

In the Aftermath of the Connecticut School Tragedy: U.S. Must Revise the Laws on Gun Ownership

The second-deadliest school shooting in the history of the United States, after the 2007 Virginia Tech massacre,

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Region: [USA](#)

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This week's school shooting at the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, brings once again to forefront the issue of gun ownership in the US, which is the object of this December 2012 article focussing on the Newton, Connecticut school shooting (December 14, 2012).

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The fatal shootings in Newtown, Connecticut on December 14, which claimed the lives of 28 people, including 20 innocent children under the age of 10, once again brought to light the dilemma of gun ownership in the United States.

Despite the fact that there was no response from gun rights advocates except deafening silence, it became clear to everyone else that the United States must revise its gun policies.

The shooting rampage, in which a mentally disturbed, heavily-armed 20-year-old man named Adam Peter Lanza opened fire on innocent schoolchildren and school staff at the Sandy Hook Elementary School — after killing his mother earlier — was so tragic and heartbreaking that many world leaders, including Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, issued condolence messages to the families of the victims and all of the people of the United States, who were incredibly shocked by the appalling massacre.

The incident was the second-deadliest school shooting in the history of the United States, after the 2007 Virginia Tech massacre, in which 33 students and professors, including the perpetrator himself, were killed. It stirred a wave of terror and trepidation, as well as anger, among U.S. citizens, and many are demanding restrictions on the freedom of gun ownership and saying they don't want to see such bitter experiences repeated again and again.

Gun violence is nothing new in the United States and dates back to the founding of the republic.

On September 6, 1901, anarchist steel worker Leon Czolgosz assassinated U.S. President William McKinley with a .32 caliber Iver Johnson revolver. Of course, no one can forget the assassinations of President John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King, and in recent years, the Columbine High School massacre, the Aurora Theater shooting, and the shooting at a Sikh temple in Wisconsin.

According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 66.9% of all homicides in the

United States in 2009 were perpetrated using a firearm, and UNODC reported that there were about 270 million firearms — handguns or rifles — in the U.S. that year. According to the latest reports from various sources, there are now 300 million guns in the United States, a country with a population of about 311 million.

U.S. officials, despite their various initiatives for restricting gun access and putting limitations on the sale of handguns and other firearms to youths and at-risk populations, have so far failed to design a legal framework through which the gun ownership issue can be resolved once and for all. They fear that the democratic values of the U.S. Constitution, and especially the Second Amendment, may be undermined, and the United States' image in the world may be tarnished as a result.

However, contrary to what many U.S. politicians and policymakers think, what is actually sullyng the image of the United States in the eyes of the rest of the world is the perception that it has provided its people so much unrestricted and unbridled freedom that it is now unable to guarantee their security and safety, and thus the lives of children, as well adults, are in danger.

However, it seems that some members of the U.S. Congress are now calling for a revision of gun policies. On December 17, The New York Times reported that the Democrats in Congress had adopted a more “aggressive” stance on gun control in the wake of the Newtown killings, while the Republicans and conservatives, who are the main advocates of gun rights, have mostly remained silent.

Even Joe Manchin III, a pro-gun-rights West Virginia senator who sparked controversy in 2010 after running a TV commercial that showed him using a rifle to shoot at an environmental bill, said that “everything should be on the table” with regard to possible alterations of the gun policies.

Gun Ownership. The Middle East Versus America

In the Middle East and North Africa region, most governments have strict rules and regulations for the possession of firearms, and in some countries in the region, the ownership of handguns and rifles is forbidden.

According to the *Small Arms Survey 2007*, the United States is the first country in the world in the rankings in regard to guns per 100 residents. In the Middle East and North Africa region, Yemen is the third country in the world in guns per 100 residents, Saudi Arabia is 6th, Iraq is 7th, Oman is 17th, Bahrain and Kuwait share 18th place, the United Arab Emirates is 24th, Qatar is 31st, Iran is 79th, and Egypt is 115th. Tunisia is the 178th nation, and it's said that the imposition of strict rules on gun ownership by the deposed president Zine El Abidine Ben Ali had greatly restricted civilians' access to firearms. The 2007 survey reported that only 9,000 Tunisian citizens possessed guns.

In a book entitled *Small Arms Survey 2007: Guns and the City*, published by Cambridge University Press, it was reported that only 3.5 million Iranian civilians possess guns and the rate of private gun ownership in Iran is 7.32 firearms per 100 people. Iran has a population of about 75 million people. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, homicides by any means, including firearms, totaled 2,215 in 2009 in Iran. In contrast, there were 15,241 murders in the United States in 2009.

It seems that the most logical way for the United States to address the problem of gun violence would be to ratify laws that would necessitate the issuance of permits for those who want to own handguns and other firearms. The United States can use the successful experience of Middle Eastern nations, which have maintained a relatively good level of public security by restricting gun ownership, as a model.

Recklessly allowing almost anyone to purchase a firearm is not a rational policy, even for a country that is trying to present itself as a beacon of freedom. Freedom can be attained, but freedom is not always free, and the lives of innocent children should not be sacrificed for the sake of political games.

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