

Thousands attend memorial for victims of mass shooting at Pittsburgh synagogue

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On Sunday, several thousand people attended a memorial service for the 11 victims of the mass shooting the previous day at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh. The memorial was held at the Soldiers and Sailors Hall in the city's Oakland section.

An overflow crowd numbering about 2,500 packed the hall and hundreds of people stood outside in the rain to listen to the eulogies and speeches and pay respect to those struck down by Robert Bowers, an anti-Semitic and anti-immigrant fascist.

The 46-year-old shooter walked into the Tree of Life Synagogue in the Squirrel Hill neighborhood of Pittsburgh shortly before 10 am Saturday with three handguns and an AR-15 assault rifle. He shouted, "All Jews must die" as he began shooting. Bowers' social media posts show that he specifically targeted the Tree of Life Synagogue because it works with HIAS [Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society] to resettle refugees from Syria and Central America in Pittsburgh.

Bowers, wounded in an exchange of fire with police, reportedly shouted anti-Jewish epithets as he was being taken into custody. He has been charged with 11 counts of criminal homicide and 13 counts of ethnic intimidation.

The anti-Semitic atrocity occurred the day after the arrest of Cesar Sayoc, a 56-year-old avid Trump supporter, on charges of sending 14 mail bombs to 12 prominent Democrats and critics of the president. These terrorist acts have come in the wake of a series of fascist campaign speeches by Trump denouncing the Central American men, women and children in the caravan heading toward the US border as "invaders" and criminals, calling himself a "nationalist," and attacking Democrats as "cosmopolitans," an epithet long used by the far right to malign Jews.

Trump accused the billionaire Democratic donor

George Soros, who is Jewish, of funding the caravan. Soros was one of those targeted in last week's wave of mail bombs.

In addition to the large turnout for the memorial service Sunday evening, thousands participated in other events held Saturday and Sunday throughout Pittsburgh and in New York, Oakland, California, Washington DC and other locations.

The names of the 11 victims were released early Sunday morning. The victims ranged in age from 54 to 97. There were eight men and three women.

The oldest victim was Rose Mallinger, 97, from Squirrel Hill. A married couple from the city's Wilksburg section, Bernice and Sylvan Simon, 84 and 86, were among the dead. Two brothers from Squirrel Hill, 59-year-old Cecil Rosenthal and 54-year-old David Rosenthal, were also among the victims.

Also killed were: Richard Gottfried, 65, of Ross Township; Melvin Wax, 88, of Squirrel Hill; Irving Younger, 69, of Pittsburgh's Mount Washington neighborhood; Dr. Jerry Rabinowitz, 66, of Edgewood Borough; Daniel Stein, 71; and Joyce Fienberg, 75, of Oakland.

Two other worshippers were shot, one of whom is in critical condition. Four police officers were injured, two of whom remain hospitalized.

Five of those killed had been alive during the holocaust. A Holocaust survivor who was late for the service was walking up to the building when he heard gunfire and people screaming inside.

Reporters for the *World Socialist Web Site* spoke with several of the people in attendance at the Sunday evening memorial.

One University of Pittsburgh student from the School of Social Work said: "I consider myself a socialist. Bowers targeted the synagogue because of their work

with refugees. It is not just about Pittsburgh. There needs to be more emphasis on anti-Semitism as a global issue. I find it upsetting that Trump called himself a nationalist. He then said he didn't know anything about the history of the word. He's the president. It's his job to know this."

George Hughes, a retiree, told the WWSWS, "There are hateful people in this world. Trump is the gasoline for their fire. Not just Trump, but other politicians are fueling this. We created the immigrant problem. In Honduras we didn't like the leader. The US organized a coup and the people are fleeing a leader who oppresses them.

"These are problems and chaos our country has created. It is the same thing in Iran and Iraq. We created the problems. Why are we in the Middle East? Why were we in Vietnam? For the same thing—the oil. Innocent people have to flee a country because of problems created by the policies of this government."

A Brazilian immigrant who has lived in Pittsburgh for the last 26 years and is now a US citizen asked that his name not be used for fear of the anti-immigrant sentiment being whipped up by the Trump administration. "Trump is making all these statements against immigrants and it's getting people to hate them," he said. "He is seeking to blame the problems of the country on the immigrants. I came here to show that we can unite to prevent this."

Trump and prominent Republicans are consciously appealing to anti-Semitic and fascist elements in response to the growth of working-class opposition and popular hostility to capitalism. Last Tuesday, a day after Trump's racist anti-immigrant rant in Houston, House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy posted an anti-Semitic tweet singling out three prominent Jewish critics of Trump: "We cannot allow Soros, [Tom] Steyer and [Michael] Bloomberg to BUY this election! Get out and vote Republican November 6th. #MAGA." The tweet was deleted the next day.

The Democrats are complicit in the growth of far-right and anti-Semitic forces. They refuse to defend immigrants and refugees and have made Trump's sending of troops to the US-Mexican border and jailing of tens of thousands of immigrant workers in detention camps a nonissue in next week's midterm elections. They oppose Trump on the most right-wing possible basis—denouncing him for being "soft" on Russia and

insufficiently supportive of the FBI and CIA.

On the Sunday talk shows, Democratic representatives responded to the synagogue massacre by criticizing Trump for "dividing the nation," not for making fascist appeals and carrying out police-state measures. At Sunday's memorial service in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania Governor Tom Wolf, a Democrat, avoided any mention of Trump.



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