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Islamophobia ñ Again?

Maureen Fiedler | Nov. 6, 2009 NCR Today

We were all shocked by the horrific killings at Ft. Hood, Texas, yesterday. But again and again, the media keep mentioning the suspect's religion. He's a Muslim. I must admit: I wonder if someone would say "the suspect is a Presbyterian, or a Reform Jew or a Catholic." His religion may or may not have had anything to do with these killings.

After all, Major Hasan, the suspect, is also a psychiatrist with a specialization in post-traumatic stress disorder. He must have listened to horrible war stories from patients for many weeks or months. He had orders for a deployment he did not want. There is nothing especially religious about these identities, and either one might be a factor in the shootings he allegedly committed. Indeed, he might have simply "snapped."

But in some quarters, the religious hate, the "Islamophobia," has already begun, with threats against mosques and Muslims. It's part of the "blame the entire group for what a small group, or in this case - one person, may have done."

I'll never forget the night after 9-11 when Rabbi David Saperstein walked into the studio where we were broadcasting on "religion and terrorism" with a press release from the Jewish community, utterly condemning such attitudes, which were all too evident after 9-11. "We stand with our Muslim sisters and brothers," he said. "This 'blame the group' mentality is at the root of anti-Semitism, as surely as it is at the root of Islamophobia.

On this day, I stand with my Muslim sisters and brothers.

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