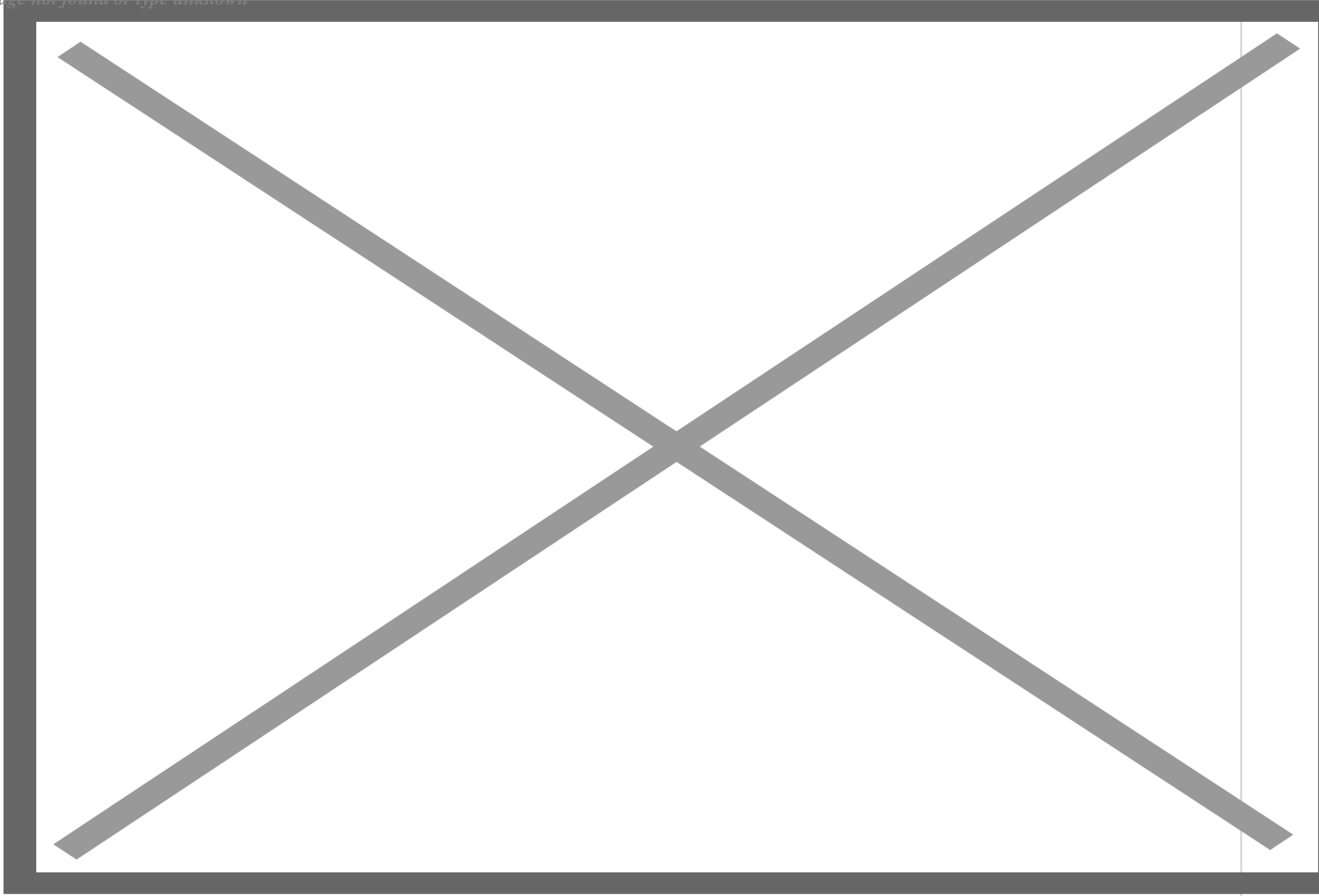


LGBTQ communities in the U.S. face rising threats of violence

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A person looks on at the flowers and mementos left at a memorial after a mass shooting at the Club Q LGBTQ nightclub in Colorado Springs, Colorado, US, November 26, 2022 [Isaiah J Downing/Reuters]

Minneapolis, December 13 (RHC)-- Amid a spate of recent attacks targeting LGBTQ communities in the United States, advocates say the government must do more to protect vulnerable citizens. Late last month, a man opened fire at a gay and lesbian nightclub in Colorado, killing five people and injuring at least 17 others. The suspect has been charged with hate crimes, murder and assault.

Right-wing demonstrators have also increasingly targeted drag shows during a year in which President Joe Biden has warned of rising violence against LGBTQ communities.

Days after the Colorado shooting, the Department of Homeland Security issued a bulletin highlighting the risk of terrorism against LGBTQ citizens and other marginalised groups, noting that “lone offenders and small groups motivated by a range of ideological beliefs and/or personal grievances continue to pose a persistent and lethal threat”.

But while this acknowledgement is a step in the right direction, rights groups say, it is not enough. “We are living in a time where there is this rising threat of violence from extreme far-right groups across the spectrum of marginalised communities. It’s frightening, but it’s not surprising, unfortunately,” Laurel Powell, a spokesperson for the Human Rights Campaign, a Washington-based LGBTQ+ advocacy group, told reporters.

“The world we live in today is not one where you can easily divide online and the ‘real world’ ... It doesn’t happen in a vacuum, and is being driven by very loud and animated extremist individuals who are stoking this hate online – and it, unfortunately, has real-world consequences.”

Social media companies and other internet platforms must do more to provide a space free from harassment, she said, while the plague of gun violence in the U.S. also needs to be addressed. “The epidemic of hate against the LGBTQ+ community can’t be separated from the fight against gun violence,” Powell said. “They’re inextricably linked.”

This month, several events across the U.S. featuring drag artists, including a children’s storytime event in Ohio and a performance in Texas, were cancelled amid threats from right-wing individuals.

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