

**ALJAZEERA****LIVE**

News | Gun Violence

## Atlanta shootings: Asian women among eight killed at three US spas

*Suspect arrested, says the killings were not racially motivated; police state it is too early to declare this a hate crime.*



Officials with the Fulton County Medical Examiner's office remove a body from the Gold Spa massage parlor after a shooting on Piedmont Road in Atlanta [Erik S. Lesser/EPA]

17 Mar 2021



At least eight people, including six Asian women, were killed in shootings at three different spas in the US state of Georgia on Tuesday, with a 21-year-old white man in custody on suspicion of staging all three attacks, police have said.

The shootings came with many Asian Americans already on edge following a recent spike in hate crimes against the community and triggered immediate fears that Asian-run businesses may have been deliberately singled out.

---

KEEP READING

**Violent crimes surge in US as COVID-19 pandemic rages**

**Biden calls for 'commonsense' gun laws on Parkland anniversary**

**Guns of New York**

---

The bloodshed began around 17:00 EDT (21:00 GMT) on Tuesday when four people were killed and another was wounded in a shooting at Young's Asian Massage in Cherokee County, about 64km (40 miles) north of Atlanta, Captain Jay Baker of the Cherokee County Sheriff's office said.

The Atlanta police department separately confirmed that four women were found dead at two business establishments in northeast Atlanta, identified as the Gold Massage Spa and Aroma Therapy spa.



Law enforcement personnel leave a massage parlour where a person was shot and killed on March 16, 2021, in Atlanta, Georgia [Elijah Nouvelage/AFP]

Authorities have identified Robert Aaron Long as a suspect in all three shootings and say he acted alone.

“The suspect did take responsibility for the shootings. He said that early on, once we began interviews with him,” Baker said at a news conference on Wednesday.

“He does claim that it was not racially motivated”, Baker said, explaining that Long has a “what he considers a sex addiction” and saw the parlours as “temptations he wanted to eliminate”.

Local newspaper the Atlanta Journal-Constitution reported Long bought a gun from a local shop the same day the shootings occurred.

Atlanta Police Chief Rodney Bryant said it is too early to definitively say whether this was a hate crime. Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms added that there has not been “a significant uptick in formal complaints” of violence from the city’s Asian American community but recognised the spike in reports of violence against Asian Americans across the country, calling it “unacceptable”.



This handout booking photo released by the Crisp County Sheriff's Office on March 16, 2021, shows 21-year-old shooting suspect Robert Aaron Long [Crisp County Sheriff's Office Handout/AFP]

Long was taken into custody after a “brief pursuit” about 240km (150 miles) from Atlanta, according to a statement by the Georgia Department of Safety on Facebook.

Describing the scene in northeast Atlanta, the city police department said: “Upon arrival, officers located three females deceased inside the location from apparent gunshot wounds.”

While on the scene, officers were advised of shots fired across the street, where they found a fourth female victim.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation was assisting in the investigation, a spokesman told the AFP news agency.

---

## **‘Marginalised minorities’**

South Korea's foreign ministry said in a statement that its diplomats in Atlanta have confirmed from police that four of the victims who died were women of Korean descent.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who is in South Korea meeting with Foreign Minister Chung Eui-yong, mentioned the killings during an opening statement.

"We are horrified by this violence which has no place in America or anywhere," he said, noting that four of the women were believed to be of Korean descent.

The shootings come as reports of attacks against Asian Americans, primarily elders, have spiked in recent months – heightened during the COVID-19 pandemic, activists believe, by talk of the "Chinese virus" by former President Donald Trump and others.

President Joe Biden told reporters at the White House the "question of motivation is still to be determined", but acknowledged concerns, saying whatever is "the motivation here I know that Asian-Americans are very concerned."

Vice President Kamala Harris told reporters before a meeting with Prime Minister Micheal Martin that she stands with the Asian-American community.

"We are not yet clear about the motive. But I do want to say to our Asian-American community that we stand with you and understand how this has frightened and shocked and outraged all people, knowing the increasing level of hate crime against our Asian-American brothers and sisters", she said.

"Our entire family is praying for the victims of these horrific acts of violence," Governor Brian Kemp said Tuesday evening on Twitter.

The New York police department's counterterrorism bureau said it was "monitoring the shooting of Asian Americans in Georgia" and deploying officers "to our great Asian communities across the city out of an abundance of caution", though it added there was no known link to the city.



A police officer stands outside a massage parlour where three people were shot and killed on March 16, 2021, in Atlanta, Georgia [Elijah Nouvelage/AFP]

While racial motivation can be hard to establish, a study by the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism at CSU San Bernardino found that reported anti-Asian hate crimes nearly tripled from 49 to 122 cases last year across 16 big US cities including New York and Los Angeles – even as overall hate crime fell 7 percent.

Georgia is home to nearly 500,000 Asian residents, or just more than 4 percent of its population, according to the Asian American Advocacy Fund.



The Democratic party in Georgia called Tuesday's shooting spree "horrifying".

"As details continue to emerge, this attack sadly follows the unacceptable pattern of violence against Asian Americans that has skyrocketed throughout this pandemic," said Congresswoman Nikema Williams, who is also the state party's chairwoman.

"Today's tragic killings in #Atlanta reaffirm the need for us to step up and protect ALL of America's marginalized minorities from racism," tweeted Ben Crump, a lawyer known for representing several high-profile Black victims of police brutality in the United States in recent years.

In an address to the nation last Thursday, President Joe Biden forcefully condemned what he called "vicious hate crimes against Asian Americans who have been attacked, harassed, blamed and scapegoated".

"It's wrong. It's un-American. And it must stop," he said.

SOURCE: NEWS AGENCIES

## ADVERTISEMENT

Dianomi

This content is created and paid for by advertisers and does not involve Al Jazeera journalists.



## RELATED

From: [The Stream](#)

### **Why is anti-Asian racism on the rise in the US?**

Attacks against elderly Asian Americans renew focus on hate crimes during pandemic.

▶ 14 Feb 2021

### OPINION

### **Anti-Asian racism must be stopped before it is normalised**

The US must not repeat the same mistake it made after 9/11 by allowing the scapegoating of a whole minority population.

“ Sahar Aziz 16 Apr 2020

**OPINION****Sinophobia, the new Islamophobia**

It is time to acknowledge and address Sinophobia in the United States.

“ Aly Kassam-Remtulla 11 Sep 2020

**US: Gunman at the door kills son of US judge, injures husband**

Authorities say the attack on the home of Judge Salas, who has presided on high-profile cases, is being investigated.

20 Jul 2020

---

**MORE FROM NEWS****The Gambia delays report on former longtime leader Jammeh****Saudi sees fuller state coffers next year on surging oil prices**

## **Boxing bouts fixed at Rio 2016 Olympics, investigation finds**

## **'We are under bandits': Dozens killed and abducted in Nigeria**

---

### MOST READ

## **UEFA drops disciplinary action against three breakaway clubs**

## **Ethiopia orders expulsion of 7 top UN officials for 'meddling'**

## **Confusion reigns after China slams door on crypto**

## **Sarah Everard: UK police officer gets life term for rape, murder**

**About**

**Connect**

**Our Channels**

**Our Network**

Follow Al Jazeera English:



© 2021 Al Jazeera Media Network