**Yet Another Mass Shooting in the US**

[Kevin B Milligan](https://dailytimes.com.pk/writer/kevin-b-milligan/)

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On 25 October, A gunman opened fire and killed 22 people in the busy city of Lewiston, Maine, USA. As many as 50 to 60 people are also injured in several locations across the city. Till now, the killer is still on the loose endangering the whole city. It is reported that the killer carried a semi-automatic rifle entered into a bar and started firing initially. After that, he fled the scene and caused mayhem at several locations. So far, Police named Robert Card- a 40-year-old as a person of interest in this case.

The mass casualty has already stunned the busy town, a habitat for 37000 people. The Lewiston shooting is the 565th Mass Shooting of the year 2023. Unfortunately, mass shootings and gun-related violence have become an inevitable element of American life. But it should not be so to protect the human rights of the ordinary Americans whose constitution promised them “a land of the free”. However, it seems the lack of a common-sense policy approach and majoritarian democracy is quietly making it an inevitable event for Americans.

Gun Related Violence Only Increasing in the US

The US casualties and deaths related to guns are well documented and well known. It is only one Google away for anyone with an active internet. Till now, the US has witnessed 565 mass shootings in the first ten months of 2023. In 2022, the number was 647, and in 2021, 690 mass shootings took place. There are also 31 mass murder events in 2023. The total number of deaths has already reached 35268 since the Lewiston incident this year.

Like terrorism, great power rivalry, and many other concerns, gun-related violence and gun possession have also become a national security concern in the US.

Apart from mass shootings related to death, 19734 people committed suicide by guns in 2022, the number was more than 26000 in 2021 and 24000 committed suicide by guns in 2020.

Besides death, the number of injuries per annum is also high. 38550 people were injured in gun-related incidents in 2022, the number was 40603 in 2021. According to Every Town for Gun Safety- an advocacy organization, between 2015 and 2022, more than 19000 people died in mass shootings in the USA. Other statistics suggest that 79% of the total crimes in the US include a gun.

Gun Violence, Increasing Supremacy, and Weakening Social Fabric

Gun-related violence is one of the major causes of death for US citizens. Every year, thousands die and many more are injured. The unprecedented attacks transforming into mass shootings or ‘lone wolves’ are threats to the Human Rights of the common and ordinary people carrying out their day-to-day activities. The shootings in superstores, elementary schools, and churches have brought new security concerns for public safety in everyday spaces. In a vicious cycle, the tendency of increasing gun possession is also visible as currently there are 120 guns per 100 population in the USA.

The supremacist reasons behind the attacks and hate crimes committed with guns are also weakening the social fabric in the US. The strong pressure of gun lobbies and the promotion of supremacist cultural narratives in favor of gun possession are increasing right-wing ideologies within the US society. The attack on Capitol Hill bears witness to growing far-right movements in the USA. The growing strength of hard-right parties such as The Proud Boys is also the symptom of supremacist narratives spreading. While the US has vowed to counter the right wings worldwide to preserve liberal Western values, it now has a systemic enemy within itself.

A Common-Sense Policy Approach

Like terrorism, great power rivalry, and many other concerns, gun-related violence and gun possession have also become a national security concern in the USA and the US administration should acknowledge it. The US needs a common-sense policy approach and a national strategy for reducing gun possession gradually.

The Biden Administration passed the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act in June 2022 and Announced ‘New Actions’ through an Executive Order to reduce gun possession. However, both the Act and executive order only aim at “Keeping guns out of dangerous hands”. Under current arrangements, gun purchasers under 21 will require background checks. However, the act has no early mechanism to prevent the illegal use of a gun by the owner in the later stage of possession. The diverse ages of mass shooters suggest that background checks under 21 during purchase may not have any significant impact on mass shootings or the mindless use of guns.

The act is only a toothless tiger introduced to immediately appease the gun control advocacies and to keep the gun lobby’s interest intact while scoring political scores for the administration.

Again, the administration’s eye-washing step would only preserve the settler culture- the root of gun possession in the US. The practice of majoritarian democracy is another challenge in reducing gun possession. Besides, the support for stricter gun laws is decreasing. According to a Gallop Survey, the support for stricter gun laws has decreased from 62% to 52% by 2021.

The spirit of democracy should be that even though the majority may not opt, what is harmful should be intervened by the government to uphold the rights of the minority. Hence, to protect human rights, the US must devise a national strategy to phase out excessive gun possession prevailing now. It is the state that should have the monopoly over the legitimate use of violence

President Biden’s foreign policy is centered around democracy and human rights and its promotion worldwide. The US is relying on several diplomatic and coercive measures to restore democratic practice and human rights in various countries.

However, the violations owing to an ill culture practiced by the early settlers are jeopardizing the acceptance of the policy. The latest US stance on Gaza has further tarnished the credibility of the US human rights policy as the rest of the world is perceiving it as a double standard. Lastly, there is still time for the global hegemon to address this ramshackle democracy and human rights and correct its course both at home and abroad before it’s too late.

*The writer is an Independent Peace and Conflict Researcher*