

Chicago: Seven fatal shootings in one day, Trump threatens federal intervention

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Seven people were shot and killed Wednesday in Chicago, in what has so far been the deadliest day of 2017. According to the *Chicago Sun-Times*, the city has recorded this many murders 21 times in the past 16 years, a rare but—appallingly—not unheard of occurrence. The last time it happened was Christmas Day of the past year.

According to counts by the *Sun-Times* and *Chicago Tribune*, there have been just under 100 murders in the first eight weeks of the year, an increase over the first eight weeks of 2016. The past year saw more murders than the city has seen in nearly two decades, with the number increasing over 50 percent from 2015, from 496 to 762.

As with most of the city's shooting deaths, the murders were concentrated in just a few of the most impoverished neighborhoods, in which gang violence is rampant. Six of seven were killed on the South Side, one of whom was a 20-year-old pregnant woman, while one, a 60-year-old man, was killed in the Little Village neighborhood on the West Side.

Reports of the violence led President Donald Trump to tweet: "Seven people shot and killed yesterday in Chicago. What is going on there - totally out of control. Chicago needs help!"

Since his campaign for president, Trump has made it a point to regularly comment on the violence in Chicago as part of a campaign to remove all constraints on police violence against the working class. During an interview last August on the O'Reilly Factor, Trump claimed to have met with a "top police officer in Chicago" and claimed that the violence could be solved by the police "being very much tougher than they are right now."

At a campaign rally in September, he suggested that an increase in "stop-and-frisk" tactics, in other words,

unconstitutional police harassment of the city's working class population, might "save thousands of lives."

In January, in response to reports about the 2016 homicide numbers, Trump threatened, again via Twitter, "If Chicago doesn't fix the horrible 'carnage' going on I will send in the Feds!"

Later, in an interview with ABC News, Trump expanded on what he meant by this, saying "Now, if they want help, I would love to help them. I will send in what we have to send in. Maybe they're not gonna have to be so politically correct. Maybe they're being overly political correct."

In other words, what Trump wants to unleash is no less than a violent and ruthless crackdown on working class and impoverished communities, along with a clampdown on protests against police violence, untrammelled by legal restraints.

Trump's support of increased police violence won him significant numbers of votes among Chicago police officers. In neighborhoods where large numbers of Chicago police officers live, Trump did much better than he did in the city as a whole. He won one, Mount Greenwood, outright, with 59 percent of the vote.

The suggestion, however, that Chicago Democratic Mayor Rahm Emanuel has been restraining the police or preventing them from doing their job is absurd on its face. The notoriously corrupt and violent Chicago Police Department (CPD) has continued its campaign of terror, while Emanuel has boasted about the high volume of recent applicants to the police force in his campaign to build up CPD numbers.

Emanuel has, in fact, offered to work closely with Trump, and personally met the president-elect in December in New York. On February 13, Emanuel visited the White House and met with senior members

of the administration including Attorney General Jeff Sessions, who oversees federal law enforcement agencies. According to a Justice Department spokesman, Emanuel and Sessions discussed “what might be done to combat the shootings and bring back proactive community policing.”

One of the main responses of the Emanuel administration to Trump’s comments about Chicago violence has been to request that more agents from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), and Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) be sent to help with investigations and prosecutions. In fact, two weeks after Trump’s January tweet, 20 ATF agents were reassigned to Chicago.

Emanuel has, however, opposed the deployment of National Guard troops in the city. This is not, however, out of any principled opposition to such a flagrant violation of democratic rights, but out of a political calculation that social opposition to such an occupation might explode, as it did after the videos of Laquan McDonald’s murder at the hands of a Chicago police officer were released to the public.



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