



## **Lemkin Institute Statement on the Lunar New Year Massacre in Monterey Park, California**

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In the United States, the Lunar New Year opened with another mass shooting, at the Star Ballroom Dance Studio in Monterey Park, California, which killed eleven people and injured nine. This is the thirty-third mass shooting in the United States this year. A motive for the shooting is still unclear. Survivors interviewed by the press have told of a man with a long gun and rolls of ammunition shooting indiscriminately into the crowd at the local ballroom and dance club. The man was recently identified as 72-year-old Huu Can Tran. He died by suicide in his van shortly after the shooting.

Mass shootings have become the norm in American society since the 1990s and government authorities have all but given up attempting to address them amidst deadlock between the two US political parties over the subject of gun control.

The Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention calls on the US government to take responsibility for its failure to curb mass shootings in the country and to start the difficult process of forcefully standing up to the gun lobby and arms manufacturers. We also call on the same authorities to address the health care crisis and to ensure that every American has access to high quality physical and mental health services free of charge.

**However, while easy access to guns and lack of access to mental health care – the two causes of gun violence most often cited by experts – are important parts of the problem and must be addressed, *the frequency with which Americans resort to mass murder is indicative of deeper cultural problems in the country.*** American society must reckon with the enduring dynamics that emerge from its violent history. When mass shooters attack groups of people, whether based on the group's identity, their marginalization, or their vulnerability, they are reenacting power scenarios they have constructed using the tools and traditions offered by the American experiment. The frontier model and the plantation complex are two models of power that continue to take the lives of innocent people across the nation. These models of power are deeply imbricated with the misogynist and racist dynamics of European settler colonialism and slavery.

*The Lemkin Institute therefore calls on Americans of all walks of life, as well as members of the leadership in both parties, to stand up for real change by taking responsibility for the country's history of mass atrocity.*

*We further call on the American people and the American government to launch a nationwide truth and reconciliation commission to address the country's past and how it haunts the present. This is a hard process, but one that is absolutely necessary to transform the violent institutions of settler colonialism and plantation slavery into the possibility of positive peace. Most recently, the groundwork for such a process was started by a nationwide wave of protests after the murder of George Floyd by a police officer in Minneapolis, Minnesota in May 2020. The US government's decision to respond to that social movement with violence and brutality demonstrated its resistance to positive transformation. Wise leaders in the country would offer the leadership, the vision, and the courage necessary to move the United States into an organized national dialogue that can heal the wounds of the past and address enduring injustices, so that new models for addressing frustrations, resentments, and grievances can emerge from the bloody realities of the present-day.*

The Lemkin Institute is deeply concerned that the stark individualism of American frontier culture combined with the past forty years of total disinvestment in people and in communities in general are coming together to create a dystopian society in which the meaningful and sustaining aspects of our shared humanity are not only lost but actively targeted for elimination. **Stochastic violence is the consequence of such societal anomie. Americans deserve better.**