

# America Not Immune from Chaos

“Exceptional” America views itself as largely immune from devastating storms and the violence that infect much of the world, but recent weeks show that there is no protection against natural and human catastrophes, writes Ann Wright.

By Ann Wright

Over the past two months – between natural disasters and the actions of a heavily armed gunman firing from a high-rise hotel – citizens of the United States have faced the kind of havoc and violence that people in other parts of the world have been enduring routinely.

Sunday night’s mass shooting in Las Vegas killed 59 and left more than 500 wounded. In previous weeks, American citizens have faced loss of life and massive property damage in Puerto Rico, Florida, Texas, and the U.S. Virgin Islands from Hurricanes Maria, Irma and Harvey.

Of course, other places in the Caribbean suffered their own devastating blows from these major hurricanes: Cuba, Barbuda, Dominica, Antigua, British Virgin Islands, Turks and Caicos, British Virgin Island, St. Martin, Monserrat, Guadeloupe, St. Kitts and Nevis.

In other parts of the world, one-third of Bangladesh has been under water from monsoon rains; parts of Nigeria have been flooded; Mexico has endured killer earthquakes.

And then there is the politically driven violence, such as is occurring in Burma/Myanmar with Rahingya villages burned, thousands murdered, and over 400,000 people fleeing into Bangladesh to escape Buddhist Burmese/Myanmar military attacks.

There is also the seemingly endless devastation from wars waged or encouraged by U.S. policymakers. People in Afghanistan have been enduring war and destruction for 16 years; in Iraq for 13 years; and in Syria for five years.

Afghan, Pakistani, Somali, Iraqi, Syrian and Yemeni civilians have been murdered by U.S. killer drones whose pilots, ironically, are trained 60 miles from Las Vegas, raining hellfire missiles from above in the same sort of sudden violence as people in Las Vegas suffered Sunday night.

Americans are now face-to-face with the human and environmental violence that many parts of the world have experienced albeit with those stories confined to briefs packages on the back pages of U.S. newspapers.

So, in just the past month or so, Americans have been shocked by the ravages of gun violence inflicted by a committed sniper and the violence of nature's environmental reaction to global warming made worse by careless human behavior releasing carbon dioxide and other pollutants into the atmosphere.

U.S. wars killing people around the world and the glorification of this organized violence as an answer to geopolitical problems can't help but influence the thinking of some troubled individuals who may see random violence as the answer to their own personal problems. Easy access to guns in the United States is simply out of control.

Yet, corporate lobbying and political pressures have encouraged Congress and the Trump administration to deny both the connection between the accessibility of powerful weapons and mass shootings and between the burning of fossil fuels and global warming.

But it turns out that this refusal to face difficult realities will not shield Americans from horrific consequences. America will not be "exceptional" in the sense of having special exemption from the destructive forces unleashed upon the world whether by war and violence or by environmental degradation.

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