

Trump approves execution of Fort Hood shooter Nidal Malik Hasan by US Army firing squad

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President Donald Trump has approved the execution of former Army Maj. Nidal Malik Hasan by a US Army firing squad for the November 5, 2009, mass shooting at Fort Hood, Texas, which killed 13 people and wounded 32 others. Chief Pentagon spokesman Sean Parnell announced Monday on X that “Secretary of War Pete Hegseth has recommended and President Donald J. Trump has approved death by U.S. Army firing squad for convicted terrorist Nidal Malik Hasan.” Parnell added, “Judgement day for Hasan has finally come.”

If it is carried out, Hasan’s killing would be the first execution by the US military since April 13, 1961, when Army Pvt. John Bennett was hanged at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. The last soldier shot by an Army firing squad was Pvt. Eddie Slovik, executed for desertion in 1945.

The secretary of the Army will now set the time and place of the execution. According to *Army Lawyer* magazine, the date is to be set within 60 to 150 days of presidential approval, though a habeas corpus petition in the civilian federal courts could delay it for years. Hasan is one of four men on the military’s death row at Fort Leavenworth.

Hasan, a psychiatrist in the Army Medical Corps, walked into a medical building at Fort Hood where soldiers were undergoing checkups before deployment, shouted “Allahu akbar” and opened fire with a laser-sighted handgun. Twelve of the 13 people killed were soldiers. Hasan was shot by a responding police officer and left partially paralyzed. Representing himself at his 2013 court-martial, he told jurors he was a soldier who had “switched sides” and said he had acted to stop troops from deploying to Afghanistan to kill Muslims. His standby attorneys, assigned to advise him at trial, warned that he was deliberately seeking a death sentence. He was sentenced to death, and the US Supreme Court declined to hear his appeal in 2025.

The Fort Hood shootings were a bloody consequence of the criminal US wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, which killed hundreds of thousands and left a generation of soldiers scarred. None of this enters into the Pentagon’s announcement, which brands Hasan a “jihadist” and turns his execution into a display of military vengeance staged by an administration that has

rebranded the Department of Defense as the Department of War.

The approval of a firing squad comes less than a week after the state of Tennessee’s failed attempt to execute Christa Gail Pike by lethal injection on September 30. Bernard Harcourt of Columbia Law School told *USA Today* the choice of method could reflect a “Tennessee effect,” adding, “They just want to stay away from lethal injection because the method seems so defective right now.”

Pike, 50, was sentenced to death for the 1995 murder of Colleen Slemmer, a fellow student at the Knoxville Job Corps, committed when Pike was 18. She was sexually abused from early childhood, none of which her court-appointed lawyer presented to the jury. After the US Supreme Court vacated a stay by a 6-3 vote on the day of her execution, executioners spent about an hour inserting IV lines before administering two massive doses of pentobarbital. “My arm feels like it’s about to burst open,” Pike said as the drug flowed. She did not die and was rushed to a Nashville hospital, where for days she remained unconscious on a ventilator, her arms burned and blistered by the caustic drug.

Governor Bill Lee has halted executions for the rest of the year in Tennessee and ordered a review, and Corrections Commissioner Frank Strada has resigned while insisting his department followed protocol. Asked about the botched execution, Trump called it “an interesting situation,” adding of lethal injection, “It shouldn’t be very difficult.”

Tennessee’s political establishment is debating not whether to kill, but how to kill more reliably. US Senator Marsha Blackburn, the Republican nominee to succeed Lee as governor, declared that “the answer is simple: bring back the electric chair.” Tennessee House Speaker Cameron Sexton said the firing squad “may be a possibility in the future”; Knoxville Republican Congressman Tim Burchett called the method “a hundred percent effective.”

The president has direct authority only over federal and military executions. But Trump has used that authority, and the White House bully pulpit, to set the tone for a nationwide expansion of capital punishment.

In July 2019, then-Attorney General William Barr ended a 16-year hiatus in federal executions. Between July 14, 2020 and January 16, 2021—a span of 186 days—the Trump administration executed 13 federal prisoners, more than the federal government had put to death in the previous six decades. Six of those executions took place after Trump lost the November 2020 election, the first federal executions carried out by a lame-duck administration in more than a century. In the final week before Joe Biden’s inauguration, the administration killed three prisoners in four days: Lisa Montgomery, a severely mentally ill survivor of horrific abuse, and Corey Johnson and Dustin Higgs, both likely intellectually disabled.

On the first day of his second term, Trump signed Executive Order 14164, “Restoring the Death Penalty and Protecting Public Safety.” It directed the attorney general to seek the death penalty “for all crimes of a severity demanding its use,” with particular emphasis on the killing of police officers and capital crimes committed by undocumented immigrants. It also called for supplying the states with lethal injection drugs and for overturning Supreme Court precedents that limit capital punishment.

On April 24 of this year, the Justice Department released a 48-page report, “Restoring and Strengthening the Federal Death Penalty,” which expanded federal execution methods to include the firing squad, electrocution and gas asphyxiation, and directed the Bureau of Prisons to reinstate the single-drug pentobarbital protocol, the same drug used in Pike’s failed execution.

The administration has also carried out a vendetta against the 37 federal prisoners whose death sentences Biden commuted in December 2024, whom Trump told to “GO TO HELL!” At least 10 have been sent to ADX Florence in Colorado, the federal Bureau of Prisons’ only “supermax” prison. Prisoners are held in near-total isolation 22 to 24 hours a day at the “Alcatraz of the Rockies,” as the prison is known, while the Justice Department urges state prosecutors to bring new capital charges against them.

Emboldened by Washington, death penalty states have sharply accelerated the pace of executions. There were 47 executions in the United States in 2025, the most since 2009, and 29 have been carried out so far in 2026. Florida, under Governor Ron DeSantis, executed 19 people in 2025—more than double the state’s previous annual record—and has executed 16 so far this year. DeSantis has already signed his 20th death warrant of 2026.

States are reviving old methods and devising new ones to keep the machinery of death running. South Carolina carried out three executions by firing squad in 2025—Brad Sigmon on March 7, Mikal Mahdi on April 11 and Stephen Bryant on November 14—the first in the US since Utah’s execution of Ronnie Lee Gardner in 2010. Mahdi’s autopsy found he had been struck by only two of three bullets. A pathologist concluded that he likely suffered excruciating pain for 30 to 60

seconds before losing consciousness.

Alabama carried out seven executions by nitrogen gas asphyxiation in 2024 and 2025, with witnesses describing condemned men convulsing and gasping for air. Idaho has made the firing squad its primary method of execution as of July 1, 2026, and has built a remote-controlled firing squad chamber.

Trump’s revival of the military firing squad is a political act. The death penalty is, above all, an instrument of state terror, and the Trump administration is wielding it as part of a broader campaign to intimidate the population.

The same government that is preparing to shoot a prisoner at Fort Leavenworth is waging war against Iran and arming the genocide in Gaza. At home, ICE agents have shot to death four people in the streets this year, while tens of thousands of immigrants are held in detention camps. Police killings continue to exceed 1,000 a year. The celebration of state violence, from the battlefield to the execution chamber, is aimed at conditioning the population to accept lethal force against all those deemed enemies of the state, above all workers and youth fighting against war and in defense of democratic rights.

This turn toward authoritarian methods is driven by the deepening crisis of American capitalism. The ruling class is pressing ahead with sweeping attacks on the working class—the gutting of Medicaid and other social programs, the destruction of jobs and the erosion of living standards—which cannot be imposed by democratic means. The expansion of the death penalty is a warning of the methods the capitalist state is prepared to use against growing social opposition.

Nine more executions are scheduled in the United States through November: Jamaal Howard in Texas on October 7; James Robertson and William Reaves Jr. in Florida on October 13 and October 20, respectively; Jeffrey Weisheit in Indiana, Michael Taylor in Alabama and Jesse Guardado in Florida, all on November 5; John Rubio in Texas and James Pavatt in Oklahoma, both on November 12; and Reinaldo Dennes in Texas on November 19.

The Socialist Equality Party opposes the death penalty unconditionally, for the guilty and the innocent alike. The fight to abolish it cannot be entrusted to the courts, which have sanctioned every stage of this barbarism, or to the Democratic Party, which has backed state killing for decades and has said nothing as Trump moves to expand it. It is bound up with the struggle of the working class against war, dictatorship and the capitalist system that gives rise to them.



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