

IVAT Statement on Recent Acts of Gun Violence in America

30 March 2021

On March 23, 2021 when ten people were killed in a mass shooting in Boulder, CO, more than seven mass shootings had occurred in the U.S. in seven days. On March 25, 2021, 9 days after 8 people were killed in the mass spa shootings around Atlanta, GA, a man was arrested in an Atlanta grocery store armed with a semiautomatic rifle, a shotgun, four handguns, body armor and a cache of ammunition. On March 27th, there were multiple shootings and victims in Virginia Beach, with the details not yet fully known. Per the CDC, “on average, there are over 100-gun deaths each day and 38,000 each year. 61% are suicides, 36% are homicides, 1.4% are shootings by police, and 1.3% are unintentional.”¹

Thoughts and prayers are not enough for the families and loved ones of the victims in Boulder: Denny Strong, Neven Stanisic, Rikki Olds, Tralona Bartkowiak, Suzanne Fountain, Teri Leiker, Eric Talley, Kevin Mahoney, Lynn Murray, Jody Waters. Thoughts and prayers are not enough for the families and loved ones of the victims in Atlanta: Soon Chung Park, Hyun Jung Grant, Suncha Kim, Yong Ae Yue, Daoyou Feng, Paul Andre Michels, Xiaojie Tan, Delaina Ashley Yaun.

Only one thing appears to be common in all the above situations: The use of guns to commit violence. Gun violence and the thousands of lives lost each year in the U.S. from homicides, suicides, family, and police shootings, result in traumatized and shattered families and communities. Gun violence destroys the right to safety in our homes, neighborhoods, places of worship, grocery stores, movie theaters, concerts, schools, workplaces, everywhere. Gun violence is a public health issue requiring numerous complex strategies to activate policy change and save lives. After lawmakers appropriated \$25 million to be split between the C.D.C. and the National Institute of Health (NIH) in 2019, firearm injury prevention research is funded again after 24 years. As Dr. Mark Rosenberg, who helped to establish the C.D.C. National Center for Injury Prevention and Control states, “There’s a strategy that science can help us define where you can do both — you can protect the rights of law-abiding gun owners and at the very same time reduce the toll of gun violence.”²

Recent reporting from The Gun Violence Archive, which tracks shootings in real time using media reports, states that there have been almost 4,000 more gun homicides in 2020 than in 2019.³

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS), “Fatal Injury Reports,” last accessed Apr. 1, 2020, <https://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars>. Figures represent an average of the five years of most recently available data: 2014 to 2018.)

² <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/27/us/politics/gun-violence-research-cdc.html>

³ <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/mar/24/us-murders-extra-4000-everyday-gun-violence>

They also reported over 39,000-gun deaths in the U.S. in 2019, including over 24,000 suicides and 400 mass shootings.

According to the Brady center, firearms sales in 2020 increased an estimated 64% over 2019 (<https://www.bradyunited.org/>). The number of firearms and access to them in America make some feel that the country has moved to making it more difficult to vote in some places than to purchase a firearm (i.e., recent legislation passed in GA).⁴

The fact that firearms, especially assault or military type weapons, remain insufficiently regulated unlike other consumer products, sends the message that guns are valued more than life. Everytown for Gun Safety (<https://everytown.org/>) highlights other areas of concern including ghost guns (handmade guns made by individuals, not licensed manufacturers, or importers), reported as the fastest-growing gun safety problem our country faces, and guns that can now be made by 3-D printers (which evade metal detectors and federal firearms licensee systems). Guns are also not being required to have safety features shown to reduce unintentional shootings and theft.

A database maintained by the University of Washington's Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation reports that "the U.S. has the 32nd-highest rate of deaths from gun violence in the world: 3.96 deaths per 100,000 people in 2019. That was more than eight times as high as the rate in Canada, which had 0.47 deaths per 100,000 people, and nearly 100 times higher than the one in United Kingdom, which had 0.04 deaths per 100,000."⁵

Multiple complex factors contribute to the high rate of gun violence in the U.S.: access, racism, misogyny, domestic violence, community violence and violence perpetrated by a smaller number of people experiencing mental health problems, as may be the case in the Boulder, CO murders. According to the data available on Giffords.org, "the US has more guns (393 million) than people, and a higher rate of gun violence than any other high-income country."⁶

Calls have been made for the Biden Administration to invest \$5 billion in inner-city gun violence reduction disbursed over 8 years to support existing work being done in affected communities, supporting intervention work interrupted during the COVID-19 pandemic. "Our lawmakers need to be educated about the actual realities of gun violence," said Fatimah Loren, executive director of the New-Jersey based Health Alliance for Violence Intervention.⁷

IVAT adds our voice to amplify the calls for action, not just words, for effective gun safety policies such as prevention efforts of banning bump stocks, implementing universal background checks,

⁴ <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/25/us/politics/georgia-voting-law-republicans.html>

⁵ <https://www.kuow.org/stories/gun-violence-deaths-how-the-u-s-compares-with-the-rest-of-the-world>

⁶ Aaron Karp, "Estimating Global Civilian-Held Firearms Numbers," Small Arms Survey, June 2018, <http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/weapons-and-markets/tools/global-firearms-holdings.html>

⁷ <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/mar/24/us-murders-extra-4000-everyday-gun-violence>

banning assault weapons, banning high-capacity magazines, raising the minimum purchase age, increasing waiting periods, and adding extreme risk and “red flag” protection orders.

In 2019 and 2020, IVAT was honored to host several students from Marjorie Stoneham Douglas high school in Parkland, FL, who performed during our International Trauma Summits in San Diego. The students shared their experiences and activism efforts and how music was a powerful tool for coping, grieving, and healing from the violence. We are grateful to have the students perform again at our upcoming April 2021 Hawai`i International Trauma Summit as we help lift voices of survivors of gun violence and continue to educate around the need for policy change and actions that will save lives.

Sincerely,



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Additional Resources:

- https://www.apa.org/topics/violence/resources-mass-shootings?utm_source=linkedin&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=apa-helpcenter&utm_content=mass-shooting-resources
- <https://giffords.org>