

## **LGBTQ and Gun Violence-Prevention Groups Call for Hate and Terror to be Disarmed Following Orlando Shooting**

As U.S. government leaders continue to grapple with addressing gun violence-prevention following last weekend's homophobic massacre at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, Florida, LGBTQ and gun violence-prevention advocates and activists are calling for more stringent checks to keep guns out of dangerous hands.

The Orlando tragedy, the deadliest mass shooting in modern U.S. history, highlights how vulnerable LGBTQ communities are to hate-fueled violence, especially LGBTQ communities of color.

Hate violence has risen sharply in recent years, with a 20% increase in reported LGBTQ homicides in the U.S. between 2014 and 2015, according to a study released this week by The National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs (NCAVP). Of the homicides reported last year, 62% were LGBTQ people of color.

Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) hate crime statistics tell us year after year that people are most frequently targeted for hate violence based on personal characteristics related to race, religion, and sexual orientation. According to The Williams Institute, gay men report being victims of violent hate crimes at a higher rate than any other targeted group, and these crimes are more violent and result in hospitalization more often.

And yet we cannot ignore the fact that transgender people are at great risk of being victims of hate violence because of their gender identity and this reality is even worse for those who are also targeted on the basis of their race, ethnicity, class, and citizenship status. Fifty four percent of all hate-violence related LGBTQ homicides were transgender women of color, according to the NCAVP study.

We recognize the need to address the bigotry that motivates acts of violence toward LGBTQ people, and we also recognize that such violence is far more deadly when carried out with firearms.

Any solutions to the problem of hate violence, including anti-LGBTQ violence, must address the alarmingly easy access that bigots have to such deadly weapons. For example, under current law, people convicted of violent hate crimes can legally buy and possess guns. This is unacceptable.

With each new massacre, most recently the one in Orlando, we hope the number of homicides has pushed Americans over the threshold of tolerance for hatred fueled by people who seek to divide the country; for weak gun laws that arm those with hate in their hearts; and for the more than 90 victims of gun killings nationwide each day, affecting people of all backgrounds, sexual orientations, and gender identities.

Assault-style weapons, like the Sig Sauer MCX rifle used in Sunday's Pulse nightclub shooting, can be purchased legally in the state of Florida without a background check – as long as the purchase is made from an unlicensed seller.

Eighteen states have already taken steps to close this dangerous “unlicensed sale loophole.” But in the remaining states, including Florida, anyone can buy a gun from an unlicensed seller with no background check, no questions asked.

Under current U.S. federal law, people on terror watch lists can legally buy guns, exploiting this “terror gap.” Since 2004, more than 2,000 terror suspects have taken advantage of this loophole. But we also recognize how this screening mechanism has the dangerous potential to profile specific communities on the basis of their actual or perceived race, religion, national origin, and other attributes.

Orlando is the sixth mass shooting in the U.S. since January 2009 to be investigated as an act of terrorism by the FBI. Americans are 25 times more likely than people in other developed countries to fall victim to a gun homicide.

The federal background check system established in 1994 by the Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act has blocked more than 2.6 million gun sales to prohibited purchasers at licensed dealers; however, an estimated 40% of gun sales across the U.S. take place without a background check, primarily at gun shows and online.

We urge Congress to make a start towards stronger protections against gun violence nationwide by enacting laws to:

1. Prevent known and suspected terrorists and those convicted of violent hate crimes from legally buying guns.
2. Ensure that criminal background checks are required on all gun sales, including online and at gun shows.

**Signed,**

*Listed alphabetically as of June 16, 2016*

AIDS Alabama  
Americans for Responsible Solutions  
The Arcus Foundation  
Athlete Ally  
Auburn Theological Seminary  
Believe Out Loud  
BiNet USA  
Bisexual Resource Center  
The Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence United with The Million Mom March  
Campaign To Unload

Congregation Beit Simchat Torah  
The David Bohnett Foundation  
Equality Alabama  
Equality Federation  
Equality Florida  
Equality Illinois  
Equality New Mexico  
Equality North Carolina  
Equality Pennsylvania  
Everytown for Gun Safety  
Fair Wisconsin  
Faith in America  
Family Equality Council  
Freedom to Work  
Gay Men's Health Crisis  
GLAAD  
GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders  
GLMA: Health Professionals Advancing LGBT Equality  
GLSEN  
GroundSpark/The Respect for All Project  
GSA Network - Genders & Sexualities Alliance Network  
International Imperial Court System  
Lambda Legal  
LPAC  
National Black Justice Coalition  
National Center for Lesbian Rights  
National Center for Transgender Equality  
National Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce  
National LGBTQ Task Force  
NMAC: National Minority AIDS Council  
National Religious Leadership Roundtable  
New York City Anti-Violence Project  
One Colorado  
Open and Affirming Coalition of the United Church of Christ  
Out & Equal Workplace Advocates  
OutServe-SLDN  
Pride at Work  
Services & Advocacy for GLBT Elders (SAGE)  
Stonewall National Museum & Archives  
Transgender Legal Defense & Education Fund  
The Trevor Project  
United Church of Christ Justice and Witness Ministries  
Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual (WATER)

**Campaign hashtags**

#DisarmHate, #WeAreOrlando