

Colorado massacre suspect faces arraignment today

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The gunman arrested after killing 10 people at a supermarket is being arraigned this morning in Boulder, Colorado. Ahmad Al Aliwi Alissa, aged 21, surrendered to police after throwing down his weapons and body armor Monday afternoon. He faces 10 counts of first-degree murder.

No evidence has yet emerged of Alissa's motive in the mass slaying, including why or how he selected the King Soopers supermarket in Boulder, some 20 miles from his home in suburban Arvada, on the other side of the Denver metropolitan area.

Alissa was brought from Syria at the age of two, when his family emigrated to the United States. His family now operates a string of successful restaurants across the Denver area, serving Mediterranean Arab cuisine. He was living at home after graduating from high school in 2018. He was not reported to be in college or employed at the time of the mass shooting.

Four of the 10 victims were at work when they were killed—three employed by King Soopers, a branch of the Kroger empire, and one working for Instacart, which fills food orders and delivers groceries.

Neither the police nor the corporate media have alleged a political motive for the rampage. Alissa's online activity did not indicate any interest in Islamic fundamentalism, and he had expressed sympathy both for the victims of the *Charlie Hebdo* massacre in Paris, carried out by Islamist terrorists, and the victims of the mosque massacre in New Zealand, carried out by a fascist who hated Islam.

Family members and school acquaintances confirmed that Alissa was socially isolated and had an explosive temper. One of his brothers said that he was mentally ill, and a sister-in-law recounted taking a weapon away from him the week before the shooting because he was playing with it in a way she found reckless.

No one referred Alissa to receive mental health treatment, and it is doubtful that after a year of the coronavirus and various forms of isolation and lockdown, which have greatly multiplied the number and variety of such maladies, that any treatment would have been made available.

The coronavirus pandemic has been accompanied by an epidemic of gun violence and particularly mass killings. According to one tabulation, by the Gun Violence Archive, killings of four or more people skyrocketed from 336 in 2018 to 417 in 2019 and 611 in 2020.

Now, 2021 has begun with two mass shootings separated by only a week: the killing of eight people, six of them Asian women, at three massage spas in the Atlanta, Georgia, area on March 16, and the killing of 10 people in Boulder on March 22.

As the WSWS has explained repeatedly (See: The Parkland massacre and the dysfunction of American society, The Las Vegas massacre: the day after, and many other statements), such mass shootings have social and political implications far beyond the small change of “gun violence” and the need for “gun control,” to which the Democratic Party seeks to reduce the issue.

The Democrats seek to avoid any discussion of the more fundamental issues: “the extreme brutalization of American society, including a quarter-century of unending war and threats of even wider, bloodier conflicts, a society increasingly run by the military-intelligence apparatus,” as described in the second statement cited above.

Not only has an entire generation grown up in the midst of war, but the society in which it has come to maturity is increasingly barbaric. More than 30,000 people a year die by suicide, another 20,000 by

homicide; 1,000 people a year are killed by police; the term “active shooter” has entered the lexicon of millions, including that of school children.

In particular, young people, even before the pandemic, face the prospect of low-paying, dead-end jobs and massive debts if they attempt to go to college. The trade unions, civil rights groups and capitalist political parties offer no hope for a better future.

The Republican Party responded to the mass shooting in Boulder as it has to dozens of similar incidents with a declaration of support for “gun rights,” as certified by the 2008 Supreme Court decision in *District of Columbia v. Heller*, which overturned 200 years of understanding of the Second Amendment, which clearly applies to state militias, not individual possession of weapons.

The Colorado State Shooting Association, which had sued the city of Boulder to put an end to its assault weapons ban, denounced “emotional sensationalism” over the King Soopers massacre. “There will be a time for the debate on gun laws,” the group said in a statement. “But today is not the time.”



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