

Ten killed in mass shooting at Texas high school

By Trévon Austin
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A 17-year-old carrying a shotgun and a revolver opened fire at a Houston area high school Friday morning, taking the lives of nine students and one teacher and injuring ten others.

The horrific shooting was the deadliest such incident since the massacre of 17 students and teachers in February at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, which sparked a nationwide wave of student-led protests and walkouts against school violence.

The suspect, identified as Dimitrios Pagourtzis, opened fire in an art class in Santa Fe High School around 7:45 a.m., killing nine students and one teacher. According to authorities, Pagourtzis said he had intended to take his own life after the initial shooting but surrendered to officers and stated that he did not have the courage to shoot himself.

Pagourtzis, now in police custody, had also apparently brought explosive devices, including a Molotov cocktail, that were found in the school and nearby. It was not immediately clear if any had exploded.

Just two months prior to Friday's attack, Santa Fe was placed on lockdown after reports of gunfire in the surrounding area. Officers swept the campus and found no threats. According to eyewitnesses, teachers and students yelled "It's real this time!" as a warning after the first shots rang out Friday morning.

Attacks on schools in the United States, typically by a current or former student armed with a gun, occur with a terrifying regularity across the country. According to CNN, there have been 22 school shootings this year, with an average of one shooting incident per week. The shooting at Santa Fe was the third in just the last eight days.

On Thursday, 19-year-old Matthew Milby opened

fire in the gymnasium of Dixon High School in Dixon, Illinois. He was quickly chased off by an officer and arrested before hurting anyone.

Last week, a 14-year-old boy went to Highland High School in Palmdale, California and fired ten rounds from a semiautomatic rifle shortly before classes were scheduled to begin, hitting and wounding a 15-year-old student. The student was eventually detained by police and charged with attempted murder.

In what has become commonplace after mass shootings, politicians have offered canned statements condemning the massacres and offering empty condolences and pledges for action.

President Trump tweeted, "We grieve for the terrible loss of life, and send our support and love to everyone affected by this horrible attack in Texas." He added that the administration would "do everything in our power to protect our students, secure our schools and to keep weapons out of the hands of those who pose a threat to themselves and to others."

Nancy Pelosi, the leading Democrat in the House, issued a boilerplate statement calling for an end to "the gun violence epidemic." She stated, "All Americans grieve for those whose lives were stolen by this tragedy, and our prayers are with the families and loved ones of who have been wounded."

What no politician from either party will state is that the frequency and severity of mass shootings is a reflection of the deeply diseased nature of American society, marred by historic levels of social inequality at home and unending wars abroad.

School shootings are the most tragic and serious expression of the crisis affecting students and youth. A nationwide survey by the health insurer Cigna found that loneliness is widespread in America, with nearly 50 percent of respondents reporting that they

sometimes or always feel alone or left out. Young people born in the 1990s and 2000s were most likely to report feeling lonely.

Recent studies cite significant increases in depression and suicide, particularly among young people, in the last decade. Blue Cross Blue Shield recently noted that depression diagnoses increased 63 percent in adolescents (ages 12 to 17) and 47 percent in millennials (ages 18 to 34) between 2013 and 2016. Another recent study in *Pediatrics* found that in 2015, 1.82 percent of teenage hospital visits were due to attempted suicide or suicidal thoughts, nearly tripling from 0.66 percent in 2008.

To the social crisis in America is added the endless promotion of militarist violence by the state, at home and abroad. Both factions of the American ruling class have carried out war crimes in the Middle East and are preparing to wage even bloodier wars against Russia and China, possibly with nuclear arms. The same politicians sending their “thoughts and prayers” have supported the recent massacre of unarmed Palestinians by Israeli snipers.

Neither party has offered any serious solution to the fundamental issues underlying the unending wave of school violence. Republicans have used each incident to call for the further militarization of schools, including the arming of teachers. The Democrats aim to use the deaths of youth to score votes in the November mid-term elections with calls for stricter gun control laws.

As the *World Socialist Web Site* explained in relation to the March for Our Lives protests, there is a growing sense among youth that school violence is the outcome of more fundamental social and political problems and will not be resolved either by stricter gun laws or turning schools into armed garrisons.

Depression, poverty, police brutality and decades of unending war are the real issues that lie at the core of mass shootings in America. Tragic incidents such as Friday’s shooting at Santa Fe High School can only be prevented by addressing the social problems rooted in the failure of the capitalist system.

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