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US students want tighter gun controls

PARKLAND, FLORIDA—Stunned by last week's bloodiest high school shooting in US history, students across the country were mobilizing on Sunday for stronger gun laws, while Florida officials contemplated when to reopen their badly shaken school.

Students from Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, where a former student is accused of murdering 17 people on Wednesday, joined others on social media to plan rallies, a Washington march and a national walkout—aimed at getting the attention of an adult population many said had failed to protect them.

"I felt like it was our time to take a stand, because, you know, we're the ones in these schools, we're the ones who are having shooters come into our classrooms and our spaces," said Lane Murdock of Ridgefield High School in Connecticut.

Walkout

Murdock, a 15-year-old sophomore who lives 32 kilometers from Sandy Hook Elementary School, where 20 children and six adults were shot dead five years ago, drew more than 36,000 signatures on an online petition on Sunday morning, calling on students to walk out of their high schools on April 20.

Instead of going to classes, she urged her fellow students to stage protests on the 19th anniversary of the mass shootings at Columbine High School in Colorado.

Former student Nikolas Cruz, 19, faces multiple murder charges in the deaths of 14 students and three staff members, and the wounding of more than a dozen others, in a rampage that eclipsed Columbine as the country's worst mass shooting at a high school.

Cruz was reported to have been investigated as far back as 2016 after slashing his arm in a social media video, and saying he wanted to buy a gun.

In addition, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) admitted on Friday that it failed to investigate a warning that Cruz possessed a gun and the desire to kill.

March for our lives

President Donald Trump lashed out late on Saturday at the FBI for missing signs that could have prevented the shooting and accused the agency on Twitter of "spending too much time trying to prove Russian collusion with the [2016] Trump campaign."

The Douglas High School students are planning a "March for Our Lives" in Washington on March 24 to call attention to school safety and ask lawmakers to enact some form of gun control.

"You know, we're marching because it's not just schools, it's movie theaters, it's concerts, it's nightclubs," student Alex Wind said on NBC's "Meet the Press." "This kind of stuff can't just happen."

A rally is set for Tallahassee, the state capital, on Wednesday, where a lawmaker is seeking a legislative opening for a ban on the sale of assault weapons, including the AR-15 that Cruz is alleged to have used. —REUTERS

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