

## POLITICS AS USUAL: Thoughts and prayers?

By Alison Collins-Mrakas

This week I don't really have anything to say as I am at a loss for words.

The US is once again struck by the madness of a mass shooting. Call it a terrorist attack, a lone wolf attack, or call it whatever you want. Naming the event is a somewhat pointless discussion to have right now. It is a distraction; a political distraction, and one I am not willing to engage in.

The facts are that a gunman killed close to 60 people, injured hundreds of others and struck terror into the hearts of literally thousands of people and put a nation ? and its neighbours ? once again into state of shocked disbelief.

Striking terror into the hearts of people makes you a terrorist. So, let's accept that and leave the dance of semantics aside for another day, shall we?

People are dead. Not because of war. Not because of an accident. Not because of gangland crime, but because someone had access to and was able to purchase multiple high fire power weapons and thus successfully execute a plan to kill as many people as possible.

Again, let's not argue semantics about the type of firearm ? scratch that, firearms - the gunman had. Or whether the weapons were semi-automatic or automatic. As if the fact the guns were allegedly purchased legally and then altered provides any solace to the families of those gunned down.

I do not understand the obsession with guns in the US. The right to bear arms, ostensibly to defend oneself, I suppose I understand that. I don't live in the middle of nowhere or in the midst of a high crime neighbourhood, so I can understand, at least intellectually, the argument of those that do that one needs protection of some sort from threats, real or perceived. I understand the argument that one has the right to defend oneself.

But how does the right to protect oneself morph into the right to own multiple high fire power weapons? Who exactly is one protecting oneself against? Marauders? Bandits? A strike force of some kind?

And how is it that one man could own all those guns, all that ammunition and no one thought to say, ?hmmmm, why is this man creating his own personal armoury?? Worse, how many other people have a similar cache of weapons? I simply don't understand how their system works. How the right to own a gun translates into the right to own sufficient weaponry to arm a small military force.

The US is awash in guns. I read one estimate that said that ?there are more guns than people in the US.? That means there are over a third of a billion guns in the US. That is simply staggering. The likelihood that they would give them all up is pretty much zero. So, a debate about gun ownership rights is pointless. We are well past that.

Despite this being the worst mass shooting in US history, I doubt that there will be any meaningful reform of gun ownership regulations. If there were no reforms after Sandy Hook, where 20 children were shot down, I am not sure what it would take, quite frankly, for there to be change.

Maybe someday common sense will prevail.

But, until then, I guess the world will just have to make do with the ?thoughts and prayers? of those that make those decisions.