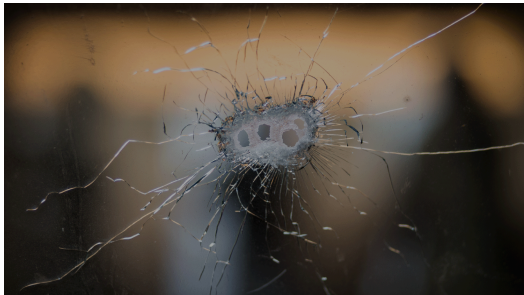


REPORT

Murder and Extremism in the United States in 2023



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Executive Summary

- Every year, individuals with ties to different extreme causes and movements kill people in the United States; the ADL Center on Extremism (COE) tracks these murders. Extremists regularly commit murders in the service of their ideology, to further a group or gang they may belong to, or even while engaging in traditional, non-ideological criminal activities.
- In 2023, domestic extremists killed at least 17 people in the U.S., in seven separate incidents. This represents a sharp decrease from the 27 extremist-related murders ADL has documented for 2022—which itself was a decrease from the 35 identified in 2021. It continues a trend of fewer extremist-related killings after a five-year span of 47-79 extremist-related murders per year (2015-2019). One reason for the trend is the decrease in recent years of extremist-related killings by domestic Islamist extremists and left-wing extremists.

Congress: Support the

Creation of a National Domestic Terrorism Director

Take action today by joining ADL in advocating for the federal government to appoint a National Director of Domestic Terrorism and combat right-wing terrorism in our country.

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- The 2023 murder totals include two extremist-related shootings sprees, both by white supremacists, which together accounted for 11 of the 17 deaths. A third shooting spree, also by an apparent white supremacist, wounded several people but luckily did not result in fatalities.
- All the extremist-related murders in 2023 were committed by right-wing extremists of various kinds, with 15 of the 17 killings involving perpetrators or accomplices with white supremacist connections. This is the second year in a row that right-wing extremists have been connected to all identified extremist-related killings.
- Two of the incidents from 2023 involved women playing some role in the killing or its aftermath. This report includes a special section that examines the role played by women in deadly extremist violence in the United States by analyzing 50 incidents from the past 20 years in which women were involved in some fashion in extremist-related killings.

Death and Extremism

Each year, people in the United States are killed by individuals with ties to extreme movements and ideologies. Often, these deaths go largely unnoticed except by families and friends of victims, but some killings—such as mass shootings—can shock the nation. Since 2008, the ADL Center on Extremism (COE) has worked to identify and track as many as possible of these domestic extremist-related murders, regardless of the motive or the ideology, and to identify past extremist-related murders dating back to 1970.

Domestic extremists of many types pose significant problems in the U.S., from incitement and harassment to hate crimes and terrorism, but reliable data is often scarce, and this can make it more difficult to understand or respond to issues related to extremism. Since 2015, COE has used its data on extremist-related murders to release annual reports on such killings to help people understand one of the most severe threats that extremists can pose: the taking of human lives.

Domestic extremists—extremists who are U.S. citizens or longtime permanent residents—regularly commit murders to further their causes, using deadly force against perceived enemies ranging from government officials to religious or racial minorities. These are the extremist-related killings with which people may be most familiar.

In addition, extremists also often commit murders in the service of a group or

gang they may belong to—targeting a rival group member, for example, or even a suspected informant in their own ranks. Extremists can also commit murders while engaging in non-ideological criminal activities ranging from home invasions to domestic violence. This is especially true for some types of extremists, such as members of white supremacist prison gangs, which also operate as organized crime.

In some cases, the motive for murders connected to extremists may never be discovered, leaving one to speculate on the reason for the violence.

This report includes all these different types of killings, as each is important for different reasons. The data we provide is transparent, so it is possible to distinguish ideologically motivated killings from other types.

In recent years, extremists from the far right (such as white supremacists or sovereign citizens), the far left (such as Black nationalists or anarchists), Islamist extremist movements, and other, more obscure causes or groups have all committed murders in the United States. Killings connected to all such ideologies are included in these annual reports if such murders occur in a given year.

Each report also contains updated statistics from previous years, where applicable, as the extremist connections to some killings can sometimes take months or years to emerge. Our report on extremist murders in 2021 initially identified 29 extremist-related killings for that year, while our report for 2022 identified 25 murders. Our most recent statistics now stand at 35 extremist-related murders for 2021 and 27 for 2022. Thus, the figures given here for 2023 are also likely to increase over time.

It is important to note these statistics are just one metric of extremist violence and crime. Every year, extremists in the U.S. are involved in terrorist plots and acts, armed standoffs, shootouts with police, hate crimes, scams and cons, threats and harassment and a wide variety of other criminal acts. In late 2023, for example, ADL released a comprehensive report on right-wing extremist terrorism in the United States from 2017-2022 that includes many incidents not detailed in these annual murder-related reports because they did not result in fatalities.^[1]

ADL's regularly updated [Hate, Extremism, Antisemitism and Terrorism \(H.E.A.T.\) map](#) keeps track of some of the more serious of these extremist-related incidents, including extremist murders but also terrorist incidents and extremist-related shootouts. It also contains other important types of data related to hate or extremism, such as white supremacist events and propaganda distribution,

antisemitic incidents, and anti-LGBTQ+ incidents across the United States.^[2]

Extremist-related Killings in 2023 Decrease Sharply



In a sharp drop from the previous year, domestic extremists killed at least 17 people in the U.S. in 2023. This is the second year in a row that the number of murders has dropped: 2022 saw 27 extremist-related killings, while 2021 had 35. The year 2023 represents a long-term low; one must go back to 2004 to find a year with fewer extremist-caused deaths (14).

Extremist murder statistics from recent years reveal a clear trend: from a high during the years 2015 and 2016, the number of extremist-related killings in the United States has generally been decreasing in the years since then. One of the primary reasons for this decline lies in the reason numbers in 2015 and 2016 were so high: in the mid-2010s, extremist murders were committed by a variety of different types of extremists, including right-wing extremists such as white supremacists and anti-government extremists, left-wing extremists such as Black nationalists, and domestic Islamist extremists. Moreover, extremists from all these sources conducted mass shooting attacks in the mid-2010s. As a result, the total casualty numbers were particularly high for those years. However, since then, murders committed by left-wing extremists and domestic Islamist extremists have dropped substantially. In the past five years, for example, left-wing extremists have been involved in only three killings, and domestic Islamist extremists have participated in only one. In other words, the extremist murders of recent years have overwhelmingly been committed by far-right extremists. While the decline in the number of deaths from those other types of extremism is welcome, the fact that the threat of lethal far-right violence remains significant is disturbing.

However, even when examining murders by far-right extremists alone, the murders of 2023 are still quite low. Again, one must go all the way back to 2004 to find a lower number of killings (14) committed by right-wing extremists. One reason for this low total in 2023 is that some incidents were less lethal than they could have been. One of the most important determiners over the past 10 years as to whether a year records higher or lower numbers of extremist-related deaths is the presence or absence of deadly shooting sprees or (more rarely) other mass-killing incidents. The Center on Extremism tracks extremist-related mass killings, which it defines as incidents of extremist violence in which at least four people were killed, and attempted mass killings, defined as incidents in which the perpetrator(s) attempted to cause mass casualties, but killed three or fewer people.

The year 2023 saw one mass killing and two attempted mass killings by right-wing extremists. One was the mass shooting conducted at a mall in Allen, Texas, by a white supremacist in May 2023, which resulted in eight fatalities, a significant killing event that by itself accounted for almost half of the 17 extremist-related killings in 2023. The second incident, a similar shooting spree in August 2023 at a supermarket in Jacksonville, Florida, also by a white supremacist, resulted in only three deaths—a much lower figure, as tragic as it was. In the third incident, there were no fatal casualties at all: in November 2023, a man said by the FBI to have been “at least partially inspired” by racially motivated extremism wounded four people in a shooting attack at a Walmart in a Dayton, Ohio, suburb before killing himself. All the victims who were shot survived. Had either of the gunmen in Florida and Ohio been able to kill more people, the 2023 totals would have been far higher.^[3]



There is another statistic in which the murder totals for 2023 were unusually low, and that is in the total number of deadly incidents. The 17 people killed by extremists this past year were killed in only seven incidents. In contrast, during

the previous 20 years (2003-2022), yearly incidents averaged between 21 and 22. One must go all the way back to the year 2000, which saw just four deadly incidents totaling 10 deaths, to find a year with fewer deadly incidents than 2023. The reason why so few deadly incidents occurred in 2023 is not clear.



Firearms were the weapon of choice in almost all the killings in 2023 (94%). This has been a consistent fact of extremist violence for years. Although many people may think of extremists as employing weapons such as bombs and explosives, it is firearms—plentiful, accessible and often laxly regulated in the U.S.—that are actually the deadly weapon of choice for extremists in the United States. Indeed, in each of the past six years, 80% or more of the victims of deadly extremist violence were killed with firearms, a consequence of the country's failure to take meaningful action to deal with gun violence.



It is important to note that extremist-related killings comprise only a small number of the total homicides in the U.S. each year. However, extremist killings can have a disproportionate impact on a community or even the entire country, especially when they take the form of a hate crime, terrorist attack, or mass shooting. The white supremacist mass shootings in recent years targeting

Blacks, Jews, Latinos, and the LGBTQ+ community stand as a grim reminder of this fact.^[4]

Exploring the Numbers

The ADL Center on Extremism tracks domestic extremist-related murders connected to all types of extremism, including right-wing extremism, left-wing extremism and domestic Islamist extremism, as well as less common forms.

When, as sometimes happens, extremists adhere to or are influenced by more than one extremist movement, they are categorized here by their apparent “primary” ideology, i.e., the ideology that seems most important to them, is the most recently followed or, if applicable, that seems most directly related to the murders they committed. This is done not to obscure the presence of multiple belief systems but to make quantification more practical.

The trend in recent years has been for the great majority of extremist-related murders to be connected to some form of right-wing extremism. That is true for 2023 as well; for the second year in a row, all of the murders identified were tied to right-wing extremism. Overwhelmingly—in 15 of 17 murders (88%)—the killings were connected to white supremacists as perpetrators or accomplices. Of the two killings not linked to white supremacist ideologies, the suspect in one was a member of the far-right Proud Boys, which the ADL does not categorize as a white supremacist group (though some of its members are white supremacists). The suspect also reportedly has a Three Percenter tattoo, a symbol connected to the militia movement. The suspected perpetrator of the other murder showed evidence of anti-LGBTQ+ extremism and a range of other far-right beliefs.



In the long term as well as the short, extremists from the far right have been responsible for the bulk of extremist-related murders. Over the past decade, right-

wing extremists have committed the majority of such killings in all years but one: 2016, the year of the shooting spree at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, Florida, conducted by a person motivated by Islamist extremism. Of the 442 people killed at the hands of extremists from 2014 to 2023, 336 (or 76%) were killed by right-wing extremists of one sort or another.^[5]



Far-right extremists in the U.S. commit such a large proportion of murders for a range of reasons. It is not that only right-wing extremists are violent. Left-wing extremists, for example, engage in violence ranging from assaults to fire-bombings and arsons, but in recent decades have only occasionally targeted people with deadly violence. A left-wing protester did shoot a Georgia state trooper in January 2023 before being killed in return fire, but the injury was not fatal for the officer. Extremists on the left have been more likely to attack property than people. Domestic Islamist extremists in the U.S. have proven willing to engage in deadly violence—including shooting sprees and vehicular attacks—but such incidents decreased significantly after 2017, primarily due to the decline of the terrorist movement ISIS/ISIL, whose calls to violence inspired many plots and attacks. Arrests related to domestic Islamist extremists continue to occur in the United States but are primarily cases involving providing material support to terrorist groups abroad.^[6]

In contrast, the far right in the United States has grown rather than declined in recent years and has always had adherents willing to attack human targets as well as property. Moreover, the far right is large, comprising many movements, including multiple types of white supremacist and anti-government extremist movements, as well as a variety of single-issue extremists and conspiracy-based movements. Most of these movements have some degree of association with violence, up to and including terrorist plots and attacks, as well as other deadly violence. Even the newest extreme right-wing movements to emerge in recent years, such as toxic masculinity extremists, QAnon adherents and anti-

government boogaloos, quickly developed violent track records. Some segments of the extreme right, such as accelerationist white supremacists, explicitly urge their adherents to conduct deadly attacks.^[7]



Another reason why more killings are connected to right-wing extremists is that some types of right-wing extremists frequently commit non-ideological violence as well as ideological violence. For the narrow purposes of this report, COE defines ideological murders as killings directed against perceived enemies, as well as other people, such as police or bystanders, who may get in the way of or try to stop such attacks. The Center on Extremism defines non-ideological murders as murders for which the motive is unclear, murders committed to benefit an extremist group or members thereof (such as killing internal or external rivals or suspected informants) and murders committed for traditional motives such as greed, anger or jealousy. These can include domestic violence murders as well as murders related to criminal enterprises such as drug dealing, in which many white supremacist gangs engage.

All these types of murders are conservatively classified in this report as “non-ideological,” even though it is possible that extremism still played at least some role in many. It is important to account for such killings, as to do otherwise would offer a misleadingly small sense of the dangers that extremists pose—after all, a murder is a murder. Moreover, there is considerable public interest in some of these subjects—such as the link between extremism and domestic violence.^[8]

Over the past decade, ideological and non-ideological killings by extremists have been roughly equivalent (232 to 210), with most of the latter coming at the hands of right-wing extremists, primarily white supremacists. One reason for this is that white supremacist prison gangs are particularly violent, committing hate-related murders, murders related to criminal enterprises such as illegal drugs, and murders of their own gang members and associates for reasons that may include

such perceived offenses as breaking rules, attempting to leave a gang, or being a suspected informant. Anti-government sovereign citizens have also been responsible for numerous non-ideological killings in recent years. This is partly because, since the late 1990s, sovereign citizen ideology has increasingly spread within the nation's jails and prisons, including to people with violent histories.

It is worth noting that the statistics in this report may undercount the number of non-ideological killings by *other* types of extremists simply because their extremist ties may be less likely to be exposed in the investigation or news coverage of a non-ideological killing. In contrast, a white supremacist who commits a non-ideological killing may be identified as such by his or her tattoos or perhaps a gang association previously documented by law enforcement or corrections officials. Similarly, a sovereign citizen arrested for a murder is likely to use the distinctive pseudo-legal language and tactics of that movement and may attract media attention in doing so.

In 2023, only four of the 17 extremist-related murders appear clearly to have been committed in whole or part for ideological motives. Some of the remaining killings were committed for non-ideological reasons, while the motive behind the deadliest incident in 2023 involving an extremist, the mass shooting in Allen, Texas, remains unclear. Extremist ideology may or may not have played a role in that attack, which left eight people dead. The shooter chose to wear a patch during the attack that featured a Nazi SS shield symbol and the acronym RWDS, standing for "right wing death squad."^[9]

The Killings

Right-wing extremists commit most extremist-related murders each year, but 2023 was the second year in a row in which far-right extremists committed all the documented murders. Only one of the incidents involved an extremist known to belong to an organized group (the Proud Boys), although the perpetrator in another incident had belonged to a group in the distant past. Unusually, there were no killings identified in 2023 as being connected to white supremacist prison gangs, which are typically responsible for numerous killings each year. However, murders committed by such gangs can sometimes take years to make it into the public record as such.

As in 2022, the deadliest incidents in 2023 were attempted mass shootings, both by white supremacists: the Allen, Texas, mall shooting in May and the store shooting in Jacksonville, Florida, in August. Together, those two incidents were

responsible for 11 of the 17 (65%) of the extremist-related deaths this past year. Only one other incident involved multiple deaths, an August 2023 incident in which a white supremacist allegedly killed a man and a woman in their home in Dillingham, Alaska. The motive for those murders is not known.

Four of the killings in 2023 had clear hate-related motives. In August, a far-right extremist with strong anti-LGBTQ+ prejudices allegedly killed a shop owner in Lake Arrowhead, California, following a confrontation with the owner over the rainbow Pride flag she displayed outside her business. That same month, a white supremacist opened fire at a Dollar General store in a Black neighborhood in Jacksonville, Florida, killing three people before shooting himself. Following the attack, police announced that they had discovered racist writings composed by the gunman. However, it was not until January 2024 that they made his written manifesto public. The manifesto made clear that the Jacksonville shooting was an accelerationist white supremacist attack targeting Black people, much like another such shooter had targeted Black victims at a supermarket in Buffalo, New York, in 2022. The screed also revealed the shooter's extreme anti-LGBTQ+ hatred, as well as xenophobia and antisemitism, and the shooter's hope that other people would follow in his footsteps and launch more attacks.^[10]

The motives in other 2023 killings remain unclear or were non-ideological, with the latter involving motives such as romantic rivalry or conflicts among family or non-family housemates.

Finally, it is worth noting one type of extremist-related murder that did *not* occur in 2023: no police officers or corrections officers were killed by extremists this past year. This is the second year in a row that no such killings have occurred. Since 1990, there have only been four years in which extremists did not kill at least one police officer or corrections official.



Extremism, Murder, and Women: A Closer Look

Of the seven deadly extremist-related incidents of 2023, two involved women in some capacity. In June 2023, police in Oregon arrested Proud Boy Allen Lloyd Swindler and his girlfriend, Sierra Sioux Jennings, charging them with second-degree murder in the death of a man who had previously been romantically involved with Jennings. In August, law enforcement officers in Phoenix, Arizona, arrested three people following the murder of a gay man beaten to death outside his home, charging one man with second-degree murder and a husband and wife with hindering the investigation. The husband had white supremacist ties.

Overall, women are far more likely to be victims rather than perpetrators in extremist-related murders. Many women have been killed by extremists during ideological attacks—including one of three people killed in the Jacksonville mass shooting—while others have been murdered for non-ideological reasons, including domestic violence. However, though most perpetrators of extremist violence are male, women do play a role in some extremist-related killings, whether participating directly in an attack or playing the role of an accomplice through actions such as helping to clean up a crime scene or to hide evidence. The role that women play in such killings is worth a deeper examination.

Of 418 incidents of extremist-related killings over the past 20 years, ADL has identified 50 incidents (12%) in which one or more women were charged with and/or pleaded guilty to murder or manslaughter, or some lesser crime related to such killings. In these 50 incidents, a total of 86 people were killed. Of these 86, 36 people (42%) were victims of ideological killings, while 50 (58%) were killed in circumstances in which the motive was either unknown or non-ideological.

In slightly over half of the incidents (26 of 50, or 52%), the woman or women participated directly in the killing or in violence that led up to the killing. In 2013, for example, a white supremacist couple, Jeremy and Christine Moody, who had fixated on killing sex offenders, tracked down and murdered a registered sex offender in South Carolina, along with his wife. Jeremy shot the two victims, and then Christine stabbed them. The couple was eventually convicted of murder, kidnapping, and first-degree burglary and given consecutive life sentences. In 27 of the 50 incidents (54%), women were convicted of first- or second-degree murder or manslaughter or (in cases that have not yet been tried) were charged with those offenses. In most of the other incidents, women were charged with, convicted of, and/or pleaded down to offenses such as kidnapping, obstruction

of justice, hindering an investigation, accessory after the fact to murder, and evidence tampering, among others. In several cases, typically terrorist attacks, the women were not charged at all because responding police shot and killed them.^[11]

Almost all of the incidents (48 of 50, or 96%) involved right-wing extremists, though in some of the incidents, the women involved may not themselves have subscribed to extremist ideologies, though other participants did. White supremacists were involved in 39 of the incidents (78%) and 53 of the deaths, while anti-government extremists (such as sovereign citizens or people with the ideology of the militia movement) were involved in seven incidents (14%) and 12 deaths. Other types of far-right extremism were connected to two incidents (4%) and three deaths. The single most deadly incident, however, was perpetrated by domestic Islamist extremists claiming to support the Islamic State terrorist group. In December 2015, a married couple, Syed Farook and Tashfeen Malik, attacked people at a government office building in San Bernardino, California, in a terrorist shooting spree that left 14 people dead and 21 more wounded. They were eventually killed in a shootout with police as they tried to escape. A second high-casualty incident also had no connections to far-right extremism. In December 2019, another couple, David Anderson and Francine Graham, engaged in a shooting spree primarily targeting a kosher supermarket in Jersey City, New Jersey, killing four people and wounding another before being killed by police. The pair were adherents of a fringe religious sect, Black Hebrew Israelism, with a connection to antisemitism.^[12]

Of the 50 incidents involving women, six (12%) were terrorist attacks, resulting in a total of 27 deaths. Seven (14%) of the 50 incidents involved domestic violence—typically killing a spouse or partner—or deadly child abuse. Almost half of the incidents (24 of 50, or 48%) involved white supremacist gangs, primarily white supremacist prison gangs, although there were a few incidents related to racist skinhead gangs. These killings involved members or associates of groups such as the Universal Aryan Brotherhood, the Aryan Brotherhood of Texas, the Aryan Circle, the Ghostface Gangsters, and others. They illustrate the important role that women play in almost all white supremacist prison gangs, even though only a few such gangs (such as the Aryan Circle) allow women as formal members.

Women were the sole perpetrators in only a small minority of the incidents (3 of 50, or 6%). All three of these incidents involved anti-government extremists. In one case, a woman involved in the militia movement in Texas shot and killed her ex-husband and stepdaughter in an incident of domestic violence in 2014. In two other cases, sovereign citizens were involved: a Georgia woman who killed a law

enforcement officer in 2021 before being killed in return fire, and a Florida sovereign citizen and QAnon supporter, Neely Petrie-Blanchard, who allegedly killed the leader of the sovereign citizen group she belonged to because she had come to believe he was colluding with the government.^[13]



It was far more common for women to participate in extremist-related murders with one or more others. In 19 of the 50 incidents (38%), male and female romantic partners engaged in the killings together, a phenomenon sometimes referred to as “Bonnie and Clyde” killings. In 2014, for example, a married couple, Jerad and Amanda Miller, who were anti-government extremists, deliberately assassinated two Las Vegas police officers while they were eating lunch, then went to a nearby Walmart, where they killed a third person before barricading themselves in preparation for a final shootout with police. Police killed Jerad Miller, after which Amanda died of a self-inflicted gunshot. In 2016, in another such incident in Gresham, Oregon, a white supremacist prison gang member, Russell Courtier, deliberately ran over a young Black man with his car while his girlfriend, Colleen Hunt, yelled, “Get him, baby!” and “Run him over!” Courtier was convicted of hate crime murder and sentenced to life in prison, while Hunt received a 10-year sentence for first-degree manslaughter. In a small number of incidents (3 of 50, or 6%), a woman and a non-romantic partner (typically a family member) took part in a killing.^[14]

In half of the 50 incidents, the woman or women involved with the killings were part of a group of three or more people. In many such cases, the people involved in the killing were members or associates of a white supremacist prison gang. In 2011, for instance, members of a Texas-based white supremacist prison gang, the Solid Wood Soldiers, decided to kill one of their own members to avoid retaliation from the Aryan Brotherhood of Texas after that member shot and wounded a member of the rival gang. The victim was shot in the head while inside the residence of a female associate of the Solid Wood Soldiers. She had

also provided the weapon used in the murder. The killers then stuffed his body in the trunk of a car, drove it to a remote location, and set the car on fire. The female associate eventually pleaded guilty to participating in racketeering activity.^[15]

In only one of these incidents did a woman actually lead a group of extremists in committing murder. In 2009, Shawna Forde, an anti-immigrant extremist who headed a small border vigilante group, Minutemen American Defense, took two other members of her group to a residence in Arivaca, Arizona, which they believed housed drug dealers they could rob to finance their cause. During the home invasion, the three killed a father and his nine-year-old daughter and wounded the mother, who survived the attack. Forde was subsequently convicted of murder and sentenced to death. She is currently still on Arizona's "Death Row."^[16]

Together, these incidents illustrate the roles that women can play in lethal extremist violence, from acting as accomplices in killings committed by male perpetrators to directly engaging in deadly terrorist attacks along with male counterparts.

Extremist Murders in 2023: The Incidents

- **Los Angeles, California, December 3, 2023.** In an apparent murder-suicide, Richard Yapelli, Jr., shot the aunt with whom he had been living, set fire to the residence, then shot himself. His aunt had reportedly been preparing to kick him out. In the 1980s, Yapelli had been one of the leaders of Fight for Freedom (FFF), one of several street gangs with white supremacist tendencies that formed from California's punk subculture. Evidence found in the home by police suggested that Yapelli still had white supremacist leanings.^[17]
- **Phoenix, Arizona, August 27, 2023.** Phoenix police officers arrested three people in connection with the murder of a gay man who shared a house with two of the suspects. The victim was allegedly beaten to death in his driveway. One of the suspects, Cory Young, who was not charged with the murder but with hindering the investigation, reportedly has a substantial history in the white supremacist movement. Although the mother of the victim has expressed her belief that the killing was a hate-motivated murder, police have not yet called the murder a hate crime. This report categorizes the incident as having a non-ideological or unknown motive, though that may change if more evidence emerges.^[18]

- **Jacksonville, Florida, August 26, 2023.** White supremacist Ryan Palmeto opened fire at a Dollar General store in a predominantly Black neighborhood in Jacksonville, killing three people before shooting himself. A manifesto written by Palmeto and released by law enforcement in January 2024 revealed that the shooter was inspired by previous white supremacist killers such as Brenton Tarrant, that he espoused hatred towards Blacks, the LGBTQ+ community and Jews, among others, and that he urged others to follow in his footsteps.^[19]
- **Dillingham, Alaska, August 19, 2023.** Law enforcement officers in Alaska arrested Joshua Wahl for the alleged fatal shooting of a man and a woman found dead inside their home. The motivation for the killing is unclear. In a separate case a month after the killings, federal prosecutors charged Wahl with cyberstalking and making threats against a sheriff in Florida who had become well-known for opposing white supremacy. According to federal prosecutors, Wahl had a history of posting antisemitic and anti-law enforcement messages on the discussion board 4chan, including an alleged claim by Wahl that “I also got away with trying to blow up a synagogue.” Wahl purportedly ended that post by claiming that he was “an actual terrorist!”^[20]
- **Lake Arrowhead, California, August 18, 2023.** Travis Ikeguchi allegedly shot and killed a shop owner after an argument over a rainbow Pride flag that the shop owner displayed outside of her shop. During the argument, Ikeguchi allegedly made “disparaging remarks” about the Pride flag and used homophobic slurs against the victim. The alleged shooter had an account on the fringe social network platform Gab, where he posted anti-LGBTQ+ screeds, promoted conspiracy theories and advanced other far-right beliefs.^[21]
- **Canyonville, Oregon, June 25, 2023.** Law enforcement officers in Oregon arrested Proud Boys member Allen Lloyd Swindler after finding the body of a man alongside I-5 near Canyonville. The victim had been shot to death. Police also arrested Swindler’s girlfriend, charging both of them with second-degree murder. The motive for the killing was allegedly a past romantic rivalry. Swindler also sports a Three Percenter tattoo, suggesting an affinity not only for the beliefs of the Proud Boys but also for the anti-government ideology of the militia movement.^[22]
- **Allen, Texas, May 6, 2023.** Gunman Mauricio Garcia opened fire outside a mall in Allen, Texas, killing eight people and wounding seven more before a responding police officer shot and killed him. Evidence on Garcia’s body, handwritten diaries, and online posts by the shooter revealed that Garcia, though himself a dark-skinned Latino, had a clear affiliation with white supremacist ideology and an extreme hostility towards Arabs, Indians and Muslims. He also evinced other far-right beliefs and used some language

specific to the incel subculture. However, it is not clear that extremist motives were behind the decision to launch the attack; the precise motive behind the shooting remains unknown.^[23]

Every year, some murders attract speculation or allegations of extremist connections. The Center on Extremism examines all such incidents for evidence of extremism. Some cases are confirmed as being extremist-connected and included in these statistics. In many instances, though, investigation either reveals no extremist ties or uncovers insufficient evidence to determine an extremist connection. Such incidents are not included in the year's extremist murder statistics. If additional evidence is subsequently revealed for a specific murder that confirms an extremist tie, such a murder would be added to the statistics at that time.

One such case was the January 30, 2023, incident near Nogales, Arizona, in which George Alan Kelly was charged with second-degree murder and aggravated assault for allegedly fatally shooting an undocumented migrant passing through Kelly's property near the border. Kelly has claimed that he only fired warning shots. Citing inflammatory text messages from Kelly, prosecutors in the case have claimed that he was motivated by "his political views, ideas and animosity toward migrants." While Kelly may possibly have shared the ideas of the anti-immigrant extremist movement, ADL has not found enough evidence to confirm that this is indeed the case, and mere hostility towards migrants would not be enough to qualify as extremist. This determination may change if more information comes out during Kelly's trial.^[24]

In a second case, it is not the background of the alleged killer that is at issue but whether or not there was an intent to kill. On March 31, 2023, a Montana woman, Sunny K. White, allegedly hit and killed a Native American woman with her vehicle while driving late at night. More than half a year later, authorities charged White with vehicular homicide while under the influence, as well as felony accident, criminal possession of dangerous drugs, criminal child endangerment, and criminal possession of dangerous drugs. Following the initial incident, the Montana Human Rights Network (MHRN) stated that it had information "that lent credibility to claims that [White] ascribes to extremist, white nationalist ideology." MHRN, as well as various news outlets, also noted that White's young children were named "Aryan" and "Nation," in reference to the former northern Idaho white supremacist group of that name. The young children were in the vehicle when White allegedly struck the victim. Moreover, the officer who first questioned White believed that she was under the influence of opioids; police allegedly recovered syringes, Narcan and methamphetamine from the vehicle. ADL only counts incidents of vehicular homicide as extremist-related killings if there was an actual

intent to hit or harm the victim. In this case, it is not clear whether the deadly incident was intentional or was primarily the result of impairment. Presently, ADL is not including this incident in its list of extremist-related killings, but new information might change this determination in the future.^[25]

Finally, a third death that does not appear in the report is that of Paul Kessler, a 69-year-old Jewish man who died during a confrontation between pro-Israeli and pro-Palestinian demonstrators in Ventura County, California, on November 5, 2023. Loay Alnaji, a computer science community college professor, was subsequently arrested and charged with involuntary manslaughter and battery. Prosecutors alleged that the two got into a physical altercation, during which Kessler fell to the ground, hitting his head and sustaining a fatal injury. According to the New York Post, prosecutors also said “the evidence did not support a conclusion that Alnaji deliberately killed Kessler.” Investigating the incident, ADL did not find reliable evidence of extremist connections on the part of Alnaji. If additional information of extremism comes to light, this determination may change.^[26]

Notes on Methodology and Sources

The Center on Extremism has compiled a list of well over 1,000 known murders/killings perpetrated since 1970—essentially the post-Civil Rights era—by people associated with a variety of domestic extremist movements. These are primarily murders committed by American extremists on U.S. soil, though a few cases involving American extremists murdering other Americans abroad are also included (such as at Jonestown in Guyana). Fatalities in foreign terrorist attacks on U.S. soil, such as the December 2019 shootings at Naval Air Station Pensacola by a radicalized Saudi military aviation student, are not included. Such incidents are, however, rare.

Because extremist connections to some murders can take months or years to be revealed, statistics for the most recent years will inevitably be revised upward in future years. For example, COE’s report on extremist-related murders in 2022 counted 25 murders, but within a year, COE uncovered two more extremist-related murders from 2022 and revised its numbers accordingly. This happens every year, so a similar upward revision is likely to occur for the 2023 statistics. Generally speaking, the chances for upward revisions drop considerably after around five years.

The incidents are derived primarily from public sources, leading to some

limitations regarding cross-era or cross-movement comparisons. Regarding cross-era comparisons, it is generally more difficult to find reliable information on extremist-related killings from the 1970s and 1980s, so it may not be as meaningful to compare figures from earlier eras to figures from more recent decades as figures for the earlier eras are likely to undercount deaths.

The main limitation of cross-movement comparisons is that extremist connections to killings are easier to determine for some movements than for others. For example, white supremacists, who often display many racist and white supremacist tattoos or may be documented as white supremacists by gang investigators or corrections officials, are frequently easily identifiable. Sovereign citizens are also often easily identifiable because of the unique language they use in their utterances and documents. In contrast, it may be more difficult for police or media to identify other extremist associations that a suspect might have. This issue comes up more often with killings that have a non-ideological or unknown motive; in such cases, police may not necessarily be actively searching for extremist associations at all. It is likely that non-ideological murders committed by extremists other than white supremacists and sovereign citizens are underrepresented in ADL's data.

In addition, because murders behind bars often attract little or no media attention and are typically not publicized by prison officials, incidents of prison-based deadly violence committed by adherents of all extremist movements are likely under-represented.

Jails and prisons pose another problem, specifically regarding adherents of the sovereign citizen movement, because those locations have become such a significant source of recruitment. Inmates behind bars for a variety of crimes—including murder—are recruited into the sovereign citizen movement by fellow inmates, who often promise prospective recruits that the movement's pseudo-legal tactics can get them off the hook. Someone currently being tried for murder who attempts sovereign citizen arguments or tactics during legal proceedings may have only been exposed to such beliefs after their arrest and not been a sovereign citizen at the time of the murder. In recent years, ADL has identified a number of murder cases in which suspects did not seem to be adherents of the sovereign citizen movement at the time of their arrest but, at some later point in their legal proceedings, started to use sovereign citizen arguments. Consequently, ADL does not automatically assume that someone making sovereign citizen arguments during legal proceedings was a sovereign citizen before their arrest unless there is evidence to suggest as much or unless their sovereign arguments were made relatively soon after their arrest.^[27]

As with any such list, the inclusion or exclusion of certain borderline cases may stem from judgment calls based on the best evidence available, judgments with which others may reasonably disagree. ADL makes the best determinations it can based on the evidence available at the time.

Policy Recommendations

We need a whole-of-government approach to address the threat of violent extremism. The framework that ADL has created — the [PROTECT plan](#) — is a comprehensive, seven-part plan to mitigate the threat posed by domestic extremism and domestic terrorism while protecting civil rights and civil liberties. Together, focusing on these seven categories can have an immediate and deeply significant impact in preventing and countering domestic terrorism— more so than any one action, policy, or law— and can do so while protecting civil rights and liberties and ensuring that government overreach does not harm the same vulnerable people and communities that these extremists target. Our suggestions come under these seven areas:

Prioritize Preventing and Countering Domestic Terrorism

Resource According to the Threat

Oppose Extremists in Government Service

Take Public Health and Other Domestic Terrorism Prevention Measures

End the Complicity of Social Media in Facilitating Extremism

Create an Independent Clearinghouse for Online Extremist Content

Target Foreign White Supremacist Terrorist Groups for Sanctions

Prioritize Preventing and Countering Domestic Terrorism

First, we urge Congress to adopt a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to preventing and countering domestic terrorism.

- In June 2021, the Biden-Harris Administration released the first-ever National Strategy to Counter Domestic Terrorism, an ambitious plan to meet the rising

threat of domestic violent extremism, which since 2019, the Department of Homeland Security and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) have repeatedly identified as the most persistent and lethal terrorist threat to the homeland.

- The strategy is laudable, and a step in the right direction. However, many critical details were left unaddressed. ADL worked with partners to [press](#) the Administration for further details into how the plan would be implemented, and the steps that should be taken to ensure protection for civil rights and civil liberties. We welcomed the fact sheet released at the two-year anniversary. However, Congress must push for further details and departments and agencies must create their own implementation plans for the Strategy.
- The White House should name a senior level Domestic Terrorism Director at the National Security Council whose exclusive, full-time focus is addressing domestic terrorism and hate-motivated violence in the United States.
 - The appointment and public announcement would send a message to the American people – and specifically those targeted by domestic violent extremism – that this remains an unwavering priority for the Administration.
- In September 2022, the White House held the United We Stand Summit to address hate-fueled violence. Bringing together impacted communities with experts on hate and extremism is a critical effort. We urge the Administration and Congress to work together to ensure that the United We Stand effort is an ongoing, fully funded, and fully supported endeavor.
- The Biden-Harris Administration released a National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism in May 2023, which notes the connection between violent extremism, white supremacist conspiracy theories, and attacks against Jewish communities and other targeted groups, specifically that “our intelligence agencies have determined that domestic terrorism rooted in white supremacy—including antisemitism—is the greatest terrorist threat to our Homeland today.”
 - The National Strategy lays out more than 200 policy proposals to holistically combat the problem.
 - ADL welcomed the release of the historic and comprehensive U.S. strategy, as well as an update in October in which eight federal agencies clarified—for the first time in writing—that Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits certain forms of antisemitic, Islamophobic, and related forms of discrimination in federally funded programs and activities.
 - The two-page annual threat assessment on drivers of transnational violent extremism released in May 2023 by the FBI and the National Counterterrorism Center was a laudable first step. However, we urge the intelligence and law enforcement community to provide a more comprehensive assessment in future iterations. The 2024 review should be on par with the rigor and robustness that is typical of intelligence

assessments.

- For the strategy to succeed, we urge Congress to commit to its implementation.
- See [ADL's COMBAT Plan](#) for a full spectrum of recommendations to directly tackle antisemitism on the international, federal, and state level.
- We urge robust funding for programs like the Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP). Difficult funding decisions need to be made across all areas of public policy, but efforts to counter serious threats from domestic violent extremism must be top priorities. At a time of increased vulnerability to threats of hate-motivated violence by domestic extremists, Congress should significantly increase funding for non-profit religious institutions and other non-profit organizations that government and law enforcement authorities objectively determine are at high risk of attack to no less than \$500 million for FY 2024 and \$500 million FY2025. Funding is especially critical as swatting incidents and hoax bomb threats targeting synagogues and Jewish communal institutions have occurred over the past year.
- The NSGP provides non-profits with the capacity to increase their defense against these threats, including physical security and cybersecurity capacity and coordination. Despite recent increases in the NSGP program, as extremism threats continue to rise, the need continues to be greater than the resources provided, as outlined in previous Presidential budget requests. In FY 2023, FEMA received \$675 million in grant applications, yet only 42% were funded

Resource According to the Threat

We must ensure that the authorities and resources the government uses to address violent threats are proportionate to the risk of the lethality of those threats. In other words, allocation of resources must never be politicized but rather based on transparent and objective security concerns.

- Congress has been unable to pass the bipartisan Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act (DTPA) to enhance the federal government's efforts to prevent domestic terrorism by formally authorizing offices to address domestic terrorism and requiring law enforcement agencies to regularly report on domestic terrorist threats. Congress should reconsider the DTPA in this Congress, or at minimum, ensure that those offices are created, that they have the resources they need, and that they deploy those resources in a manner proportionate to existing threats. Further, the transparency that comes with regular reporting is crucial for civil society, Congress, and the public writ large to help oversee the national security process and hold leaders accountable.
- Congress must exercise careful oversight to ensure that no resources are

expended on counterterrorism efforts targeting protected political speech or association. Investigations and other efforts to mitigate the threat should be data-driven and proportionate to the violent threat posed by violent extremist movements.

- Data drives policy, and as such, Congress must empower high-quality, comprehensive data to understand threats related to hate and democracy. For example, the annual FBI hate crimes statistics demonstrate a systematic gap in reporting by law enforcement agencies. This gap must be filled, including through support for hate crimes data collection resources and requirements for mandatory reporting by law enforcement agencies.

Oppose Extremists in Government Service

It is essential that we recognize the potential for harm when extremists gain positions of power, including in government, law enforcement, and the military.

- To the extent permitted by law and consistent with Constitutional protections, government should take steps to ensure that individuals engaged in violent extremist activity or associated with violent extremist movements, including the white supremacist movement and the militia movement, are deemed unsuitable for employment at the federal, state, and local levels — including in law enforcement. Appropriate steps must also be taken to address any current employees, who, upon review, match these criteria.
- To the extent permitted by law and consistent with Constitutional protections, government should take steps to ensure that individuals engaged in violent extremist activity or associated with violent extremist movements including the white supremacist movement and the militia movement, are not given security clearances or other sensitive law enforcement credentials. Appropriate steps must also be taken to address any current employees, who, upon review, match these criteria. Law enforcement agencies nationwide should explore options for preventing extremists from being among their ranks.
- ADL has worked with Law Enforcement experts to provide tools for identifying and weeding out extremists in the recruitment process as well as within law enforcement ranks. While there is no evidence that white supremacist extremists have large numbers in our law enforcement agencies, we have seen that even a few can undermine the effectiveness and trust that is so essential. We have provided resources to law enforcement agencies with guidance on approaches that do not violate First Amendment protections.
- More must be done to address the problem of extremism within the military, train officials for how to address it, and scale efforts to fully ensure that members of our armed forces are not targeted for recruitment to extremist

causes.

- An independent study on extremist behavior in the Armed Forces commissioned by the Department of Defense highlighted the danger of extremism in the military, stating “the participation in violent extremist activities of even a small number of individuals with military connections and military training could present a risk to the military and to the country as a whole.” It also points out that the military’s process for giving security clearances to military and civilian personnel is outdated and inadequate, asserting that “the Department remains at risk of unknowingly permitting persons who may have engaged in violent extremist conduct to enter and encumber privileged positions as civilian employees or contractors in the military community.”
- ADL worked with Members of the Armed Services Committee to secure two provisions in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2024 to address this issue by securing two new reports that would:
 - Require the Secretary of Defense to report on the implementation and status of its training and education for DOD members and civil personnel on protecting the military from extremist recruitment and activity.
 - Identify gaps in the DOD security clearance process.
 - We look forward to reading the reports in June 2024, as mandated by in statute.
- DHS announced that it reviewed internal extremist threats, though noted that there were no mechanisms for doing so systematically or comprehensively. DHS and law enforcement agencies must have these protocols in place.

Take Domestic Terrorism Prevention Measures

We must not wait until after someone has become an extremist or a terrorist attack has happened to act. Effective and promising prevention measures exist, which should be scaled.

- Congress can provide funding to civil society and academic programs that have expertise in addressing recruitment to extremist causes and radicalization, whether online or offline. By providing funding for prevention activities, including education, counseling, and off-ramping, Congress can help empower public health and civil society actors to prevent and intervene in the radicalization process and undermine extremist narratives, particularly those that spread rapidly on the internet.
- These initiatives must be accompanied by an assurance of careful oversight with civil rights and civil liberties safeguards. They must also meaningfully engage the communities that have been targeted by domestic terrorism and the civil society organizations already existing within them, and those

communities which have been unfairly targeted when prior anti-terrorism authorities have been misused and/or abused. These initiatives must be transparent, responsive to community concerns, publicly demonstrate careful oversight, and ensure that they do not stigmatize communities.

- Further, DHS should not be the only agency working on prevention; ADL urges the Department to partner with Health and Human Services and other non-security Departments whenever possible.
- While Congress has funded a grant program for prevention measures domestically, the program is too small to have an [impact at scale](#). Congress should significantly expand the Center for Prevention Programming and Partnerships (CP3) within DHS, such as through \$200 million per year in grants and a proportionate increase in program evaluations, the results of which should be published for public view.
- DHS should be empowered to support research and innovation to address domestic violent extremism. However, there have been reports that research and innovation related to domestic violent extremist radicalization has been halted at DHS, which would be troubling; we urge Congress to ensure there is adequate implementation of research and innovation.

End the Complicity of Social Media in Facilitating Extremism

Congress must prioritize countering online extremism and ensuring that perpetrators who engage in unlawful activity online can be held accountable. Online platforms often lack adequate policies to mitigate extremism and hate equitably and at scale. Federal and state laws and policies require significant updating to hold online platforms and individual perpetrators accountable for enabling hate, racism, and extremist violence across the internet. In March 2021, ADL announced [the REPAIR Plan](#), which offers a comprehensive framework for platforms and policymakers to take meaningful action to decrease online hate and extremism. Like ADL's PROTECT Plan, REPAIR addresses domestic extremism and terrorism but goes beyond these issues to address other manifestations and harms of online hate, including online harassment, antisemitism, racism, and disinformation.

Create an Independent Clearinghouse for Online Extremist Content

Congress should work with the Administration to create a publicly funded, independent nonprofit center to track online extremist threat information in real-time and make referrals to social media companies and law enforcement agencies when appropriate.

- Those empowered with law enforcement and intelligence capabilities should not be tasked with new investigative and other powers that could infringe upon

civil liberties such as broad internet surveillance. Scouring online sources through an independent organization will act as a buffer but will not prevent the nonprofit center from assisting law enforcement in cases where criminal behavior is suspected. This wall of separation, modeled in part on the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC), will help streamline national security tips and resources while preserving civil liberties.

- The National Institute of Justice (NIJ) was provided with \$500,000 to investigate the feasibility of this concept in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2022. NIJ should be empowered to complete its review, and Congress should quickly follow up to ensure that a clearinghouse can be authorized.

Target Foreign Terrorist Groups

Congress must recognize that extremism is a major global threat and mobilize with that mindset.

- To date, no white supremacist organization operating overseas has been designated as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO). Only one – and some members of its leadership – has been designated as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist (SDGT). Congress should review how these designation decisions are made, whether any additional racially or ethnically motivated violent extremist groups (RMVEs) outside the United States, particularly white supremacist groups, have reached the threshold for either designation, or whether such designations would help advance U.S. national interests.
- We are pleased that the Department of State developed a strategy to counter global white supremacist extremism. We urge more transparency from State in this process and for Congress to provide more resources to implement it.
- The Department of State must mobilize a multilateral effort to address the threat of white supremacy globally. Multilateral best-practice institutions, such as the Global Counterterrorism Forum, the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund, and the International Institute for Justice and Rule of Law, may be helpful mechanisms through which to channel some efforts. Moreover, the Global Engagement Center should be charged with undermining the propaganda of violent extremist groups – not just designated terrorist organizations, but overseas white supremacist violent extremists as well. DHS should participate in these efforts, supporting overseas exchanges, partnerships, and best practices sharing to engage in learning from other countries and sharing U.S. best practices, where applicable.
- The FBI, DHS, and National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) assessed that ongoing tensions related to the conflict between Israel and Hamas likely heightened the threat of lone actor violence targeting large public gatherings. Since the Hamas attack on Israel on October 7, various foreign terrorist media

organizations have called for lone actor attacks in the United States. RMVEs have also increased calls for violence and celebrated attacks on the Jewish community.

- Congress should pass the STOP HATE Act which would require social media platforms to disclose their policies and how they're dealing with content from FTOs, such as Hamas, who use these platforms to recruit, fundraise, and spread propaganda. The bill would also require the Intelligence Community to assess the threat posed to U.S. national security by FTO's usage of social media platforms.

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