

Two evil endemics in the United States

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Protest in Memphis over the death of Tyre Nichols. JOE RAEDLE / AFP

By Maria Josefina Arce

2023 is not off to a good start for the United States. Police brutality and deaths by firearms have marked the first month of the year in the northern country, where events of this nature have become part of the daily life of society.

The death of the young African-American Tyre Nichols, after being beaten by five officers of the city of Memphis, has reopened the debate on the excessive use of force by police officers against the black population.

The video, released by the authorities, has shocked Americans by the violence against the young man, who died hours after his arrest. The event has sparked protests in several cities across the country.

Sadly, this is not an isolated event. The murder of George Floyd, in 2020 in the city of Minneapolis, is still fresh in our memory. A case that also triggered an intense wave of protests to demand justice and an end to police brutality, one of the most serious and enduring human rights violations in the United States.

Although several cities have passed more restrictive use of force policies, it is a reality that this situation has worsened. In fact, at least 1,176 homicides committed by law enforcement officers were recorded in 2022, the highest number in a decade when experts began a database on such occurrences.

A latest study reveals that African-American citizens are three times more likely than whites to become victims.

Along with this situation, there is another one that also worries Americans: mass shootings, which have already reached 40 in the first month of the year alone, resulting in several fatalities and injuries.

According to the Gun Violence Archive, this figure is equivalent to one act of gun violence every 24 hours.

In 2022, mass shootings in the United States exceeded 600, while 1,358 teenagers died from a firearm-related injury, according to the organization, which records these types of incidents almost in real time.

The truth is that in the United States there are more weapons in the hands of civilians than population, homicides with firearms are 25.2 times higher than in the rest of the developed countries and there are more mass shootings than anywhere else in the world.

But efforts to curb this situation clash with strong political interests, and with the famous second amendment to the Constitution, which favors gun ownership and is used by pro-gun advocates to prevent any regulation.

Police brutality and gun violence are two endemic evils in the United States, a nation with deep-seated, institutionalized racism and a gun culture that has become an epidemic.

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