

Six killed, including three children, in mass shooting at private Christian school in Nashville, Tennessee

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Seven people are dead, including three students, three adult staff members and the shooter, following a mass shooting Monday morning at the Covenant School, a private Christian school in Nashville, Tennessee.

Police identified the shooter in Monday's massacre as local resident 28-year-old Audrey Hale, a former student at the school. At the time of this writing, police and FBI agents were conducting an investigation at a home located in Nashville where Hale is believed to have lived with their parents.

After initial morning reports stated that there had been a "few injuries," due to the shooting, by mid-afternoon on Monday police identified six victims, all deceased from gunshot wounds. Three of those killed are nine-year-old students: Evelyn Dieckhaus, Hallie Scruggs and William Kinney. The three adults killed were staff members at the school, Cynthia Peak, 61, a substitute teacher; Mike Hill, 61, a custodian; and Dr. Katherine Koonce, 60, the head of the school, according to Covenant's website.

According to Nashville police chief John Drake, the shooter, Hale, was a "transgender woman," however, according to *The Tennessean*, Hale was "a transgender man who used male pronouns."

In a press conference early Monday evening, Drake claimed that prior to the massacre, Hale had written a detailed manifesto that included maps of the school. The map, according to the police, included locations of entry points into the school. Drake said the shooting was a targeted attack and that the shooter had named another target in their manifesto.

Drake said Hale allegedly abandoned the other target after conducting a "threat assessment" and deciding the risk was too great.

The Covenant School was founded in 2001 and has an enrollment of about 200 students with about 42 staff according to its website. The Christian school teaches pre-kindergarten through sixth grade. According to her LinkedIn profile, Dr. Koonce has been head of the school since 2016.

According to police, all of the doors to the school, which is also a Presbyterian church, were locked prior to the shooting. However, police claim Hale was able to gain entry to the school by shooting through a side door.

Police claim Hale was armed with three different weapons, including two "AR-style weapons," one of which was a "rifle," while the other was an "AR-style pistol." Drake said Hale was also armed with a handgun. Drake said two of the weapons were purchased "legally and locally."

After shooting through the side door, police claim Hale began shooting into classrooms while heading to the second floor. Police claim that they first received calls about an active shooter at the school at approximately 10:13 a.m. Police have confirmed that there is security footage from inside the school although they have yet to release any footage as of this writing.

Police state that a five-person team engaged Hale in a shootout on the second floor at around 10:27 a.m. that

ended with Hale dying after being shot by two police officers. Police have not stated if Hale was wearing body armor or a helmet but they have confirmed finding several rounds of ammunition.

Chief Drake confirmed that police are looking into a possible motive to the shooting that is related to the fact that the shooter identified as transgender. Tennessee, like several states controlled by Republicans, has enacted a raft of anti-LGBTQ legislation aimed at dehumanizing and criminalizing transgender and queer persons.

Monday's shooting is the deadliest mass shooting at a school in the United States since the Uvalde Massacre in Texas last year that left 19 students and two teachers dead, after police refused to engage the shooter for over an hour. It follows the shooting of two school administrators by a student in Denver, Colorado last week. The shooter in that incident, 17-year-old student Austin Lyle, was found dead after police claim he shot himself with a "ghost gun."

A database complied by the *Washington Post* estimates that with this latest shooting more than 348,000 students have experienced gun violence at school since the 1999 Columbine Massacre. There have been at least 376 school shootings in the US since 1999 according to the *Post*.

However, it is likely these figures are a vast undercount. The K-12 School Shooting Database which is maintained by David Reidman and has been cited by the *Wall Street Journal* and the *New York Times*, found that there have already been 89 shootings on school grounds this year alone. In 2022, the database recorded 303 school grounds shootings. Through 2018, the tracker never recorded more than 100 shootings on school grounds with many years, such as 2010 only tabulating 15 shootings.

According to the K-12 School Shooting Database there have already been 75 victims, fatal and wounded, from shootings on K-12 property this year alone, marking it the sixth-highest year since 1970. 2022 saw the most injuries and deaths with 273 total victims recorded.

In the coverage of the Covenant shooting the capitalist press has been quick to contrast the response time of Monday's shooting to the Uvalde shooting. The fact that six people still were killed before police intervened, has been quickly brushed over in the rush to venerate the police.

As with every mass shooting in the US, the question is reduced to the individual level, while questions that must be asked about a society that produces routine mass homicidal outbursts are completely ignored.

Instead the capitalist politicians trot out their somber tones and well-worn phrases. For the Republicans, this takes the form of endless calls for "thoughts and prayers." For the Democrats, it is empty rhetoric about "gun reform."

In his comments on the shooting Monday, President Joe Biden called for an assault weapons ban, something he knows has no chance of passing the Republican-controlled House and will do nothing to address the root cause of gun violence in America, which is not in the individual psyche or mental health of the shooter, but in the capitalist system itself, which produces a society in which thousands of people every year resort to gun violence.

Decades of widening inequality has led to not only the resurgence of fascistic movements in the US and internationally but a deep social crisis in America. The solution to overcoming the crisis of mass shootings is not to pray to the almighty, or lobby for empty gun reform, but to mobilize the working class against the source of inequality, the capitalist system, and fight for a socialist program that guarantees education, health care and democratic rights for all.



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