

Presentation title:

## Lone-actor grievance-fueled violence: Current evidence base and future directions

**Speaker:** Christopher Kehlet Ebbrecht (Aarhus University, Denmark)

Over the past decades, western societies have experienced an increase in acts of lone-actor grievance-fueled violence, that is, mass violence committed by single perpetrators. In 2021, The European Commission highlighted lone actors as a serious challenge to the prevention and countering of violent extremism, because their relative isolation complicate threat detection and disruption. As such, rather than just focusing on threat assessment, efforts to prevent lone-actor grievance-fueled violence are also very much concerned with early intervention. Such interventions call for knowledge about the complex radicalization trajectories of these violent offenders. This presentation offers an overview of the current evidence base on lone-actor grievance-fueled violence by presenting the findings from a systematic review on risk factors and mechanisms in lone-actor radicalization. Through a quality assessment of the extant literature, it is argued that the current evidence base suffers from two limitations in particular. The first is a substantial predominance of 'variance-based' (quantitative) studies in favor of 'case-based' and 'interpretive' (qualitative) research. This uneven research focus means that while the potential causal relationship between certain risk factors and lone-actor radicalization is given much attention, the mechanisms by which they (perhaps) work and the sense-making offenders attribute to their radicalizing circumstances, is not equally examined. The second limitation concerns the low methodical quality of the far predominating variance-based studies, which, due to the conditions of lone-actor research, often only reach correlational rather than causal claims. In an attempt to remedy these shortcomings, this presentation suggests to adopt methods not so often used in extremism-related research (e.g. Bayesian statistics, process-tracing, and narrative analysis) to improve future evidence-based knowledge on lone-actor grievance-fueled violence.