

Trump calls off livestream of Fort Hood shooter's firing squad execution

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President Donald Trump announced Thursday that the military firing squad execution of former Maj. Nidal Malik Hasan, set for December 3 at Fort Hood, Texas, will not be livestreamed. The decision reverses a plan unveiled a week earlier by Secretary of War Pete Hegseth to broadcast the killing to the world.

In a Truth Social post, Trump insisted that streaming the execution “might have been a strong deterrent for the World to witness how America deals with Terrorists and SCUM like Hasan,” but conceded that “many very good and well meaning people would rather not watch him die.” He continued: “He will die, as scheduled, by firing squad, but this event will not be streamed.” The military is still preparing to shoot a paralyzed man to death at the base where his crime took place, in the first military execution since 1961.

On November 5, 2009, Hasan, an Army psychiatrist, opened fire inside a medical processing center at Fort Hood where soldiers were being readied for deployment to Afghanistan. He killed 13 people, 12 of them soldiers, and wounded 32 others before police shot him, leaving him paralyzed from the waist down. At his 2013 court-martial, he said he had acted to stop troops from killing Muslims in Afghanistan. He was sentenced to death.

The massacre was a reactionary crime. But as the WSWS explained at the time, the killings cannot be understood apart from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, which took close to a million lives and of which the Fort Hood shootings were a bloody byproduct.

Hegseth announced the livestream on October 8 in an interview aboard the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln with the far-right propagandist Jack Posobiec of Real America's Voice. “We'll make sure that people are able to watch it, that it's public,” Hegseth

said, “because people need to understand that there's serious consequences for these types of things.” The UN human rights office said that broadcasting an execution amounts to a public execution, which would violate international bans on such torture.

According to CNN, Trump learned that Hasan uses a wheelchair only after approving the plan, and he did not like the optics of a firing squad shooting a man who cannot stand. Advisers also warned that livestreaming the video could make a martyr of Hasan. An administration official told the *Washington Post* the White House had been “caught off guard” by Hegseth. Pentagon spokesman Sean Parnell insisted that Trump and Hegseth are “completely aligned.” The two fascists are fully in agreement on the execution itself.

Hegseth chose the firing squad, with Trump's approval, explaining, “Well I kind of like the mentality we had in World War II.” In that war, the US Army in fact carried out most of its executions by hanging. It was Hitler's Wehrmacht that utilized the firing squad as an instrument of discipline, shooting more than 18,000 of its own soldiers. In occupied Poland and the Soviet Union, the Nazis staged mass public hangings to terrorize the population. These are the types of methods the secretary of war admires.

Hegseth, who has purged generals and the military's top lawyers and championed soldiers accused of war crimes, takes as his model Heinrich Himmler, who built the Waffen-SS as a politically vetted force, outside the regular army and bound by personal oath to Hitler. Public executions have always served a definite purpose: to terrorize the population and appeal to the most backward social layers.

The plan to livestream the firing squad execution was opposed by many in the Republican Party and the military. Vice President JD Vance said he would not

watch if it was streamed. Republican Senator Thom Tillis called it “beyond disgusting,” and 72 retired officers wrote in an open letter that the broadcast would taint the military’s honor.

The firing squad execution at Fort Hood is part of a sweeping expansion of state killing in America. On his first day back in office, Trump signed an executive order on “Restoring the Death Penalty and Protecting Public Safety,” directing the attorney general to seek death sentences in every case of sufficient “severity,” singling out the killing of police officers and capital crimes committed by undocumented immigrants.

On April 24 the Justice Department released a report adding the firing squad, electrocution and gas asphyxiation to the methods available for federal executions. The administration has also pursued a vendetta against the 37 federal prisoners whose death sentences Joe Biden commuted. At least 10 have been transferred to ADX Florence in Colorado, the “Alcatraz of the Rockies,” where prisoners spend 22 to 24 hours a day alone in concrete cells smaller than a parking space and exercise in solitary cages.

Trump, Hegseth, Stephen Miller and others in the administration aspire to Hitler’s methods, but they are not yet able to impose them in the face of mass opposition to their policies, above all to their wars. In September, Trump’s approval rating fell to 32 percent in a Reuters/Ipsos poll, the lowest rating in either of his terms, and a Fox News poll found that more than 60 percent of voters believe the war against Iran was the wrong decision.

Lacking popular support, the administration is turning to the military, and the Hasan execution is a message to the ranks. A firing squad made up of soldiers, carrying out a killing before a mass audience, would serve as a warning to members of the armed forces of what awaits them if they refuse orders.

Hegseth’s proposed macabre spectacle met with broad popular disgust. A *Washington Post*-ABC News-Ipsos poll released Thursday, hours before Trump called off the livestream, found that 80 percent of Americans opposed it, with only 18 percent in favor.

The livestream announcement came barely a week after the failed execution of Christa Pike on September 30 in Tennessee. Pike, 50, was sentenced to death for the murder of Colleen Slemmer, committed when Pike was 18. She survived two massive doses of

pentobarbital and was rushed to a Nashville hospital, her arms burned and blistered, where she lay unconscious on a ventilator until her attorneys reported on October 6 that she was awake and speaking. About 10 days after the failed attempt to kill her she was returned to prison. Governor Bill Lee has halted executions for the rest of the year but has not granted Pike’s attorneys’ request to commute her death sentence.

Jamaal Howard was put to death on October 7 in Texas, the first execution in the country after the Pike debacle. On October 13, Florida executed James Robertson, its 17th execution of the year. In Florida, William Reaves is scheduled to die on October 20, followed by Jesse Guardado on November 5.

Hasan is scheduled to be shot at 1 p.m. on December 3, though a habeas corpus petition in federal court could delay the execution.

The Socialist Equality Party and the *World Socialist Web Site* unconditionally oppose the death penalty, for both the guilty and the innocent. The abolition of state killing cannot be left to the courts, which continue to sanction this barbarism, or to the Democratic Party, which has supported capital punishment for decades and removed opposition to it in its 2024 election platform. The fight to abolish capital punishment is bound up with the struggle of the working class against war, dictatorship and the capitalist system that produces them.



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