

# Mental Illness Doesn't Explain Mass Violence-but Neither Does "Islamic Extremism"

By [Jim Naureckas](#)

Global Research, July 22, 2015

[FAIR](#) 21 July 2015

Theme: [Media Disinformation](#)

With the latest mass shooting in Chattanooga, corporate media followed the [usual pattern](#) of being ready and willing to label violence as "terrorism" so long as the suspect is Muslim—e.g., Time's report on the shooting, "How to Stop the Next Domestic Terrorist" ([7/20/15](#))—despite questions occasionally raised about whether "terrorism" is the appropriate frame to describe attacks on military installations (e.g., Slate, [7/17/15](#)).

*CNN's Anderson Cooper, talking to correspondent Gary Tuchman, recognizes that "depression" doesn't explain mass violence-but seems to suggest that "Islamic extremism" does.*

At the same time, perhaps responding to critics of the [double standard](#) in treatment of Muslim mass murder suspects, US journalists did do something with reported shooter Mohammad Abdulazeed that is [often reserved](#) for white suspects with Christian backgrounds: delving into Abdulazeed's psychology and viewing his alleged crime through the lens of mental illness—as with the New York Times' report, "In Chattanooga, a Young Man on a Downward Spiral" ([7/20/15](#)).

Trying to square the terrorist narrative with the mental illness narrative, CNN's Anderson Cooper ([7/20/15](#)) came up with a peculiar question (as noted by [Sam Hussein](#)), asking correspondent Gary Tuchman:

Now, did the gunman's parents acknowledge the possibility their son committed these murders in the name of Islamic extremism? I mean, they say it's depression, but, you know, depression doesn't lead most people to kill other people.

It's true what Cooper says: Most depressed people, and people with [mental illness](#) in general, will never hurt anyone. But it's just as true that religious beliefs—"extremist" or otherwise—don't "lead most people to kill other people."

It's a sign of media failure to understand the criticisms made of terrorism coverage that Cooper doesn't recognize that "[Islamic extremism](#)" is no more a satisfying explanation of why someone might become violent than "depression" is.

*Jim Naureckas is the editor of [FAIR.org](#).*

*Messages to CNN can be sent to [here](#) (or via Twitter [@CNN](#)). Please remember that*

*respectful communication is the most effective.*

The original source of this article is [FAIR](#)  
Copyright © [Jim Naureckas](#), [FAIR](#), 2015

---

[\*\*Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page\*\*](#)

[\*\*Become a Member of Global Research\*\*](#)

Articles by: [Jim Naureckas](#)

**Disclaimer:** The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: [publications@globalresearch.ca](mailto:publications@globalresearch.ca)  
[www.globalresearch.ca](http://www.globalresearch.ca) contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.  
For media inquiries: [publications@globalresearch.ca](mailto:publications@globalresearch.ca)