

Ten killed in mass shooting at Boulder, Colorado grocery store

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Ten people, including three workers at the King Soopers grocery store in Boulder, Colorado, were killed Monday afternoon in the latest mass shooting to occur in the United States. The suspected shooter, 21-year-old Ahmad Al Aliwi Alissa, was taken into police custody Monday following a brief shootout that left 51-year-old Boulder Police officer and father of seven, Eric Talley, dead.

Alissa is currently detained in a local hospital after suffering an apparent gunshot wound to the leg. He has been charged with 10 counts of first-degree murder.

The ages of the victims range from 20 to 65. King Soopers has confirmed that three of the deceased were employees: an aspiring pilot, 20-year-old Denny Stong; front-end manager Rikki Olds (25) and Special Olympics track and field and skiing participant Teri Leiker (51).

Nevin Stanisic (23), Tralona Bartkowiak (49), Suzanne Fountain (59), Kevin Mahoney (61), Lynn Murray (62) and Jody Waters (65) were also killed in the attack, which began shortly before 2:30 p.m. local time and ended with Alissa being led away in handcuffs just before 3:30 p.m.

Photos and video released from the scene show grocery store workers, hands on each other's backs, helping to lead customers out of the store in single file lines, as hundreds of police and SWAT officers, along with drones, helicopters and armored vehicles, descend on the store. The market is less than two miles south of the University of Colorado at Boulder. None of the victims are believed to have been enrolled at the university.

The university, with an enrollment of over 33,000, is the social and economic center of Boulder. The city is relatively affluent, with a median income of \$66,117. The median property value, at \$645,600, is nearly triple the national average.

As a witness to the shooting, Ryan Borowksi, told CNN, "Boulder feels like a bubble, and that bubble burst. This feels like the safest place in America and I just nearly got killed for getting a soda and a bag of chips."

The shooting comes one week after a 21-year-old Georgia man shot and killed eight people, including six women of Asian-American descent, at massage parlors in the Atlanta area, and five days after two workers were killed by a co-worker inside a

Roundy's grocery distribution center in Oconomowoc, Wisconsin.

The latest statistics from the Centers for Disease Control estimate that 111 people are killed every day in the US due to gun violence, with 39,707 people killed in 2019, a number that exceeds all other countries except Brazil.

As of yet, no information has surfaced that establishes a political motive, or points to links between Alissa and terrorist or extremist organizations. He appears to have been suffering from psychological distress, likely exacerbated by the pandemic.

Alissa resides in a suburb of Denver called Arvada, about 20 miles south of Boulder, sharing a residence with his brother and sister-in-law. Key details of his personal life, including whether he is employed or attending school, have not yet been made public.

He was enrolled at Arvada West High School from 2015 until he graduated in 2018. While in high school, he participated on the wrestling team, and on his Facebook profile he described himself as "Born in Syria 1999, came to the USA in 2002. I like wrestling and informational documentaries."

On his Facebook page, Alissa posted videos of himself wrestling in high school and occasional posts about his Muslim faith. Like millions of other Facebook users, in November 2015 Alissa sympathized with victims of a series of ISIS-linked terrorist attacks. He changed his profile picture to the French flag in support of the victims of a mass terror attack in Paris.

In response to the far-right terrorist attack in April 2019 that targeted Christchurch, New Zealand mosques, Alissa shared a post that read: "The Muslims at the #christchurch mosque were not the victims of a single shooter, they were the victims of the entire Islamophobia industry that villified [sic] them."

In interviews with investigators, members of Alissa's family have stated that he may have been suffering from an undiagnosed mental illness. The Associated Press cited an unnamed official as revealing that Alissa's family said he had complained of people following or chasing him.

In interviews with CNN and the *Daily Beast*, Alissa's brother, Ahmad Al Aliwi Alissa, said that beginning around 2014, Alissa said he felt like he was being followed and became increasingly paranoid. Alissa said his brother put tape

over his laptop camera to prevent anyone from observing him.

“He always suspected someone was behind him, someone was chasing him,” Ali Alwi Alissa said. “We kept a close eye on him when he was in high school. He would say, ‘Someone is chasing me, someone is investigating me,’ and we’re like, ‘Come on man, there’s nothing...’ He was just closing into himself.”

In interviews with the press and the police, Alissa’s brother reiterated that “[It was] not at all a political statement, it’s mental illness.” He told the *Daily Beast* that his younger brother “used to get bullied a lot in high school, he was like an outgoing kid, but after he went to high school and got bullied a lot, he started becoming anti-social.”

Court records obtained by a local Fox affiliate, KDVR in Boulder, show that Alissa was arrested in 2017 after he allegedly punched a classmate in the head. At the time, Alissa reportedly said that the victim “had made fun of him and called him racial names weeks earlier.” Alissa plead guilty to a charge of assault.

Witnesses and the police warrant indicate that the shootings began outside the grocery store and that Alissa was armed with a “black AR-15 style” rifle and possibly body armor. Footage taken at the scene of the shooting shows that multiple victims were shot in the parking lot. The victims, according to statements given to investigators, included an older man whom Alissa allegedly shot multiple times as he stood over him. He then made his way into the grocery store.

Court documents allege that Alissa had purchased a Ruger AR-556 pistol on March 16, six days before the shooting. The affidavit, which was unsealed Tuesday, indicates that his sister-in-law, whose name is redacted, saw Alissa “playing with a firearm she thought looked like a ‘machine gun’” in the days prior to the shooting. Police have indicated that they recovered a “rifle” and a semiautomatic handgun at the scene.

While mass shootings have long since become a grotesquely regular feature American life, and an acute expression of the deeply dysfunctional character of US capitalist society, the country’s social, political and economic contradictions have intensified after a year of the pandemic.

Colorado has been home to a disproportionate number of mass shootings since the 1990s. A 2019 analysis by the *Denver Post* revealed that Colorado had more mass shootings per capita than all but four states, and that the Denver metropolitan area has had more school shootings per capita since 1999 than any of the other 24 largest metropolitan areas in the US. Alissa himself was born three days before the 1999 Columbine massacre.

In ritualistic fashion, Democratic and Republican politicians have offered their “thoughts and prayers,” while spouting their respective party’s political positions in the “debate” between gun rights and gun control. The Democratic party is once again promoting the panacea of limited restrictions on guns—such as the closing of “loopholes,” expansion of background checks

and a ban on assault weapons—while the Republicans curry favor with their far-right supporters by opposing any limitation on what they proclaim to be their “Second Amendment” right to bear arms.

No section of the political or media establishment dares seriously examine the underlying social and political conditions that have made the US the scene of over 100 mass shootings since 1999, costing thousands of lives. Issues such as ever widening social inequality, endless wars abroad and the militarization of the police at home, and a general attack on science and culture are not raised because they point to the bankruptcy of capitalism and its ruling elite.

In bumbling comments Tuesday, President Joe Biden rehashed the usual clichés while joining fellow Democrats in calling for more gun control measures. At a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing on reducing gun violence, Chairman Dick Durbin of Illinois cited two pieces of legislation passed by the House in 2017 that would supposedly close “gaps” in the federal background check system.

The Republican response was made clear in the opening comments of the ranking Republican member of the committee, Iowa Senator Chuck Grassley. Grassley used the hearing to raise the bogeyman of “left-wing extremism,” absurdly linking the Boulder shooting with last year’s mass protests against police murder.

“Statistics show that the murder rate in 2020 increased most significantly in June when the rioters were on the march and policy makers forced police into retreat,” Grassley declared.

Arkansas Senator Tom Cotton, an advocate of martial law to crush left-wing protests, said the “simple” solution to gun violence was “support our police, enforce our laws and lock up criminals.”



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