

An American massacre on the Fourth of July

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On Monday morning, a gunman opened fire on the Fourth of July parade in Highland Park, Illinois, a northern suburb of Chicago. Six people have died so far, and dozens are injured. It is the latest in a string of horrific mass shootings that continue to rip through American society.

More than two dozen have been hospitalized, including one child in critical condition. The age of those shot spanned between eight and 85 years old, including at least five children, with minor to severe injuries.

According to reports that have emerged, the gunman opened fire from a rooftop of a business along the route of the parade. Heavy gunfire can be heard on videos captured on social media as a marching band was performing. Hundreds of parade-goers fled in a mass stampede. Others who remained helped paramedics tie tourniquets on the victims. A number of bystanders described the scene as “a war zone.”

In an emotional statement to ABC 7 Chicago, local physician Dr. David Baum described the deadly scene he witnessed a couple hundred feet away. “You saw massive amounts of bodies on the corners where the gunman just picked people off,” he said. “These bodies were decimated, these were eviscerations of body parts. The people who were gone, they had horrific injuries. The kind of injuries you only see in wartime...”

Police reported that the alleged shooter was 22-year-old Robert E. Crimo III, who fled the scene. A massive manhunt by the police and federal law enforcement agencies began in the Chicago suburbs, and the suspect was caught and taken into police custody by the early evening.

More information will come to light in the coming days about the specific motivations for this latest act of homicidal violence, though there are initial indications that Crimo holds far-right political views. Ten months ago, he posted disturbing music videos, including one

that showed imagery of a man with a rifle in a video called “Toy Soldier.” Several reports have now emerged of Crimo attending a Trump rally in 2020 and appearing to cheer on a Trump motorcade in 2021.

Highland Park also has a large Jewish population. While it is not clear at present if Crimo’s motives were anti-Semitic, in April a number of anti-Semitic flyers were littered around the city and other northern suburbs.

This event must be placed and analyzed within its broader social and political context. The United States is a society plagued by unprecedented levels of social inequality, police violence, massive levels of exploitation of the working class, endless wars, the worship of the stock market and the indifference of the ruling class to the needs of the population.

Mass violence has become part of American life. When Charles Whitman, known as the “Texas Tower sniper,” shot indiscriminately at a gathering of people in 1966, it was a truly shocking event in American society. Such mass shootings are a near daily occurrence now.

According to the Gun Violence Archive, there have been over 307 mass shootings in 2022 to date in the United States, on track to exceed the 611 mass shootings in 2020, a figure that is approaching two such incidents daily.

Mass shootings have more than doubled since these events began to be tracked. In 2014, there were 269 mass shootings; 335 in 2015; 382 in 2016; 346 in 2017; 336 in 2018 and 417 in 2019, before leaping to 611 in 2020. Most recently, the massacre in Uvalde, Texas, in May, sparked widespread revulsion and anger. Chicago itself is a city plagued by violence.

President Biden barely referred to the horrifying events in Highland Park in his remarks at the White House yesterday, devoting all of 11 words that said nothing (“You all heard what happened. You all heard

what happened today.”) Instead, he gave a number of paeans to the military in a pre-planned speech in which he declared that the United States is “a great nation... I’ve never been more optimistic about America than I am today. An optimism that digs deep, never gives up. That’s America.”

Biden’s delusional remarks about the state of American society along with his indifference to yet another mass shooting is in line with the interests of a ruling class that is wholly consumed with preparations for endless war and the maintenance of a policy of mass infection that has led to over a million dead in the United States in the COVID-19 pandemic. To the ruling class, life for the masses has become expendable and cheap one year after Biden declared “independence” from the virus.

To discuss the horrific mass shooting that had taken place just hours before would have struck a discordant note in Biden’s declaration that “We are a great nation... I have never been more optimistic about America than I am today.” As with the pandemic, the American ruling class’s solution to social problems is to just ignore them.

The police in the United States kill more than a thousand people with impunity every year, such as the latest horrific shooting—the murder of Jayland Walker, hit by over 60 bullets fired by police officers.

The richest 400 people in America control over \$3 trillion in wealth, while half of Americans do not even have \$400 in savings to cover an emergency. Such levels of inequality, across the country and in the Chicago area, are completely incompatible with democracy, as has been made clear with the shredding of the right to abortion by the Supreme Court, along with a slew of other decisions that pave the way for the eradication of the democratic rights of the population.

Biden and the Democratic Party have nothing to offer except the prospect of war against Russia and China, in large part due to the acute levels of social tensions at home. In response to the persistence of high gas prices that are wrecking working class families, Biden told the media he will fight the US-NATO war in Ukraine against Russia “as long as it takes,” threatening the danger of nuclear war and planetary suicide.

The promotion of political reaction, spearheaded by every institution of government, has been accompanied by the incitement of right-wing violence. Sections of

the ruling class through the Republican Party are preparing for dictatorship by whipping up fascistic groups, right-wing terrorism and racially motivated and anti-Semitic attacks.

For their part, the Democrats have adopted a political strategy of accommodating their fascistic Republican counterparts, calling them “colleagues” even though Trump and a vast section of the state conspired to carry out a coup on January 6.

The Democrats have also begun to carry out an electoral strategy in which they boost far-right candidates within the Republican Party, part of the playbook used by Hillary Clinton and the media in 2016 that assisted Donald Trump.

The Democratic governor of Illinois, J.B. Pritzker, recently spent millions on ads to boost the fascistic, Trump-backed multimillionaire Darren Bailey, helping him win the Republican primary election for governor. Bailey spoke in the nearby suburb of Skokie, Illinois (the site of a fascist march in the 1970s), where he said in response to the shootings in Highland Park, “Let’s move on and celebrate the independence of this nation.”

The latest horrific mass shooting must be taken as a warning. Fascistic violence is dripping from every pore of capitalist society, and democratic forms of government are crumbling under the weight of America’s massive social inequality. The fight against fascist violence and the defense of basic democratic rights require the building of a socialist movement of the working class.



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