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Press Release

Americans Against Gun Violence Responds to Mass Shooting at Capital Gazette in Annapolis, Maryland

Sacramento, California, June 29, 2018: Americans Against Gun Violence extends heartfelt sympathy to the families, friends, and colleagues of the five people killed, including the newspaper editor, three journalists, and another staff member, in the mass shooting on June 28, 2018, at the office of the Capital Gazette in Annapolis, Maryland. At the same time, we agree with the statement by the late Senator Thomas Dodd of Connecticut who said in a press release and a speech on the floor of the U.S. Senate 50 years ago:

Pious condolences will no longer suffice....Quarter measures and half measures will no longer suffice....The time has now come that we must adopt stringent gun control legislation comparable to the legislation in force in virtually every civilized country of the world.¹

The regular occurrence of mass shootings is eminently preventable. The United States is the only high income democratic country in the world in which such mass shootings occur on a regular basis.² The overall homicide rate in the United States is 10 times higher than the average rate in other high income democratic countries, driven by a gun homicide rate that is 25 times higher.³ The reasons for the extraordinarily high rate of gun violence in the United States are clear. Our country's rates of mental illness and substance abuse⁴ are comparable to the rates in other high income democratic countries.⁵ We do not have a more violent society in general. Our rate of assault by any means is lower than the assault rate in most other developed countries.⁶ The reasons for our extraordinarily high rate of gun violence are our extraordinarily lax gun control laws as compared with all other high income democratic countries, the associated extraordinarily high number of guns in circulation in our country,⁷ and what Senator Dodd referred to 50 years ago as "the ridiculous ease" with which almost anyone in our country can acquire almost any kind of a gun.⁸

In every other high income democratic country of the world, the burden of proof is on the person seeking to acquire a gun to show why he or she needs one, and that he or she is of good character and able to handle a gun safely; not on society to prove why he or she should not have a gun.⁹ Moreover, recognizing that there is no net protective value from civilian gun ownership, most other developed countries do not accept "self-defense" as a reason for owning a firearm.¹⁰ The alleged shooter in the Capital Gazette mass shooting, Jarrod Ramos, had pleaded guilty to misdemeanor harassment of a young woman who refused his advances

in 2011.¹¹ He filed an unsuccessful defamation of character lawsuit against the Capital Gazette after the Gazette published a critical – but accurate – account of his conviction. Ramos subsequently made numerous threats against Gazette staff on social media.¹² He was nevertheless able to legally purchase the pump action shotgun he used in the Capital Gazette mass shooting under lax federal and Maryland state gun laws.¹³ A person with this background almost certainly would not have been able to acquire a gun in any other high income democratic country in the world.

Other high income democratic countries have reacted swiftly and definitively to prevent mass shootings. For example, following a mass shooting committed with assault rifles in the resort town of Port Arthur, Australia, in 1996, the Australian government took just 13 days to agree to ban civilian ownership not only of all automatic and semi-automatic rifles, but also of all pump-action shotguns of the type used by Ramos in the Capital Gazette mass shooting yesterday and by Dimitrios Pagourtzis in the Santa Fe High School mass shooting in May of this year.¹⁴ There have been no further mass shootings in Australia since 1996. Despite scores of horrific mass shootings in the United States over the past half century, the U.S. federal government has failed to take any definitive action to prevent these massacres from recurring on a regular basis.

It is the position of Americans Against Gun Violence that the United States should adopt stringent gun control laws comparable to the laws that have long been in effect in every other high income democratic country of the world. If such laws had already been in place, it's exceedingly unlikely that the Capital Gazette mass shooting would have occurred. Until such laws are in place, when the next horrific mass shooting occurs in our country, we shouldn't ask ourselves why these tragedies keep occurring. Rather, we should ask ourselves why we fail to take the obvious steps necessary to prevent them.

¹ Thomas Dodd, "Text of Speech by Senator Thomas Dodd on Floor of U.S. Senate: The Sickness of Violence and the Need for Gun Control Legislation" (Office of Senator Thomas Dodd, June 11, 1968), http://thedoddcenter.uconn.edu/asc/research/gun_control.htm#; Thomas Dodd, "Press Release: Pious Condolences Will No Longer Suffice" (Office of Senator Thomas Dodd, June 10, 1968), http://thedoddcenter.uconn.edu/asc/research/gun_control.htm#.

² Max Fisher and Josh Keller, "What Explains U.S. Mass Shootings? International Comparisons Suggest an Answer," *The New York Times*, November 7, 2017, sec. Americas, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/07/world/americas/mass-shootings-us-international.html>.

³ Erin Grinshteyn and David Hemenway, "Violent Death Rates: The US Compared with Other High-Income OECD Countries, 2010," *The American Journal of Medicine* 129, no. 3 (March 1, 2016): 266–73, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amjmed.2015.10.025>.

⁴ L. Andrade et al., "Cross-National Comparisons of the Prevalences and Correlates of Mental Disorders.," *Bulletin of the World Health Organization* 78 (2000): 413–425.

⁵ "OECD Income Distribution Database (IDD): Gini, Poverty, Income, Methods and Concepts," OECD, accessed November 29, 2017, [//www.compareyourcountry.org/inequality?lg=en](http://www.compareyourcountry.org/inequality?lg=en).

⁶ "Assault Rate in OECD Countries: 2013 or Latest Year Available, % of Adults Assaulted in the Past 12 Months," OECD, accessed September 18, 2016, <https://figure.nz/chart/yd9BelUz6xKvNpW>.

⁷ Jen Christensen, “Why the US Has the Most Mass Shootings,” CNN, November 28, 2016, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/08/27/health/u-s-most-mass-shootings/index.html>; “Guns in the United States — Firearms, Gun Law and Gun Control,” GunPolicy.org, accessed June 12, 2017, <http://www.gunpolicy.org/firearms/region/united-states>.

⁸ Dodd, “Quarter Measures and Half Measures Will No Longer Suffice”; Dodd, “Pious Condolences Will No Longer Suffice.”

⁹ “Guns in the United States — Firearms, Gun Law and Gun Control.”

¹⁰ Rebecca Peters, “Welcome, Americans Against Gun Violence: A Message from Australian Human Rights Medal Winner Rebecca Peters,” *Americans Against Gun Violence* (blog), June 12, 2016, <http://aagunv.org/welcome-americans-against-gun-violence-a-message-from-australian-human-rights-medal-winner-rebecca-peters/>.

¹¹ Timothy Williams and Amy Harmon, “Maryland Shooting Suspect Had Long-Running Dispute With Newspaper,” *The New York Times*, June 29, 2018, sec. U.S., <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/29/us/jarrold-ramos-annapolis-shooting.html>.

¹² Williams and Harmon.

¹³ Meg Wagner, Veronica Rocha, and Brian Ries, “Deadly Shooting at Maryland Newspaper: Live Updates,” CNN Live Updates, June 28, 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/us/live-news/maryland-newspaper-shooting/index.html>.

¹⁴ Rebecca Peters, “Rational Firearm Regulation: Evidence-Based Gun Laws in Australia,” in *Reducing Gun Violence in America: Informing Policy with Evidence and Analysis* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), 195–204.