

Three dead, 10 injured in New Zealand mass shooting

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A horrific mass shooting on July 20 in a busy part of central Auckland, New Zealand's largest city, left three people dead and 10 injured.

Around 7:22 a.m., police received reports of gunshots at the Deloitte office tower on Queen Street, which was undergoing renovations. Workers fled or hid under desks and in toilets as the shooter, 24-year-old Matu Tangi Matua Reid, made his way through the building armed with a pump action shotgun. Reid killed two men aged in their forties and injured 10 more people, including a police officer, before he was apparently killed in a shootout with the Police Armed Offenders Squad around 8:00 a.m.

Construction company LT McGuinness confirmed that the gunman was employed by a subcontractor at the site. He was one of more than 100 contractors working on what is one of New Zealand's biggest construction projects. Those he killed were his colleagues.

Police Commissioner Andrew Coster told TVNZ that the shooting was likely "related to workplace tension," but gave no further details. One witness told the *New Zealand Herald* that Reid shouted "So what you going to do to me now... what can you do," during his rampage. Some Australian media outlets report that Reid was sacked the day before, but this is unconfirmed.

Reid had previous convictions related to family violence. In March, he was sentenced to five months' home detention for a serious assault of a woman, but he was allowed to continue attending work while wearing an ankle bracelet.

Questions remain about how Reid was able to obtain a shotgun without a firearms license and take it to his workplace. Commissioner Coster told TVNZ that police had previously searched Reid's house "when there was a threat made that implied he might want to

use a firearm and kill his family. We did not locate at any stage firearms in his possession." He did not say when this occurred.

The government's immediate response to the tragedy on Thursday was to reassure the media that this was not a terrorist incident and that the FIFA Women's World Cup starting that evening in Auckland could go ahead. The Labour Party-led government has spent \$55 million on the football tournament, which is expected to be watched by two billion people around the world.

In a press conference held just over two hours after the shooting, Prime Minister Chris Hipkins emphasised that the government had "spoken to FIFA organisers this morning and the tournament will proceed as planned," with an increased police presence.

Hipkins then praised the "heroic" actions of the police, saying "we rely on our police, our frontline police, to put themselves in harm's way to keep us safe... [and] we will all send our love and support to the New Zealand police, who are doing an amazing job." About three minutes before the end of the 16-minute press conference, the prime minister expressed "condolence[s] to the victims and to their family."

The tragedy takes place in the middle of an election campaign in which Labour and the opposition National and ACT Parties are all competing with each other on right-wing "law and order" policies. Speaking to *Newstalk ZB* yesterday, the National Party leader demanded to know why Reid was not in prison, accusing the government of seeking to "reduce the prison population, despite violent crime increasing."

Labour, for its part, has recently announced policies targeting "youth crime," including the construction of two new units to house "the most serious offenders" in the country's prison-like youth justice facilities. Amnesty International and other groups denounced the

policy as a further move towards incarcerating more children.

Asked by Radio NZ whether the Auckland shooting showed that police officers should be armed, Police Minister Ginny Andersen said this was a decision that the police hierarchy could make if it wanted to. At present, officers do not routinely carry firearms, but can access them from police vehicles and stations.

The political establishment has nothing to offer the working class, which is suffering from soaring social inequality and out of control prices for food and housing, except for deeper cuts to healthcare and other essential social services, along with more spending on the military, police and prisons.

The facts indicate that Reid was the product of a society that has become increasingly brutal towards its most vulnerable layers. *Stuff* obtained court documents revealing that he had previously been required to undergo an anger management program, and that he had at one point been diagnosed with borderline personality disorder.

Reid pled guilty to violently attacking a woman in September 2021, fracturing her neck through strangulation. In a victim impact statement, the woman said she thought Reid had “generational anger” and needed help; she did not want him to end up in prison.

The judge’s sentencing notes stated: “I do not want to send a young man like you, with a limited history, to prison. I think it would be counterproductive and actually set you down the wrong path.” Reid was required to report regularly to a probation officer and to undergo drug tests, but it is far from clear whether he had access to the necessary psychological and material support.

According to *Stuff*, “[Reid] told a probation officer his background had been troubled: there was domestic violence and physical abuse as a child; family instability and hardship; and he’d run away from home because of this. He described a disrupted education, limited employment, and being exposed to drugs, alcohol, and gang life from an early age.”

In late 2021, Reid was living in the Albany Oak Motel under the government’s emergency housing program for homeless people. Angela Huntley, manager of the motel, said: “He tried to get help, but there was not enough. He probably needed extra help in the mental health [area]. Everyone needs help, being

homeless.... He must have snapped, he’d had a hard life.”

It is still not clear what exactly triggered Reid’s shooting at his workplace. It is well-known that the construction industry is highly exploitative, with a workforce, including large numbers of migrants, who are casualised and treated as disposable.

Mass shootings, while much less common in New Zealand compared with the United States, are becoming more frequent. While the circumstances vary in each case, Thursday’s shooting—like the 2014 shooting at a government welfare office in Ashburton—is clearly connected with the impoverishment of broad layers of the population and the destruction of mental healthcare services and social welfare. The decades-long assault on the working class by successive governments has produced widespread hopelessness, high suicide rates and rising deaths from drug overdoses.

The growing militarisation of society, New Zealand’s participation in criminal imperialist wars, and the demonisation of immigrants and minorities by politicians and the media, also contributes to the reactionary climate that produces violent attacks—including the fascist terrorist attack by Brenton Tarrant, who massacred 51 people in Christchurch in 2019.



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