

US students speak out on the way forward in the fight to end school shootings after Uvalde massacre

Our reporters
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Students, teachers and staff at schools across the United States have responded to the horrific shooting at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas last month with outrage and concern. Walkouts have been organized and held at a number of schools, and further actions and demonstrations are planned over the coming weeks.

The International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE), the youth and student section of the Socialist Equality Party (SEP), has been speaking to students on the social and political roots of mass violence in the US.

At Patrick Henry High School in San Diego, California over 300 students participated in a walkout on Wednesday.

Mena, a sophomore, addressed her classmates and school staff at the rally: “In America guns kill about 53 people daily. Over 250 mass shootings have occurred in 2022 alone as of today and almost 30 of those were school shootings. There’s more guns than there are people in the US.”

Mena went on: “Gun control shouldn’t have to be divisive politics. Wanna pull the Constitution on me? Try obtaining life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness when we’re all dead.”

Speaking to our reporters after her speech Mena explained: “I think that the biggest enabler [to school shootings] is the fact that people in the mental state to even think of performing this in the first place are not able to access help. ... Mental health care is extremely inaccessible right now, it is extremely unaffordable to most people. I feel like if that were made more accessible to the general public then we would see a lot fewer shootings. And of course, just restricting guns, so

that this can not happen in the first place.”

Mena expressed a deep concern over the immense impact of war on society: “I think that all these larger socioeconomic problems, at the end of the day, you have to look at a single person and how they react to it. For example, if there is a mass war going on, on the other side of the planet, the person all the way over here, maybe in our same neighborhood, would be looking at it, and feeling personally affected by it. That is where it all stems from, I think. It does not feel so far away anymore, now that we have communication via social media, every big problem in the world, it feels like it affects us really, *really* strongly.”

Another student, Winnie added, “I also think that the fact, most of us, we have grown up our whole lives with the US being at war, in a constant state of violence, for a lot of people it has desensitized them to the idea that it is an actual life that they are taking. This enables that mindset, that justifies it to themselves.”

May, a sophomore at Herbert Hoover High School in San Diego, California, spoke to the impact of the shooting on students and teachers, “It has a lot to do with mental health. I feel like this has impacted teachers more than even students. One of my teachers cried, another, now always locks the door, saying if a student comes late, they can knock, but the door needs to stay locked.”

Responding to the IYSSE statement, which points to unending war, the militarization of the police and immense growth in social inequality as underlying causes of mass violence in the US, May noted, “for a recent field trip we had to do a life simulation project. My assignment was to live as a single mom on \$2000 a month. This was really difficult. And it really showed

how society punishes the poor.”

Blue, a high school student in Oakland, California, told the IYSSE: “I do not understand how this could have happened to an elementary school. It is terrifying because I also wonder if it happened to me as someone with mobility needs, I do not think I would have been able to run away.

“The fact that we have to have active shooter drills in the first place is just absolutely disgusting. This is the 27th school shooting this year and we are only half way through the year. A new school year is going to start and there will probably be school shootings.”

Blue went on: “This is such an American issue. Since 2009, there have been 288 school shootings in the US, but in other countries it’s different, Canada two; France two; Germany one; Japan, Italy and the UK it has been zero. It is unfathomable and other countries look down on us for allowing children to be killed.”

IYSSE reporters pointed out that the US has 800 military bases around the world which they use to carry out unending wars abroad.

Blue responded: “The US government is a terrorist country, we go to other countries and terrorize them and kill innocent people and then turn around and call other countries disgusting for protecting themselves. The US is not in any danger, why are you going to a war for no good reason? I understand other countries being in war because the US is attacking them. But no one is attacking us! No one wants to attack us! So why is America using war and being a terrorist to others. This is the reason I do not call myself an American. Because I am disgusted by the country.”

In Detroit, Michigan, students at schools throughout the city have expressed immense concern over the recent shooting. At Cass Technical High School hundreds of students participated in a walkout on Tuesday which was tightly controlled by the administration and the Democratic Party.

At Western International High School a few miles away, students told the IYSSE that school shootings were a symptom of something deeply wrong with society. Andy explained: “I think that it is crazy because, first of all, I do not even know how so many kids get their hands on weapons. But why should they even want to do that? ... The problem is that some kids feel that they have to deal with things alone, and that happens a lot with kids.”

Andy’s friend, who wished to remain anonymous added: “Gun control is not going to stop people from figuring out how to get one. It might even make the problem worse. I mean gangs have guns when the stores do not have them.”

On the question of better policing in schools, he said, “Now if you want to bring more guns and more police into the schools, that will just make students angry and rebellious and even more likely to take some rage out on each other, like people do in prison.” Andy added: “That is not going to go smoothly at all.”

“Society has got too many problems.”

Morgan, a high school student in Virginia, told the IYSSE: “I think the reason behind the school shootings and mass shootings in general is the failure of capitalism and the failure of the two party system and really the failure of both parties. The Republicans are insistent on keeping these semi-automatic weapons in the hands of the general public. The Democrats are powerless or too scared to stop it or just won’t.”

Morgan continued: “There are really no solutions left other than looking at what those two parties have in common: they are both capitalists. The only thing that Democrats and Republicans share in common is their belief in American capitalism and war and because of that we see the breakdown of our society. People in poverty are suffering. They don’t have health care, they don’t have access to mental health care. Living in such a cruel and heartless society leads people to break down and they commit mass acts of violence because that’s what their sick minds turn to. ... There is no solution other than moving away from the system that created all of this: capitalism.”



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