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## Over 650 Faith Leaders Call for Mother's Day to be Declared a National Day of Prayer, Mourning, Repentance, and Contemplation To End Gun Violence.

Dear President Biden,

The epidemic of gun violence has become so dire that nearly 1 in 5 adults in the United States have lost a family member to a gun death. Mass shootings have escalated so much in recent years (23% since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic began) that as of April 12, there have already been at least 147 mass shootings so far this year. It is a war taking place in our schools, houses of worship, supermarkets, movie theatres, homes, businesses nightclubs, and more. While some may throw up their arms and say that this is a battle too large to win, we, an interfaith coalition, made up of Christians, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and other faith traditions, remember the miracles of ancient times and remain optimistic that this scourge can be overcome.

Do we really believe as a nation that the second amendment and the profits of those who manufacture AR-15-style assault rifles, Hellfire missiles, and other instruments of death should take primacy over our rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness?

We thank you for having last year pushed through Congress the first major gun violence protection legislation in 30 years, for highlighting the issue during this year's State of the Union, and the executive order you issued last month. Given the gravity and urgency of this issue, we ask for more. We appeal to you to declare this Mother's Day, Sunday, May 14, 2023, to be a national day of repentance, mourning, prayer, and reflection to address the culture of

gun violence that is staining our collective soul.

We ask for our lawmakers and faith institutions to reflect this Mother's Day on how we are allowing gun manufacturers, the gun lobby, and a culture of gun worship to hold our country hostage.

Mary, a role model for motherhood, stood at the foot of the cross witnessing brutality, inhumanity, and death being inflicted on her child. Today we are all parents looking on as the brutality and death from another mass shooting is inflicted on our children. At the same time, we are painfully aware that gun violence is a racial justice issue. Black Americans are twice as likely as white Americans to die from gun violence. Esther was counseled by her uncle Mordecai that she was born for such a time as this. For her to go to the King and expose the plots designed to steal the lives of young and old alike. In that same vein, your administration has come into office for such a time as this. Will you squander the demand of this historical time, or go like Esther into the fury to save lives and people?

The Holy Quran, Surah 5 verse 32, teaches: "Whoever kills one person, it is as if they killed all of humanity." The various holy books teach us that "to save a life is to save the world entire." We are responsible to one another and responsible to all life.

As faith leaders, we call on you, and on our communities, to manifest our prayers and create a new covenant – a reclaiming of the name of G-d – committed to honoring and saving lives. We must pray together, not only with our words, but with our feet, and take action, like Esther did, in such a time as this!

In memory of the lives lost in Nashville – Evelyn Diekhaus (9), William Kinney (9), Hallie Scruggs (9), Mike Hill (61), Katherine Koonce (60), Cynthia Peak

(61), the lives lost in the Kentucky bank shooting on April 10, and the rest of the nearly 50,000 people that die every year in the United States from guns, we ask you to declare Mother's Day 2023 a national day to end gun violence and heal our country.

Sincerely,

Over 650 faith leaders including **Rev. Jesse Jackson** • Bp. Vashti Murphy McKenzie, Interim President & General Secretary, **National Council of Churches of Christ, USA** • Dr. Cornel West • Rev. Dr. Liz Theoharis, Executive Director of the Kairos Center for Religions, Rights, and Social Justice • **Rev. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, General Secretary Emeritus, Reformed Church in America** • Rabbi Jill Jacobs, C.E.O., T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights • **Rabbi Jonah Pesner, Executive Director, Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism** • Dr. Shane Claiborne, Red Letter Christians • Rev. Hope Christensen, Co-Chair of Faith Leaders for Ending Gun Violence • **Rev. Adam Russell Taylor, President, Sojourners** • **Rev. Jim Wallis, Archbishop Desmond Tutu Chair, Center on Faith & Justice, Georgetown University** • Dr. Daisy Khan, Executive Director, Women's Islamic Initiative in Spirituality and Equality (WISE) • Dr. Tarunjit Singh Butalia, Executive Director, Religions for Peace USA • Rev. Dr. John C. Dorhauer, **General Minister and President, United Church of Christ** • Rev. Dr. Susan Frederick-Gray, President, **Unitarian Universalist Association** • Rev. Dr. Emma Jordan-Simpson, President, **Auburn Seminary** • Rev. Dr. Serene Jones, President, **Union Theological Seminary**