

Mass shooting at Tennessee Kroger grocery store leaves at least 14 injured and two dead, including suspected shooter

Jacob Crosse
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Fourteen people were injured, and one person was killed in a shooting spree at a Kroger grocery store in Collierville, Tennessee, a suburb of Memphis, marking the 517th mass shooting to occur in the United States this year per Gun Violence Archive. Police claim the as-of-yet unidentified shooter died from a self-inflicted gunshot wound.

Unconfirmed reports indicate a recently fired store employee returned to the store Thursday after being terminated and opened fire on former co-workers and customers alike before taking his own life.

Nearby schools were placed on lockdown with students ordered to shelter in place during the shooting as swarms of local Collierville police, Memphis police, SWAT teams, Tennessee State troopers, along with federal Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms and FBI agents swarmed the area. Law enforcement officials cordoned off the massive crime scene with yellow police tape going up inside and outside the store. In two press conferences the police have refused to identify the killer, the victims, or confirm the circumstances that precipitated the shooting, citing an "ongoing investigation."

A woman whose mother-in-law works at the Kroger store told Fox13 Memphis that the shooter had "just got fired." She told reporters that he shot a store manager "in the face" but that the manager was "going to be OK." A reporter from WREG News Channel 3 said that an "anonymous law enforcement source" confirmed to him that the shooter was a former employee who worked in the sushi department and had been fired earlier in the day.

The grisly event began shortly after 1:30 p.m. local time. Witnesses described seeing a man run into the

store with "a very large gun" and begin shooting. Witnesses also described seeing bodies lying at the entrance of the store along with broken glass and shell casings. Social media photos show police using a robot to inspect a black SUV believed to have been the shooter's vehicle. The type of weapon used has not been confirmed, although witnesses described the shooter wielding a military-style rifle akin to an AR-15.

Due to the preventable surge in coronavirus cases, which has stretched hospital capacity throughout the US, but especially in the South, to the breaking point, the injured victims were sent to at least three different hospitals, with at least five victims still in critical condition.

During a Thursday evening press conference, Collierville Police Chief Dale Lane confirmed that one victim is still in surgery, while another is in the ICU. In an earlier press conference, Lane described the incident as "the most horrific event in Collierville history."

Despite the horrifying circumstances, witnesses and survivors described to local news outlets the courageous actions of grocery store workers. Brignetta Dickerson, who has been employed at the store for 32 years, told WREG News Channel 3 her only concern was "my co-workers and my customers."

Dickerson described hearing "gunshots" and saw a man running through the deli department. "He kept on shooting, shooting, shooting," Dickerson said. "He shot one of my co-workers in the head, and then shot one of the customers in the stomach, and then my other customer got kinda like cuts from the asphalt."

"We ran out the back," said Dickerson. "My only concern was my co-workers and customers. My co-worker who got shot in the head. He told me 'I want to

go home' and to call his mother. I tried calling her, she didn't answer. I have to call her again."

"I'm a little bit scared and a little bit shaky but I'm OK," she added.

Other workers interviewed described leading customers to coolers and back offices to hide, while one worker was stuck on the roof during the attack.

As of this writing none of the names of the victims have been released but witnesses have reported that customers and co-workers were shot. The company released a statement saying that all 44 workers at the store are "accounted for" along with the hollow and meaningless assurance that "The entire Kroger family offers our thoughts, prayers and support..."

Similar routine incantations were recited by political figures from both political parties that have overseen the proliferation of mass shootings in the US over the last 30 years. Tennessee Republican Senator Marsha Blackburn said she was "praying for all of the victims" while Democratic Representative Jim Cooper likewise said he would be "praying for the wounded, families of the victims, and all of Collierville."

This latest mass shooting comes just six months after 10 people were killed at a King Soopers grocery store in Boulder, Colorado. That store remains closed, while the shooter, Ahmad Al Aliwi Alissa, is currently undergoing a competency evaluation to determine whether he is mentally fit to stand trial.

While there is much information left to be uncovered and revealed in this latest shooting, there is no doubt that the loss of a job can severely exacerbate any underlying psychological issues someone may have. Even prior to the pandemic, frontline grocery store workers already had to contend with abysmal wages, poor working conditions, and lackluster benefits, if any.

However, within the last 19 months these stresses have been multiplied many times over for workers who have been on the front lines of the pandemic, forced to contend with not only the virus, but aggressive and violent customers who have engaged in physical confrontations with workers trying to enforce mask-wearing requirements.

While Kroger's CEO and shareholders have profited handsomely off the labor of Kroger workers throughout the pandemic, as of April this year, the United Food and Commercial Workers union estimates that at least 91,400 grocery workers have been infected with

COVID-19 and 456 have died from the disease.



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