

Seventeen killed in mass shooting at Florida high school

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15 February 2018

Seventeen people were killed and at least 14 more wounded Wednesday afternoon in the latest horrific school shooting in the United States. The tragedy unfolded at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, located some 30 miles northwest of Fort Lauderdale, in Broward County.

According to reports, a former student started shooting from outside and then entered the school building, firing an AR-15 semiautomatic assault rifle with multiple magazines at students and teachers, evidently targeting people randomly. Students barricaded themselves inside classrooms and then ran from the building while frantic parents raced to the scene.

The shooting rampage began at about 2:30 in the afternoon, shortly before the end of the school day. Students said someone pulled a fire alarm just before shots started to ring out. The gunman was reportedly on the loose in the school for more than an hour.

Just after 4 PM, the Broward County Sheriff's Department announced that the suspected shooter had been apprehended. They said he surrendered without incident several miles from the school. He was identified as 19-year-old Nikolas Cruz, who had been expelled from the school for disciplinary reasons.

Cruz was reportedly a member of the Army Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (JROTC).

Broward County Sheriff Scott Israel told reporters later in the afternoon that the dead and wounded included adults as well as students, but he said he did not yet know how many of each.

A video posted on social media showed students cowering under desks during the melee. Hannah Siren, 14, was in math class on the third floor of the freshman building when the shooting broke out. She told the *Sun-Sentinel* newspaper, "The people next door to us must

have not locked their door. They all got shot."

Lisette Rozenblet, whose daughter attends the school, was quoted by NBC News as saying, "Her biggest fear is a school shooting. She is always begging me to be home-schooled because she was scared of this."

Math teacher Jim Gard told the *Miami Herald* he had taught the suspect last year and said he was troubled. "There were problems with him last year threatening students, and I guess he was asked to leave campus."

The mass shooting in Parkland was the 18th school shooting just since the beginning of 2018, i.e., in the space of less than seven weeks. There have been school shootings in 13 states so far this year, including at least two each in Texas, California and Michigan. While many of these events did not result in fatalities or injuries, a good number did.

NBC News has compiled a list of shooting incidents since the beginning of the year that resulted in injuries and/or deaths at elementary, middle and high schools. As of February 5, these shootings had killed four people and wounded more than 20 others.

They include:

- Oxon Hill High School in Prince George's County, Maryland on February 5—one student injured
- Salvador Castro Middle School in Los Angeles, California on February 1—two students shot
- Marshall County High School in Benton, Kentucky on January 23—two students killed and 18 injured
- NET Charter High School in New Orleans, Louisiana on January 22—one student injured
- Italy High School in Italy, Texas on January 22—one student injured
- Coronado Elementary School in Sierra Vista, Arizona on January 10—one student killed.

Since the 1990s, school shootings have become a common and horrific feature of American life. Names

such as Jonesboro, Columbine, Virginia Tech and Newtown have become synonymous with violent and bloody eruptions at schools and campuses that in some cases claim dozens of lives.

These are just a subset of a much longer list of mass killings. According to the Gun Violence Archive, a nonprofit organization, 2017 was “the deadliest year of mass shootings in modern US history.” The group counted 345 mass shootings, defined as an incident in which four or more people are shot (not including the shooter). Overall, the website calculates that more than 15,000 people in the US died from gun violence last year, with another 31,000 injured.

The period that has seen an escalating eruption of mass shootings in America roughly corresponds to more than a quarter century of virtually uninterrupted war waged by US imperialism, beginning with the first Gulf War of 1991. Throughout this entire period, the ruling class and both of its major parties have promoted militarism and glorified military violence, while they carried out “shock and awe” attacks on defenseless populations that killed millions and destroyed entire societies.

In parallel with the growth of militarism there has been a continuous increase in social inequality and a drastic deterioration in the social conditions of the working class, and particularly the young generation. Today, young people, who have known nothing but war overseas, face worsening prospects for secure and decent employment and a massive burden of student debt. Hence the growth of scourges such as the opioid epidemic and an ever-rising suicide rate among young people.

Politics and culture have been blighted by the deliberate cultivation of nationalism and anti-immigrant racism and efforts to encourage the most backward conceptions.

No section of the political establishment and neither of the two big-business parties can offer any policies to address the social crisis. The response of the politicians to each mass shooting is to demand a further buildup of the police apparatus of the state and a further crackdown on Internet speech and criminalization of political dissent. The Republicans promote “gun rights” and the Democrats cart out their hobbyhorse of “gun control,” without any examination of the social and political conditions that produce violence.

Donald Trump, as usual, expressed with particular banality and insincerity the inability of the ruling class to address the question of why such events recur with numbing regularity in America. Shortly after the shooting in Parkland had ended, he tweeted: “My prayers and condolences to the families of the victims of the terrible Florida shooting. No child, teacher or anyone else should ever feel unsafe in an American school.”

This is a man who just a few weeks ago in his State of the Union address presented a delusional picture of a grateful and happy nation moving from success to success.

The reality is a growing political radicalization and overall movement to the left within the working class and particularly among the youth, who have registered in poll after poll a growing interest in socialism and hatred for capitalism. This anticipates the renewal of class struggle on an unprecedented scale. This is the path, directed politically against capitalism and for socialism, to resolving the social impasse that generates malignant events such as Wednesday’s eruption in Florida.



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