



GUN VIOLENCE

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THE ISSUE:

The U.S. has both the highest absolute and highest per capita rates of gun ownership in the world, and guns are easily accessible by those likely to misuse them. Yet the U.S. has failed to implement even a basic system for the regulation of firearms – with no requirements for universal background checks, licensing, and training for gun purchasers or for registration of guns. Killing an average of 109 people each day, gun violence is the second leading cause of death among children and disproportionately affects communities of color. African Americans are ten times more likely to be the victims of gun homicides than white Americans, and gun violence is the leading cause of death among black men ages 15–34. Persistent firearm violence, high rates of gun ownership, and ease of access to firearms by individuals likely to misuse them demonstrate how the U.S. government is failing to meet its obligation to respect, protect and fulfill human rights pursuant to international law. Persistent gun violence in the U.S. is denying people their civil and political rights including the right to life, the right to security of person and the right to be free from discrimination.

The U.S. crisis of gun violence impacts a broad range of people domestically, including women, children, communities of color, and students. It also impacts foreign countries as the Trump administration relaxes arms export oversight to boost U.S. arms sales, making it easier for dangerous actors to access military-style weapons which are often used to commit human rights atrocities abroad.

THE HUMAN COST:

Hadiya Pendleton was an honors student and drum majorette who had just performed at President Obama's inauguration. In January 2013, gun violence claimed her life. Two members of a gang, driving past Harsh Park, Chicago, saw a group of teenagers gathered under a canopy, sheltering from the rain, and opened fire, mistaking the teenagers for rival gang members. Hadiya was just 15 years old when she was killed.

TALKING POINTS:

It is time for a change: the crisis of gun violence in the U.S. and failure of the U.S. government to take effective action has resulted in the death of thousands and injuries to even more. The U.S. has an obligation under international law to ensure the rights and individual safety of people living in the country.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Create an Executive Task Force on Ending Gun Violence that includes representatives from impacted communities, direct service providers, health care professionals, law enforcement agencies, and researchers to investigate evidence-based gun violence prevention policies that holistically address gun violence, including school safety, gun violence in communities of color, access to mental and physical health care for gun violence survivors, requirements for universal background checks, licensing, and training for gun purchasers/registration of firearms, etc. Within its first 100 days, the Task Force should draft a report on effective policies that could be implemented to reduce gun violence.
- Issue directives to the Department of Justice, Attorney General, and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), requiring:
 - ◇ Enforcement of existing gun violence prevention measures that fall within their jurisdictions, including interstate gun trafficking
 - ◇ Adoption of policies banning 3-D printed guns, ghost guns, and other dangerous accessories that increase firearm lethality.
- Mandate that the State Department and Department of Commerce reverse Trump administration policies transferring oversight of exports of semi-automatic weapons and ammunition and adopt policies preventing the import of foreign assault weapons into the U.S.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- In the Line of Fire: Human Rights and the U.S. Gun Violence Crisis (2018): https://www.amnestyusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Gun-Report-Full_16.pdf
- Scars of Survival: Gun Violence and Barriers to Reparation in the U.S. (2019): <https://www.amnestyusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Scars-of-survival.pdf>
- Fragmented and Unequal: A Justice System that Fails Survivors of Intimate Partner Violence in Louisiana (2019): <https://www.amnestyusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/AMR5111602019ENGLISH.pdf>

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