and militant anti-fascists got into a fight in central Stockholm, during which one of the anti-fascists was stabbed in the neck. An SRM member was sentenced to five years in prison for attempted murder.¹¹⁵

2008: Five SRM members attacked a 17 year old sitting on a bench in Gothenburg, mistakenly believing that he was a left-wing activist. The young man suffered a broken nose and reduced eyesight, and the five attackers were arrested and charged.¹¹⁶

2010: SRM members demonstrated in connection with a music festival in Piteå, Sweden. In their first recorded incitement of violence at a large gathering, they attacked festival guards when confronted. One of the SRM activists was found to be in possession of a knife.¹¹⁷

2012: Two SRM members stabbed Joakim Karlsson eight times in the chest outside of a grocery store in Vallentuna. A CCTV recording showed how the victim was stabbed, kicked and trampled upon. Only one of the perpetrators was arrested, while the other remained on the run, and on Interpol's most wanted list as of 2017. There is no publicly available evidence that central SRM leadership was involved in planning the murder, but researchers have observed that individuals or clandestine "action groups" often carry out illegal activities with tacit support from central leadership, while absolving SRM/NRM of responsibility as an organization.¹¹⁸

November 11, 2016: Members of NRM-Sweden placed homemade bombs at the Syndikaliskt Forum Kafe, a left-wing cafe in Gothenburg. There were no casualties. There is no publicly available evidence that central SRM leadership was involved in planning the murder, but researchers have observed that individuals or clandestine "action groups" often carry out illegal activities with tacit support from central leadership, while absolving SRM/NRM of responsibility as an organization.¹¹⁹

December 2016: Members of NRM-Finland attacked an anti-racist activist for openly disapproving of the group during a rally in Helsinki, violently beating him and kicking him to the ground. NRM-Finland's web page then posted a video of the activist lying on the ground, and called the attack a "disciplinary measure." The activist died six days later from head injuries, and one NRM member was convicted for aggravated assault.¹²⁰

January 5, 2017: Members of NRM-Sweden set off homemade bombs outside of a refugee lodging center in Gothenburg. One security guard was injured. Evidence later came out that two of the perpetrators had undergone paramilitary training with RIM in Russia. There is no publicly available evidence that central SRM leadership was involved in planning the murder, but researchers have observed that individuals or

clandestine “action groups” often carry out illegal activities with tacit support from central leadership, while absolving SRM/NRM of responsibility as an organization.¹²¹

August 11, 2018: An NRM member was arrested for planning to murder two journalists working for Mittmedia, a large Swedish media group. Investigators found planning documents, photos of the journalists’ homes, and homemade weapons. There is no publicly available evidence that central SRM leadership was involved in planning the murder, but researchers have observed that individuals or clandestine “action groups” often carry out illegal activities with tacit support from central leadership, while absolving SRM/NRM of responsibility as an organization.¹²²

August 10, 2019: Philip Manshaus was in the process of being interviewed to join NRM but was not yet a member when he carried out an attempted terror attack at a mosque in Bærum, Norway. The mosque was mostly empty when he opened fire, and two worshippers managed to restrain him until the police arrived. The police later found that he had also killed his step-sister, who had been adopted from China, earlier in the day. Racist motives were later confirmed for both attacks.¹²³

November 4, 2021: An NRM member was arrested for planning a bomb attack, and was found to have been stockpiling weapons and explosives at his residence for over a year. Police also found evidence for extensive searches on his computers for “lone wolf” terrorist attacks, and attacks on schools, giving authorities idea of what he may have been planning. There is no publicly available evidence that central SRM leadership was involved in planning the murder, but researchers have observed that individuals or clandestine “action groups” often carry out illegal activities with tacit support from central leadership, while absolving SRM/NRM of responsibility as an organization.¹²⁴

July 12, 2022: A 32-year old NRM “support” member committed a fatal knife attack against Dr. Ing-Marie Wieselgren, a Swedish psychiatrist. She is believed to have been targeted due to her public-facing advocacy for issues in psychiatry. The perpetrator has been charged for terrorism and awaits trial as of August 2022. There is no publicly available evidence that central SRM leadership was involved in planning the murder, but researchers have observed that individuals or clandestine “action groups” often carry out illegal activities with tacit support from central leadership, while absolving SRM/NRM of responsibility as an organization.¹²⁵

INTERACTIONS

A. DESIGNATED/LISTED

NRM was banned in a Finnish district court in 2017, but the group continued to appeal the decision until the case reached Finland’s Supreme Court. In 2020, the Supreme Court officially ordered the shutdown of NRM’s Finland chapter.¹²⁶

The Trump administration's 2018 National Strategy for Counterterrorism cited NRM as an example of a white supremacist armed group that poses a threat to the United States, although it did not give the group any official label.¹²⁷

B. COMMUNITY RELATIONS

NRM was created to be an “elite” organization and was originally less concerned with creating a broad base of acceptance for their ideology. However since Simon Lindberg took over leadership in 2015, the organization has loosened its restrictions for membership and become much more public facing. They engage in shocking behavior in order to attract attention to their message. In general, they hope to intimidate members of their communities that they see as “enemies” (immigrants, LGBTQ), and garner support from people they see as “true” Nordic citizens. They often direct propaganda towards trade union members, as they specifically want the support of white working class males.¹²⁸

NRM engages in many online communities and has increasingly been found in the same circles as the Swedish alt-right. However, NRM also makes a practice of physically going into communities in order to distribute propaganda, marking it as their “territory,” in a way.¹²⁹ One member, Pär Öberg, even served on the Ludvika municipal council from 2014 to 2018.¹³⁰

There have been locally led efforts to combat neo-Nazi extremism, often met with resistance from NRM. For example, after Pär Öberg's election, the Ludvika community received support from the national government and anti-extremism organizations in stopping neo-Nazi recruitment. They put on educational courses on how extremism spreads, and worked on strengthening local institutions. Pär Öberg and other NRM members showed up to meeting to intimidate participants, sometimes stalking families who they saw as opponents or advocating for discrimination in public places.¹³¹

NRM members are often ostracized from their communities and families, particularly because full membership in the organization requires them to be public in their support of Naziism.¹³² A study was conducted on the leaders of civil society groups in Ludvika prior to the 2018 elections, which showed that civil society groups were often actively opposed to NRM's activities. 93% of survey respondents reported finding NRM offensive or disturbing, and 89% reported being unable to imagine having a personal relationship with an NRM member.¹³³ It is also common for members to lose their jobs. Part of the group's emphasis on community and social events is to compensate for this lack of outside community.¹³⁴

C. RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER GROUPS

White Aryan Resistance (Viit Ariskt Motstand, or VAM) and National Youth (Nationell Ungdom) were both Swedish groups that preceded NRM in the neo-Nazi movement, and were the source of many of its early members and leaders. National Youth eventually merged with NRM, becoming the organization's youth wing.¹³⁵

The Finnish chapter of NRM had always sustained some degree of ideological difference, and in 2015 NRM member Mika Ranta decided to form the splinter group Soldiers of Odin to reflect this. The groups have remained on good terms.¹³⁶

Nordic Strength also formed as a splinter group from NRM in August 2019, by prominent NRM leaders such as Klas Lund. The split was partially a reaction to their failed parliamentary bids, and followed their attempted coup of NRM, where they hoped to return Lund to power. The split partially occurred in order to re-focus on creating a neo-Nazi organization with elite membership that not everyone would be allowed to join, and to move in a more radical direction. They are present in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark.¹³⁷

NRM has close contacts with the more decentralized and internet-based alt-right in Sweden. Members of NRM and the alt-right frequently exchange ideas and appear on each other's media forums. Although the political strategies of the alt-right and NRM are quite different, they share many of the same narratives about race and society.¹³⁸

Outside of Scandinavia, NRM has interpersonal connections with several other right-wing extremist organizations, including Der Dritte Weg in Germany, Legio Hungaria in Hungary, Casa Pound in Italy, National Action in the UK, and Golden Dawn in Greece.¹³⁹ NRM has also expressed support for and interacted with American right-wing extremist groups, particularly over social media.¹⁴⁰ With all of these groups, they share ideas, publicize each others' media outputs, and occasionally travel to attend each others' events. For example, Finnish NRM branch (FRM) plans an annual "612 March" in Helsinki on Finnish Independence Day, where neo-Nazis and right-wing extremists from across Scandinavia and even the rest of Europe congregate. Before COVID-19, the march would usually have up to 3000 participants.¹⁴¹

In particular, NRM has had close relations with the Russian Imperial Movement (RIM) since at least 2012, and has a presence in the Russian social media service, VKontakte. In 2015, several Nazi groups from across Europe and alt-right groups from the U.S. gathered in St. Petersburg to create a joint strategy. While there, RIM offered several groups paramilitary training, including NRM.¹⁴² However, NRM is not unilaterally on the side of RIM. The Finnish right-wing has historically been anti-Russian, and members in the Finnish chapter often side with the Azov Movement in Ukraine instead. An FRM delegation visited the Azov regiment in Kyiv in 2019, and a few participated in the 2014 conflict in Ukraine.¹⁴³

D. STATE SPONSORS AND EXTERNAL INFLUENCES

There are no publicly available state sponsors or external influences for this group.

MAPS

- Global Right-Wing Extremism

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