



## Sabbath to Stop Gun Violence in the Wake of Newtown Shooting

As faith teaches us that human life is sacred and must be protected, faith leaders have a unique role in speaking out about gun violence prevention. They know firsthand the pain and suffering caused by illegal firearms because they are the ones who are called upon to comfort the family and friends who have lost their loved ones to gun violence.

On December 14, 2012 a gunman shot and killed 26 people, including 20 children, at an elementary school in Newtown, Connecticut. Last summer, the faith community was directly touched by gun violence when a gunman opened fire at a Sikh Temple in Oak Creek, Wisconsin, murdering 6 and injuring 4 others. During President Obama's next term, 48,000 Americans – 34 Americans per day – will be murdered with guns if we do not take action.

To remember those that have been murdered by guns and to work together to prevent gun violence, Mayors Against Guns is joining with gun violence survivors from across the country to announce a Sabbath to Stop the Gun Violence, a day for faith leaders to speak to their congregations about the **toll of gun violence** in our communities and the **power of faith to heal** and help recover from the pain of losing a loved one to gun violence. Faith leaders are also encouraged to discuss, if they are comfortable doing so, **common sense gun laws** that will help keep guns out of the wrong hands while protecting the rights of law-abiding gun owners, and lead a discussion with their faith communities on specific ways that they can work to **prevent future gun violence tragedies**.

### About Mayors Against Illegal Guns

**Mayors Against Illegal Guns** is a national, bipartisan coalition of mayors working to make America's communities safer by cracking down on illegal guns. Co-founded in 2006 by New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg and Boston Mayor Thomas Menino, the coalition has grown from an initial group of 15 mayors to more than 750 Republicans, Democrats, and Independents from major cities and small towns, representing more than 57 million Americans.

Mayors Against Illegal Guns advocates for common-sense measures that will keep guns out of the hands of dangerous people while respecting the Second Amendment rights of law-abiding citizens. The coalition is committed to closing the deadly gaps in the national gun background check system that give criminals, terrorists, domestic violence offenders, the seriously mentally ill and other dangerous people easy access to firearms.

Learn more about the coalition at [www.mayorsagainstillegalsguns.org](http://www.mayorsagainstillegalsguns.org).

### SUGGESTED GUIDELINES TO DISCUSS GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION WITH YOUR FAITH COMMUNITY:

Faith leaders are encouraged to discuss gun violence prevention in whatever way is most appropriate for their congregation. You might consider including the following in your discussion:

## 1. **The toll of gun violence in our communities:**

- Remember the victims and survivors of the December 14<sup>th</sup> Newtown, Connecticut elementary school shooting and the hundreds of thousands of Americans that have been affected by gun violence.
- 24,000 Americans have been murdered with guns since the Tucson, Arizona shooting on January 8, 2011.
- 34 Americans are murdered with guns every day – that’s 48,000 Americans that will be killed during President Obama’s next term.

## 2. **The power of faith to heal:**

- Please share your favorite spiritual passages and discuss how faith can help us overcome adversity and heal us spiritually.
- If any members of your congregation have been affected by gun violence or know someone who has been, you might consider asking them to stand up and briefly share with the congregation their story of how they have been affected by gun violence.
- Invite the congregation to pray together for the continued healing of those who have been affected by gun violence.

## 3. **Common sense gun laws** can help keep lethal weapons out of the hands of dangerous people:

- Our nation’s gun background check system is broken because 40% of guns are sold without background checks under federal law. As a result, people with criminal records and domestic violence abusers can too easily buy guns.
- The vast majority of Americans – including 82% of gun owners – support requiring a background check for every gun sale.
- The Fix Gun Checks bill is national legislation that would require a background check for every gun sale.
- We need to limit the kind of military-style weapons – including high-cap magazines – which have been used in several recent mass shootings, including at Newtown and Aurora.

## 4. We can work together to **prevent future gun violence tragedies** by:

- Going to [www.demandaplan.org](http://www.demandaplan.org) to sign a petition telling Congress that you support background checks for all gun sales.
- At this site, you can also view YouTube videos posted by gun violence survivors, family members of victims, and concerned public officials. And please upload your own “I Demand a Plan” videos to the Demand a Plan website.
- Signing a letter to President Obama asking him to tell us what his plan is to reduce gun violence.
- Talking to friends and family and encourage them to join you in working to prevent gun violence.
- Emailing Mayors Against Illegal Guns at [organize@mayorsagainstillegalguns.org](mailto:organize@mayorsagainstillegalguns.org) and sharing your stories.
- Calling your federal and state elected officials to urge them to support common-sense gun policies.