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Mortuary Statue of Liberty: The Repeated Killings in the United States Are Consistent with the Culture of Death It Boasts

Italian photographer Gabriele Galimberti won the first prize of the World Press Photo last year for his coverage of American domestic armaments.



Photograph by Gabrielle Galimberti, from the photographic production Ameriguns, which portrays the possession of weapons by American citizens.

On July 4, Independence Day, there was a mass shooting that has been repeated for years. On this occasion, eight people were killed and another 30 were injured in various ways. The shooting, carried out by Robert Crimo, 21, occurred in a parade in the town of Highland Park, Illinois, in the north of the city of Chicago.



For decades, the government of Washington has supported the issue of human rights as a political emblem of global demand. However, its population is one of the most vulnerable in the world in terms of violence, homicide and suicide, because of the use of weapons and its permanent exaltation as an object of glorified defense. Mass *shooting* is defined by U.S. law as a form of domestic terrorism consummated in public places, with random recipients, or against specific groups. Their execution can occur through the use of weapons or the mass run over of passers-by.

The most vulnerable groups, recipients of mass murders, are students, Afro-descendants, [Latinos](#), members of LGTBI communities and Jews. This is why the Whitney Harris Institute of International Law at the University of Washington appeared before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) to denounce its country for negligence in the prevention of armed violence, which "limits the ability of Americans to enjoy many fundamental freedoms and guarantees, protected by international law".

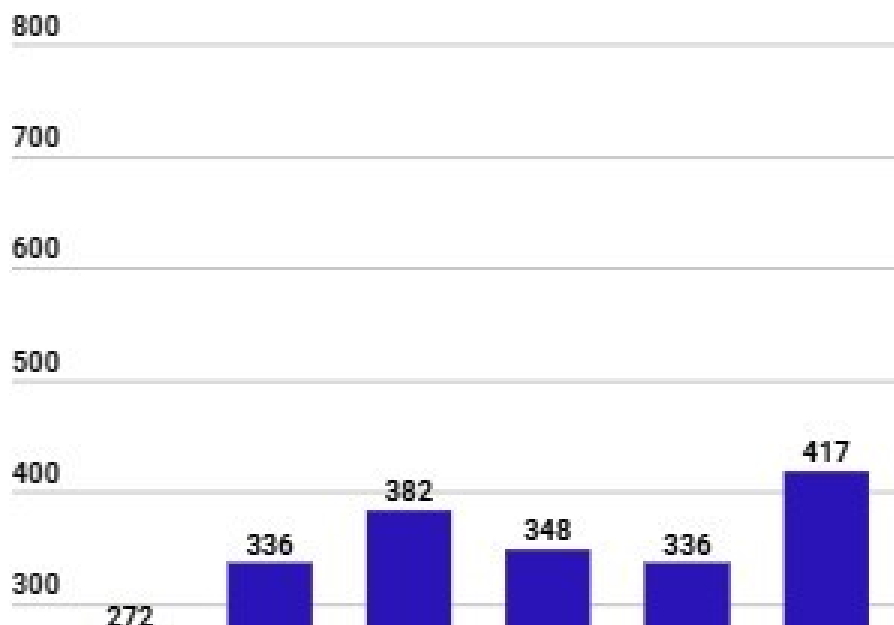
The mass shootings began during Washington's invasion of Vietnam in 1966. The first recorded case dates back to August 1 of that year at the University of Texas, during the presidency of Lyndon Johnson. The second was a few months later, on November 13, at the College of Beauty in Arizona. From 1966 to the present, a third of all mass shootings in the world took place in the country that postulates human rights as an attribute and unavoidable value of its civilizational paradigm. The free trade of weapons, including assault rifles, explains not only mass murders, but the continuous and systematic [increase](#) in homicides and suicides. The principle of legitimacy with which the

carrying of weapons is justified refers to guaranteeing personal security. However, 63% of all deaths resulting from the use of firearms are suicides.

So far in 2022, there have been 308 mass shootings, according to the [Gun Violence Archive](#). Some of this devastation is linked to war demographics: half of all the world's firearms – in the hands of civilians – are based in the country that houses the Statue of Liberty. The total number exceeds even the population of the country: the existence of 393 million weapons is counted for a population of 330 million. There are about 120 firearms for every 100 American adults, according to the Swiss [Small Arms Survey \(SAS\)](#). The distribution of these weapons is eight times higher than that of its neighbor Canada and 22 times greater than that registered in the European Union. 44% of American adults live in a household with one or more guns. Studies carried out by SAS stipulate that the total number of weapons held by civilians worldwide reaches 857 million.

Bullet pandemic

El número de tiroteos masivos en Estados Unidos



Number of mass killings 2014/2022.

Some 46% of these weapons are in the United States, despite representing only 4% of the global population. In addition, it accounts for 40% of all internationally recorded suicides

caused by firearms. In 2019, more than 23,000 Americans took their own lives with self-inflicted gunfire. The suicide rate with the use of weapons is seven times higher than the average for developed countries. A [2020 study from](#) Stanford University revealed that men who owned firearms were nearly eight times more likely to die from gunshot wounds than those who did not. On the other hand, the indicators related to women were even more bulky: those who lived with weapons were 35 times more likely to die by suicide than their unarmed peers. In addition, every 16 hours a woman is shot dead by a man linked to the victim, especially by partners and former partners.

The country that guides NATO policies has the highest [homicide rate](#) in the developed world. In 2020 it reached 6.52 cases per 100,000 inhabitants, a number that multiplies by seven the average of countries with similar GDP per capita. Argentina has 5.32 cases for the same year. Uruguay, on the other hand, almost doubles the Argentine guarismos: 9.3. The hundreds of exiles from Buenos Aires in Punta del Este have not been able to access the numbers collected by the United Nations Office on Drug Trafficking and Crime ([UNDOC](#)).

The country that presents itself as the champion of freedom is one of the three States in which the possession and carrying of arms is a constitutional right. The other two are – by his direct influence – Guatemala and Mexico. However, the effective possession rate of Mexican and Guatemalan citizens is one-tenth of that. Parliamentarians in Washington who refuse to regulate marketing and/or possession argue that the perpetrators of shootings in public settings are people with mental problems. "As a society, we need to do a better job with mental health," Texas Gov. Greg Abbott said after a teenager killed 19 children and two teachers with a semi-automatic rifle at an elementary school in the state he runs. Coinciding with Abbott, one of the top representatives of the gun lobby, Republican Senator [Ted Cruz](#), characterized the gun sales restrictions as "a vehicle to disarm law-abiding citizens."

The appeal to psychiatric justifications enables a large part of American society to circumvent evidence of gun access as one of the causal explanations for the massacres. In fact, one of the most important surveys, conducted by the [FBI's Behavioral Analysis Unit](#), revealed that the vast majority of perpetrators who have survived their criminal actions did not qualify for a clinical diagnosis of mental illness. Despite the tens of thousands of lives lost or damaged by gun proliferation, only half of American adults favor restrictions on the purchase or possession of weapons.

Shooting at night

Nearly one-third of U.S. adults, according to a [Pew Research Center](#) survey — believe there would be fewer crimes if a higher proportion of citizens carried guns. 80% of citizens who identify with Republicans, and nearly 20% of Democrats, believe that the current rules on access to and possession of guns are adequate, but perhaps they should be more lax. In 2018, companies that manufacture civilian weapons offered the market nine million units, according to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. That amount is double that produced a decade ago, in 2008. Mass shootings, far from limiting demand, drive it even more, considering the purchase of weapons as a security against possible events of these characteristics.

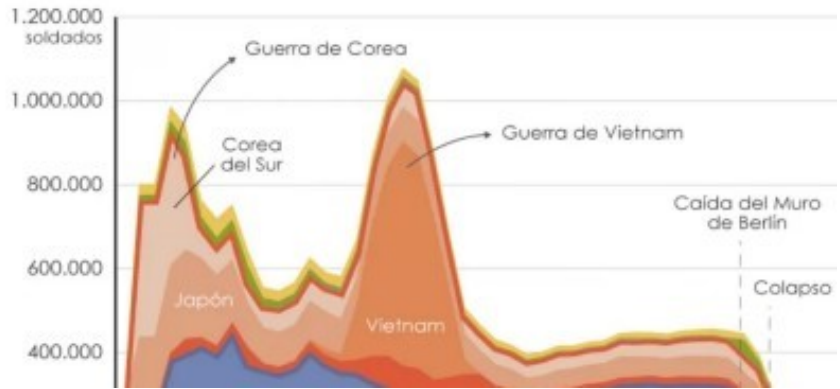
However, access to guns is not the only factor operating in the culture of death that characterizes the American dream. Only three of the mass massacres have not been carried out by men. The mandates of [hegemonic masculinity](#), characteristic of the patriarchal model, are part of the tragic phenomenon that explains the personality of the perpetrators. The frustration produced by a society that imposes winners and losers according to their social recognition and / or their money is another of the causal explanations that are taken into account to analyze the perpetrators. The [desire for notoriety](#) of criminals is another factor that explains the tendency to overvalue a narcissistic individualism that despises the communal, [otherness](#), and that makes the need for glittering figuration a desperate search for media coverage.

One of the researchers who has most relieved *mass shootings* is [Patrick Blanchfield](#), author of *Gunpower: The Structure of American Violence*, where he conceptualizes the phenomenon as part of the "insatiable death impulse of American culture", which combines "fear, anxiety and guilt and (...) it is reduced to the production of a *status quo* that changes only to the extent that it becomes more brutal and more cruel." The domestic terrorism of mass shootings is not detached from the policies pursued by the State Department, the Pentagon, and their intelligence and security agencies. The United States [maintains 200,000 military personnel](#) deployed in more than 700 bases installed on five continents; it is the world's leading producer of weapons, leads exports of military apparatus and is the nation most involved in wars in the last two centuries.

La evolución del despligue milit

Presencia de tropas por regiones y países más de

■ Europa y Asia Central ■ Asia Oriental y Oceanía ■ Asia Meridional
■ África subsahariana ■ Latinoamérica y Caribe



Domestic terrorism of an arms nature also promotes crime in neighboring countries: some 200,000 firearms enter Mexico annually, coming from its northern border. In 2019, about 70% of the weapons seized by Mexican security forces came from U.S. manufacturers. That is the reason why the government of Andrés Manuel López Obrador filed a lawsuit in 2021 against a group of companies based in its northern neighbor.

Christmas rifles



The complaint, filed in a Federal Court in Boston, accuses eleven arms manufacturers and marketers of promoting "negligent and illicit trade practices, which facilitate the illegal trafficking of weapons to Mexico," which end up in the hands of drug cartels. "For decades, the [Mexican] government and its citizens have been victims of a deadly avalanche of military-style and other particularly lethal weapons flowing from states." The indictment cites as an example the special editions of the .38 caliber pistols that are

marketed with the engraved face of the revolutionary Emiliano Zapata and a quote attributed to him: "It is better to die standing than to live a lifetime on your knees."

According to the Mexican watchdog, half a million pistols, rifles and machine guns are illegally trafficked each year from the United States, and in 2019 alone such weapons produced more than 17,000 intentional homicides. The increase in smuggling explains the change in criminal patterns: today 70% of homicides are committed with firearms, while three decades ago they only represented 15%. When an attempt was made to capture the top leaders of the Sinaloa Cartel, an arsenal composed of Browning M2 50-caliber machine guns, the same ones used by the infantry of the neighboring country, was found in the possession of the drug traffickers.

Meanwhile, much of American society continues to advocate for the free possession and carrying of weapons in public spaces. In November last year, a 15-year-old boy shot at a school in Oxford, Michigan, killing four children. A few days later, Kentucky Republican Rep. Thomas Massie posted a Christmas photo in which members of his family pose with different guns. In the caption of the image it can be read: "Merry Christmas! Santa, bring us ammunition." The scene was reproduced by Congresswoman Lauren Boebert of Colorado, who posed happily next to her Christmas tree and her children armed with automatic rifles.

Italian photographer [Gabriele Galimberti](#) won the first prize of the World Press Photo last year for his coverage of American domestic armaments. The award-winning work is entitled The Ameriguns, and is a journey through a society that sympathizes with death: when war is naturalized and becomes the *raison d'être* of a culture, terrorism also becomes a domestic custom.



Jorge Elbaum for La Pluma

Edited by [María Piedad Ossaba](#)

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