

END THE HUMAN RIGHTS CRISIS OF GUN VIOLENCE IN THE UNITED STATES

ALL MEMBERS OF CONGRESS MUST URGENTLY HELP STOP HATE-MOTIVATED GUN VIOLENCE BY SUPPORTING THE “DISARM HATE ACT”.

Gun violence is a human rights crisis. The sheer volume of people killed or injured each year in the U.S. by gun violence is staggering. In 2017, firearms caused an average of 108 deaths every day, and over 133,000 more injuries. Per capita, this is significantly higher than in other industrialized countries. Even if we can't stop all gun violence, there are basic steps we can take to make a difference.

THE INTERSECTION OF HATE AND GUN VIOLENCE

Reports indicate that hate groups and hate-related crimes in the U.S. are on the rise. Hate crimes on the basis of religion, race or sexual orientation increased by 17 percent from 2016 to 2017 alone.

The Center for American Progress (CAP) analyzed data from the National Crime Victimization Survey conducted by the Bureau of Justice Statistics and observed that between 2010 and 2014, approximately 43,000 reported hate crimes involved a firearm. This means that more than 8,500 hate crimes per year, or more than 23 per day, involve a firearm.

Despite these facts, there is no federal law prohibiting those convicted of misdemeanor hate crimes from purchasing or possessing a firearm, and only a handful of states have passed laws preventing individuals convicted of misdemeanor hate crimes from purchasing a firearm. In most U.S. states, some people convicted of hate crimes can still legally buy or possess guns.

Recent examples of hate-fueled gun violence include the shootings at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pennsylvania; the Sikh Temple of Wisconsin (Gurdwara) in Wisconsin; the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in South Carolina; the Pulse nightclub in Florida; and most recently, a shopping center in El Paso, Texas.

No one should be afraid to walk down the street, enter their place of worship or otherwise gather with members of their community out of fear that they will be targeted

by a shooter. This violates our rights to security of person, freedom from discrimination and even the right to worship freely.

We all have the right to be treated equally and governments have a moral and legal obligation to protect people from discrimination or violence based on who they are—their real or perceived identity. The U.S. is obligated to take active steps to ensure—to the greatest extent possible—that people are able to live freely regardless of real or perceived race, country of origin, religion, sexual orientation or gender identity.

AIUSA RECOMMENDATIONS TO CONGRESS:

- Members of the U.S. Senate: Promptly cosponsor and pass S. 1462, *Disarm Hate Act*.
- Members of the U.S. House of Representatives: Promptly cosponsor and pass H.R. 2708, *Disarm Hate Act*.

Key elements of this legislation supported by Amnesty International include:

- Defining misdemeanor hate crime to include the threat, use or attempted use of force and are found to be motivated at least in part by hate or bias against the victim's race, color, religion, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability;
- Prohibiting the purchase, possession or shipment of a firearm by anyone convicted of a misdemeanor hate crime or anyone who received a hate crime sentence enhancement.

For more information, please contact Adotei Akwei, Deputy Director Advocacy and Government Relations, at 202-509-8148 or aakwei@aiusa.org