**US gun violence**

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On July 27, two top executives from prominent US gun companies – Marty Daniel of Daniel Defense and Christopher Killoy of Sturm, Ruger and Co – appeared before the United States House Committee on Oversight and Reform chaired by New York Democrat Carolyn Maloney. The hearing came on the heels of the latest succession of massacres – the Buffalo supermarket, the Uvalde elementary school, the Highland Park July 4 parade – that have come to define life in America.

As the Guardian noted, this “marked the first time in nearly two decades that the CEOs of leading gun manufacturers testified before Congress”. The CEO of Smith and Wesson Brands – which according to the committee earned at least $125m in 2021 alone from the sale of assault-style rifles, a frequent prop in mass shootings – had declined to participate in the attempt at ‘oversight’.

But the two willing invitees presumably spoke for the US gun industry as a whole when they shot down the notion that their products and aggressive marketing practices have anything to do with rampant killing.

Killoy insisted that a firearm is an “inanimate object” that cannot accrue responsibility, while Daniel – whose firm manufactured the inanimate object that slaughtered 19 school kids and two teachers in Uvalde – maintained that the blame must be assigned to the individual ‘murderers’. In Daniel’s view, “these murders are local problems that have to be solved locally”.

For her part, Maloney took the opportunity at the hearing to express her “hope [that] the American people are paying attention today”, noting “it is clear that gun makers are not going to change unless Congress forces them to finally put people over profits”.

But were we Americans really paying attention, we would have noticed long ago that our country is entirely predicated on putting profits over people – from the corporate destruction of the environment to the manic incarceration of poor minorities to a healthcare system that is decidedly ill. This is not to mention US behaviour abroad, where the “war on terror” and other forms of military slaughter with US-made weapons have also produced many, um, “local problems”.

In her initial invitation to the three arms executives to testify before the House committee, incidentally, Maloney encouraged them to “explain to Congress and the American people why they continue to sell products to civilians that are meant to be used in the battlefield”.

Which brings us to the following question: When the US converts the world into a battlefield, how do Americans know where to draw the line? More precisely put, it is not immensely shocking that a country that inculcates its citizenry with a macho, shoot-’em-up attitude vis-a-vis other human populations might end up with some, well, “murderers” on its hands – particularly when the domestic panorama is one of dystopian capitalism and acute alienation.

As for the culpability of US gun manufacturers in scenes of armed sociopathy from Buffalo to Uvalde, there is no denying that the industry itself is morally depraved – and yet it is merely fulfilling a nefariously lucrative function made possible by general systemic depravity. The fundamental blame for mass shootings does not lie with the CEOs of Daniel Defense and Sturm Ruger – just as the blame for US-bound migrant deaths does not lie with oft-scapegoated human smugglers, whose reprehensible business is only made possible by America’s brand of deadly capitalism and profit-driven border militarisation schemes.

On July 29, two days after the House Committee on Oversight hearing, the US House voted to ban assault weapons – although the measure hardly stands a chance in clearing the Senate.

Excerpted: ‘US gun violence: Capitalism is the culprit’. Courtesy: Aljazeera.com