



Fellowship of Reconciliation-USA Submission for the United Nations
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The Fellowship of Reconciliation-USA (FOR-USA) prepared this submission for the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the United States of America (USA) to take place in November 2025. In it, FOR-USA evaluates the situation of human rights in the USA regarding gun violence, suppression of free expression, and hate crimes with recommendations to the U.S. government on how to address these major human rights challenges.

Founded in 1915 to support conscientious objection to war, Fellowship of Reconciliation-USA (FOR-USA) is dedicated to inspiring and organizing a diverse movement of people of faith and conscientious to use nonviolence to foster peace, dismantle structures of violence and war, and build the Beloved Community. FOR-USA is a branch of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation, which has about forty branches around the world.

GUN VIOLENCE

Gun violence is a critical public health issue in the United States, marked by alarming statistics and significant disparities across communities, infringing upon civil and political rights, specifically rights to life, to security of person, and to be free from discrimination.

The rates of firearm-related homicides and suicides peaked in 2021 during the COVID-19 pandemic. Since then, gun deaths in the United States have decreased each year. However, the decreases seen over the past few years are minor given the thirty-four percent increase that has occurred between 2014 and 2023 with a fifty-seven percent increase in the rate of gun deaths by homicide and twenty-one percent by suicide¹ Gun-related deaths are the leading causes of mortality for in the United States

¹ Everytown for Gun Safety, *How Does Gun Violence Impact the Community You Care About?*, Available at: <https://everytown.org/>



for persons aged 0 to 19², with an average of 4,320 children and teens dying by guns per year, of which 30% of the deaths being from suicides and 65% from homicides³

A closer examination of gun violence in the United States reveals stark disparities that disproportionately affect marginalized communities, with Black and Latino youths particularly vulnerable as compared to their white counterparts⁴. The Socioeconomic Vulnerability Index highlights the strong association between neighborhood conditions and firearm violence, suggesting that community-level socioeconomic factors play a critical role in exacerbating gun violence⁵.

Like Black and Latino people in the United States, the LGBTQ+ community in the United States is disproportionately affected by the country's gun violence crisis, with LGBTQ+ people being more than twice as likely to be victims of gun violence than their cisgender and straight peers⁶. In 2023, the Human Rights Campaign reported that partners, acquaintances, or strangers killed at least 32 transgender and gender-expansive people — 78% of whom were victims of gun violence⁷.

In the context of school shootings, a recent analysis from 2017 to 2022 revealed both an increase in frequency and a rise in the lethality of incidents, signifying an urgent need for targeted preventive measures⁸. With schools often viewed as safe havens, the surge in violence has profound implications for educational institutions, traumatizing

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Provisional Mortality Statistics, 2018 through Last Week Results*, 30 March, 2025, Available at:

<https://wonder.cdc.gov/controller/datarequest/D176;jsessionid=2427E58DA1A933A896F18B3FE068>

³ Everytown for Gun Safety, *Gun Violence in the United States*, October 2024, Available at:

https://everystat.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/USA_2024-October.pdf

⁴ Lanfear, Charles C., Rebecca Bucci, David S. Kirk, and Robert J. Sampson. *Inequalities in exposure to firearm violence by race, sex, and birth cohort from childhood to age 40 years, 1995-2021*. JAMA network open 6, no. 5 (2023): e2312465-e2312465.

⁵ Polcari, Ann M., Lea E. Hofer, Kylie M. Callier, Tanya L. Zakrisson, Selwyn O. Rogers, Marion CW Henry, Mark B. Slidell, and Andrew J. Benjamin. *Social Vulnerability Index is strongly associated with urban pediatric firearm violence: an analysis of five major US cities*. Journal of trauma and acute care surgery 95, no. 3 (2023): 411-418.

⁶ Flores, Andrew R., Langton, Lynn, Meyer, Ilan H., and Romero, Adam P., *Victimization rates and traits of sexual and gender minorities in the United States: Results from the National Crime Victimization Survey, 2017*, *Science Advances*, 2 Oct 2020, Vol 6, Issue 40, Available at:

<https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/sciadv.aba6910>

⁷ Human Rights Campaign, *Fatal Violence Against the Transgender and Gender-Expansive Community in 2023*, Available at: <https://www.hrc.org/resources/fatal-violence-against-the-transgender-and-gender-expansive-community-in-2023>

⁸ Katsiyannis, Antonis, Luke J. Rapa, Denise K. Whitford, and Samantha N. Scott. *An examination of US school mass shootings, 2017–2022: Findings and implications*. Advances in neurodevelopmental disorders 7, no. 1 (2023): 66-76.



entire generations and communities and negatively affecting students' mental health and amplifying students' risks related to substance abuse and suicidal ideation⁹.

The correlation between weak gun laws and higher incidences of gun violence is documented, with stricter gun control measures corresponding with lower rates of firearm deaths, particularly in at-risk populations in the United States¹⁰.

In 2022, under the presidency of Biden, significant legislative progress to address the country's gun violence crisis was achieved with the passage of the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act. This legislation was primarily a response to the increasing frequency of mass shootings and public demand for effective measures to enhance gun safety. The BSCA aimed to address critical issues such as background check enhancements, funding for mental health services, and age-related regulations for gun purchases¹¹. However, tying mental health services to gun control measures, as BSCA did, has raised concerns regarding privacy and stigmatization¹².

Public opinion in the United States increasingly favors measures like universal background checks and restrictions on assault weapons, with both gun owners and non-gun owners supporting these initiatives. Despite this, since Donald Trump has returned to the U.S.A. White House, the gun violence federal health advisory has been removed and there is concern that Trump will reverse federal restrictions on ghost guns (homemade guns that are unserialized and therefore untraceable)^{13 14 15}.

Recommendations to the U.S. Government:

⁹ Harper, Christopher R. *Witnessing community violence, gun carrying, and associations with substance use and suicide risk among high school students—Youth Risk Behavior Survey*, United States, 2021. MMWR supplements 72 (2023).

¹⁰ Braga, Anthony Allan, and Philip J. Cook. *Policing gun violence: Strategic reforms for controlling our most pressing crime problem*. Oxford University Press, 2023.

¹¹ GLANCE, ATA. Gun Control. *Today's Crime and Punishment Issues: Democrats and Republicans* (2024): 135.

¹² Swadley, Heather. *The structural harms of providing mental health services through the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act*. Neb. L. Rev. 102 (2023): 52.

¹³ Barry, Colleen L., Elizabeth M. Stone, Cassandra K. Crifasi, Jon S. Vernick, Daniel W. Webster, and Emma E. McGinty. Trends in public opinion on US gun laws: majorities of gun owners and non-gun owners support a range of measures. *Health Affairs* 38, no. 10 (2019): 1727-1734.

¹⁴ Friedman, Amanda, *Trump Removes Gun Violence Public Health Advisory*, Politico, 17 March, 2025, Available at: <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/03/17/trump-gun-violence-public-health-advisory-00234171>

¹⁵ Egelko, *Trump Could Reverse Federal Restrictions on Ghost Guns. What That Would Mean for California*, San Francisco Chronicle, 31 March 2025, Available at: <https://www.sfchronicle.com/politics/article/trump-could-reverse-ghost-gun-restrictions-20250197.php>



- Ban all forms of “assault-style” weapons and high-capacity magazines;
- Require ammunition dealers to be licensed and to maintain accurate sales records;
- Require comprehensive background checks for private and gun show sales;
- Fund programs that focus on early identification, early intervention, evidence-based mental and behavioral health treatments for communities at risk of and struggling with the aftermath of gun violence;
- Track all incidents of injuries from gun violence, including accidental shootings, as a matter of public health administration and promote, and provide training for the safe handling of weapons.
- Establish a Racial Diversity Commission that looks at connections between gun violence and policing of communities of color, investigates instances of racial profiling, and raises cases of concern to the Federal Bureau of Investigation;
- Implement a nation-wide policy that clearly defines and outlaws racial profiling and requires law enforcement officials to complete an unconscious bias training that addresses the multidimensional approach to racial profiling;
- Expand resources and subsidies for community-based educational and skill-building programming with a focus on Black, Latino, and other vulnerable youth.

FREEDOM OF SPEECH, POLITICAL EXPRESSION, AND ASSEMBLY

Executive Order 14188, signed into law by President Trump on January 29, 2025, specifically targeted international students involved in anti-Israel protests. The order mandates the deportation of any student who violates any law during protests, regardless of the severity of the offense. Since March 2025, U.S.A. Secretary of State Marco Rubio has publicly stated that the visas of at least 300 individuals were revoked due to their participation in pro-Palestinian demonstrations, even though many of them were not accused of any criminal activity, and signaling an alarming precedent: the use of immigration law as a tool of political suppression.

The April 2024 dismantling of Columbia University student encampments against the war in Gaza marked the first instance since the 1968 Vietnam War protests where the university allowed the NYPD to conduct mass arrests on campus. That Spring, across the United States, more than 3,100 protesters, including faculty members, were arrested across 60 college campuses for opposing the war in Gaza.

Since 2015, U.S.A. policy has increasingly falsely conflated opposition to Israeli policies with antisemitic intent. The implementation of the International Holocaust Remembrance



Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism has led to legislative and institutional crackdowns on boycotts, divestments, and sanctions against Israel. The efforts criminalize not only advocacy for Palestinian rights but have also contributed to broader efforts to restrict freedom of speech.

The arrest and detention of activists represent a stark violation of the U.S. Constitution, which guarantees freedom of speech and peaceful assembly under the First Amendment, protecting individuals from government retaliation for expressing political opinions. These actions contravene international law, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which the U.S.A. in 1992.

The fear of government retaliation can deter students and organizations from engaging in protests, effectively stifling political discourse. This climate of intimidation is reminiscent of historical efforts to silence dissent, such as the McCarthy-era persecution of political activists and the surveillance of civil rights leaders during the 1960s.

Recommendations to the U.S. Government:

- End arbitrarily arrests and deportations of international students and scholars in retaliation for their viewpoints and activism;
- Uphold the rights of noncitizens residing in the U.S. to hold and express opinion as per the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1966 and ratified by the U.S. in 1992;
- Foster civil discourse and classroom environments that support the full, free exchange of ideas;
- Ensure the autonomy of institutions of higher education;
- Ensure academic freedom and encourage diversity, equity, and inclusion at educational institutions;
- Encourage educational institutions to investigate whether and what policies of theirs disproportionately impact marginalized groups of people;
- Refrain from using the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism, which has been used to wrongly label criticism of Israel as antisemitic, and thus chill and suppress free speech and non-violent protest¹⁶.

HATE CRIMES

¹⁶ Human Rights Watch, *Human Rights and other Civil Society Groups Urge United Nations to Respect Human Rights in the Fight Against Antisemitism*, 20, April 2023, Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/04/04/human-rights-and-other-civil-society-groups-urge-united-nations-respect-human>



The analysis and recommendations in the following section, regarding hate crimes, is thanks to the Arab American Institute Foundation, a national civil rights advocacy nonprofit organization that provides strategic analysis to policymakers and community members to strengthen democracy, protect civil rights and liberties, and defend international human rights¹⁷.

Hate crimes are defined by the United States Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) as “criminal offenses which are motivated, in whole or in part, by the offender's bias(es) against a: race. religion. disability. sexual orientation.” In 2023, 11,862 hate crime instances were reported to the FBI, the highest number since 1991, when the agency began reporting on hate crimes¹⁸. The year 2023 was the third consecutive year that incidents of hate crimes in the United States increased to an all-time high, presenting a severe concern regarding violations of the principle of equality and non-discrimination, wherein all people are guaranteed the equal enjoyment of human rights, protection of the law, and dignity without any discrimination as prohibited under the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD), adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1965..

Between 2022 and 2023, hate crimes in the United States increased by two percent. While violent offenses decreased overall, from 4,895 in 2022 to 3,879 in 2023, there were substantial increases in larceny, vandalism, and arson.

One hundred twenty-three anti-Arab single-bias incidents were reported, the highest-ever number of anti-Arab incidents since the FBI began collecting data on the category in 2015 and a 34% increase since 2022. Anti-Arab hate incidents were removed as a reporting category from federal statistics prior to the release of the FBI's first comprehensive annual report in 1992. Because of this, anti-Arab hate was excluded from federal statistics for over two decades and was only included again in 2015¹⁹.

As in previous years, “Anti-Black or African American” incidents (3,027) accounted for the most single-bias hate crimes based on race, ethnicity, or ancestry. According to the released statistics, anti-Arab and (34%) anti-Latino (10%) were the only race, ethnicity, or ancestry categories to increase from 2022 to 2023. While anti-Asian incidents

¹⁷ Arab American Institute, Available at: <https://www.aaiusa.org/>

¹⁸ Federal Bureau of Investigation, *FBI Releases 2023 Crime in the Nation Statistics*, 23 September 2024, Available at: <https://www.fbi.gov/news/press-releases/fbi-releases-2023-crime-in-the-nation-statistics>

¹⁹ Arab American Institute, *Underreported, Under Threat: Hate Crime in the United States and the Targeting of Arab Americans*, 31, July 2018, Available at: <https://www.aaiusa.org/library/under-reported-under-threat>



continue to decline from a historic peak (499) during the pandemic in 2021, 2023 is still the third-highest year on record for anti-Asian hate with 407 single bias incidents reported.

Single-bias incidents based on religion grew this year by 32 percent. Anti-Jewish (1,832), anti-Muslim (236), and anti-Sikh (156) had the highest number of incidents among religious groups. There was a significant 63% increase in anti-Jewish incidents, making 2023 the highest year on record. Anti-Muslim single-bias incidents increased by 49% between 2022 and 2023. There were 236 reported incidents, making it the fifth-highest year on record and the highest since the first year of the Trump Administration.

Hate crime incidents based on sexual orientation (2,077) also reached an all-time high, with a 7% increase. Anti-Gay (Male) (1,037), anti-Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, or Transgender (Mixed Group) (839), and anti-Lesbian (157) were the three categories with the highest number of incidents in this group.

Statistics for 2023 also include 492 hate crime incidents based on gender identity, which is the highest annual total since the FBI added a separate category for those crimes in 2013. This represents a 5% increase from 2022, with a total of 355 anti-Transgender incidents and 137 anti-Gender Non-Conforming incidents.

Though this data is important, particularly in that it offers trend lines, it represents a dramatic underreporting of hate crime in America. In reviewing the data, AAI found that the most violent anti-Arab hate crime of 2023 – the tragic murder of a six-year-old Arab American Muslim child of Palestinian descent named Wadea al-Fayoume and the brutal attack on his mother – were not properly reported in federal statistics. Wadea's murder occurred on October 14, 2023, and the perpetrator made clear that they targeted Wadea and his mother because they were Palestinian, as well as Muslim. The crime was noted as an anti-Muslim incident, but not *also* an anti-Arab incident.

From the review of the data at this time, it is also unclear whether the attack on three Arab American college students—Hisham Awartani, Kinnan Abdalhamid, and Tahseen Aliahmad—all of whom are of Palestinian descent, was reported as a hate crime. The three students were shot on November 25, 2023, while walking in Burlington, Vermont, speaking in a mix of Arabic and English, with two of them wearing keffiyehs.

Many of the issues with the FBI's hate crime data stem from the continued lack of participation in the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS). The FBI reports that 83.5 percent of agencies actively enrolled in the FBI's UCR Program submitted hate crime incidents with a population coverage of 95% percent. While there have been



improvements – this is the first year since the transition to NIBRS that the FBI has not had to supplement the data from the old reporting system – these participation statistics belie the fact that many participating agencies submit zero data. Of participating agencies that represent populations of 100,000 or more, 324 submitted a zero report. In other words, they reported that no hate crimes occurred in their jurisdictions.

Recommendations to the U.S. Government:

- **Increase Interagency Coordination Against Hate.** Congress should enact legislation to institutionalize President Biden’s United We Stand Summit commitment to establish an interagency initiative on hate crimes, authorize \$10 million to fund its continued implementation, and require periodic reports from the White House that outline the work of the initiative, including: how each agency has addressed hate crime issues, prevention and training initiatives, as well as research and programmatic plans for the next fiscal year.
- **Pass the Improving Reporting to Prevent Hate Act (H.R. 7648),** which would condition federal funding under the Safe Streets Act on credible hate crime reporting to the FBI for law enforcement agencies serving populations of more than 100,000.
- **Address White Supremacy in Federal Law Enforcement.** The U.S. should enact legislation to require the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Justice, and the FBI—and all other federal agencies with law enforcement responsibility— to promptly “avoid the hiring and retention of law enforcement officers who promote unlawful violence, white supremacy, or other bias against persons based on race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sex (including sexual orientation and gender identity), or disability” as mandated in President Biden’s May 2022 police reform executive order²⁰.
- **Increase Funding for the Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights (OCR).** The U.S. should enact legislation—the Showing Up for Students Act (S. 3883; H.R. 8271)—to double OCR’s funding. The Leadership Conference and more than 90 civil rights and education groups are on record in support of doubling the funding for OCR²¹.
- **Increase Funding for Community-based Hate Crime Prevention Initiatives** authorized by the COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act, which includes the Jabara-Heyer

²⁰ Exec. Order No. 14,074, 87 Fed. Reg. 32945 (May 25, 2022)

²¹ Letter to Sen. Subcomm. on Lab., Health & Hum. Servs., Educ., and Related Agencies from the Leadership Conf. on Civ. & Hum. Rts. et al. (Feb. 14, 2024), <https://civilrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Congress-Double-theFunding-for-ED-OCR.pdf>; Letter to Pres. Joseph R. Biden, Jr. from the Leadership Conf. on Civ. & Hum. Rts. et al.



NO HATE Act²², by an additional \$30 million, including increased funds for state hate crime hotlines to promote expanded victim reporting and assistance and support services and restorative justice initiatives for those targeted and impacted by bias-motivated harms.

- **Increase support to the Department of Justice’s Civil Rights Division and the Community Relations Service (CRS).** Both play a critical role in combatting and responding to hate crime incidents, including providing training and community outreach programs for directly impacted communities.

²² Pub. L. No. 117-13, 135 Stat. 265 (2021).