

Chicago Pastor: Christians Would Be Safer in Iraq Than Here

A total of 101 people were shot in Chicago over an unusually violent Fourth of July weekend, leaving at least 14 dead, according to police and local media, as the city continues to grapple with gun crime.

Police officials counted 71 shooting incidents and 14 murders between 6 p.m. CDT on Friday and early Wednesday, according to data provided by police spokesman Frank Giancamilli on Wednesday.

The Chicago Tribune newspaper tallied the total number of victims shot in those incidents at 101 between Friday afternoon and early Wednesday. Police could not immediately provide the number of victims shot.

Gangs were a major source of the violence, Chicago Police First Deputy Superintendent Kevin Navarro said at a news conference on Wednesday.

Chicago police deployed 1,300 additional officers to patrol during the Fourth of July weekend, and had arrested 58 people on drug and gun charges ahead of the holiday in hopes of tamping down violence.

The number of shootings, which police said surged during a six-hour period on Monday night, was higher than in 2013, the last time the Fourth of July weekend spanned four days, when 74 people were shot, according to the Tribune.

The weekend brought the total number of people shot in Chicago this year above 1,800, below the 2,035 recorded at this time last year when violence spiked sharply, the Tribune reported.

The violence came less than a week after President Donald Trump tweeted that gun crime in Chicago had reached “epidemic proportions” and that he would be “sending in Federal help.”

Attorney General Jeff Sessions later clarified that federal assistance for the city of 2.7 million will come in the form of the Chicago Crime Gun Strike Force, a collaboration between the police and the Department of Justice’s Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF).

Chicago’s ongoing struggles with violence come amid an effort to reform its police department after a federal investigation found officers routinely violated citizens’ civil rights and used excessive force and racially discriminatory conduct.

The Rev. Michael Pfleger, an activist who heads a large African-American Catholic church in Chicago, said in an interview on Wednesday that more needs to be done to address underlying causes of violence such as unemployment, foreclosures, poverty and neighborhood blight.

“And people ask why I am flying the American flag upside down,” he wrote on Facebook. “We are safer in Iraq.” {eo}

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