

2 children killed and 17 wounded in Minneapolis Catholic school mass shooting

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At around 8:00 a.m. on Tuesday, as students and parishioners gathered for Mass inside Annunciation Catholic Church in Minneapolis, a shooter approached the side of the building and began firing through the stained glass windows with a rifle, shotgun and handgun.

Two children, aged 8 and 10, were killed while sitting in the pews. Seventeen others were wounded, including 14 children between the ages of 6 and 15 and three elderly parishioners. Authorities expect all of those injured to survive.

The shooting reportedly lasted roughly two minutes before the attacker died from a self-inflicted gunshot wound in the parking lot. The shooter had set up makeshift barricades around some chapel doors to impede the students' ability to escape and used all three weapons, alternating between them. Police also discovered a smoke bomb at the scene.

The shooter fired dozens of rounds through the stained glass windows directly into the pews where children were seated, targeting those praying and worshipping. Witnesses said they heard as many as 30 to 50 shots in quick sporadic bursts, and the shooter reloaded at least once during the assault.

According to media reports, as the barrage began, teachers and staff instantly moved children to the floor and under the pews, using the thick solid wood as makeshift shields. The Mass had marked the opening week of school, so the church was full of students, staff and elderly parishioners.

In the confusion, children huddled tightly together with some clutching each other and praying, while others were comforted by school staff risking their own lives to crawl back and forth, providing reassurance and cover.

Several children reportedly witnessed their friends

being shot. One fifth grader recounted being just two feet from the window where the bullets pierced the glass. The attack was so sudden that some children had no time to run, but thanks to the swift action of teachers, many survived by staying low and silent. In multiple instances, older students helped guide younger ones away from the direct line of fire and held the hands of those injured until the shooting stopped.

Authorities arrived within minutes and began evacuating students and staff, moving them to safety and establishing a "reunification zone" for families.

Minneapolis authorities have identified the shooter as 23-year-old Robin Westman, a former student of the school who had no significant criminal history. Westman was born male but identified as a trans woman, changing names legally in 2020. Investigators report that Westman acted alone in the attack.

Westman posted a series of videos and a written manifesto online which were later removed from YouTube and other social media platforms. The videos included sketches of the church, weapons, ammunition and references to a killing spree targeting children and the Catholic community.

Other videos mocked God for failing to stop massacres, lamented the violence in the US and abroad and featured anti-Israeli statements. One segment included the phrase "Kill Donald Trump." Westman referenced infamous shooters by name on camera, and exhibited gear marked with slurs and references to other domestic terrorists.

Quoting directly from the posted manifesto, Westman allegedly wrote, "F-k those kids," along with incendiary language. The attacker timed the video and written statement's release to coincide with the shooting. According to a report by CNN, Westman left a written message for friends and family expressing the

intention to commit suicide.

Local police Chief Brian O'Hara described the attack as "a deliberate act of violence against children," decrying "the sheer cruelty and cowardice of targeting a church full of children" and calling it "incomprehensible."

The FBI has classified the act as a hate crime targeting Catholics and has launched a domestic terrorism probe. Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem called Westman a "deranged monster."

Speaking to television news, Democratic Mayor Jacob Frey said, "There are no words to capture the horror and evil of this unspeakable act. ... This kind of act of evil should never happen, and it happens far too often."

The Minneapolis school shooting is the latest in the decades-long crisis of violence in American schools. According to a review by CNN, there have been 44 school shootings in the US so far this year. In 2022, 2023 and 2024 there were a total of 80, 82 and 83 school shootings respectively.

Every family in the US with school-age children is dealing with the threat that a shooting will occur at their school. As many as 95 percent of US public schools perform active shooter drills and "lockdown" protocols at the start of each academic year.

Since the massacre at Columbine High School in Columbine, Colorado, in April 1999—in which 13 students and one teacher were killed—US schools have become the sites of mass social trauma. Over the past 25 years, incidents like Sandy Hook (2012), Parkland (2018), Uvalde (2022) and now Minneapolis have revealed the deep social crisis of American society. Children and educators in the US now face among the highest rates of mass shooting risk anywhere in the world, a reality that is unique among advanced capitalist countries.

While political leaders and mass media commentators routinely invoke the "incomprehensibility" of the "evil" attacks carried out by "monsters," they, in fact, take place within the context of the deepening decay of American society brought on by unprecedented social inequality, state violence and decades of war abroad.

The fascist Trump administration has waged an intensifying assault on the basic democratic rights of immigrants, mobilizing far-right political forces and deploying National Guard troops in major US cities.

The demonization of transgender individuals is part of the campaign by Trump to target those in society who are most vulnerable and least able to defend themselves.

Simultaneously, the US government's support for the Israeli genocide in Gaza has rendered meaningless the protestations of both Democrats and Republicans over the "senselessness" of gun violence. The entire US political establishment and the corporate media support the barbaric assault on Palestinians in Gaza, where civilians, mainly women and children, are deliberately targeted and mass murder has been normalized.

The *World Socialist Web Site* has consistently argued that school shootings are not "incomprehensible" or "inexplicable" but the product of the capitalist system. The WSWS has emphasized that the social and psychological crisis reflected in these mass school shootings are rooted in the glorification of violence, the collapse of secure employment, the marginalization of youth and the absence of any genuine collective future under capitalism.



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