

World

Girl, 12, is killed by a stray bullet during a drive-by shooting in Sweden

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The shooting at the weekend of a 12-year-old girl in Stockholm sparked outrage on Monday and reignited a debate around a rise in gang-related violence in Sweden.

The girl, who is not believed to have been the intended target, was hit by a stray bullet aimed at two men allegedly linked to Swedish organised crime, local news website, Expressen, reported.

People had placed flowers and candles at the scene on Monday.

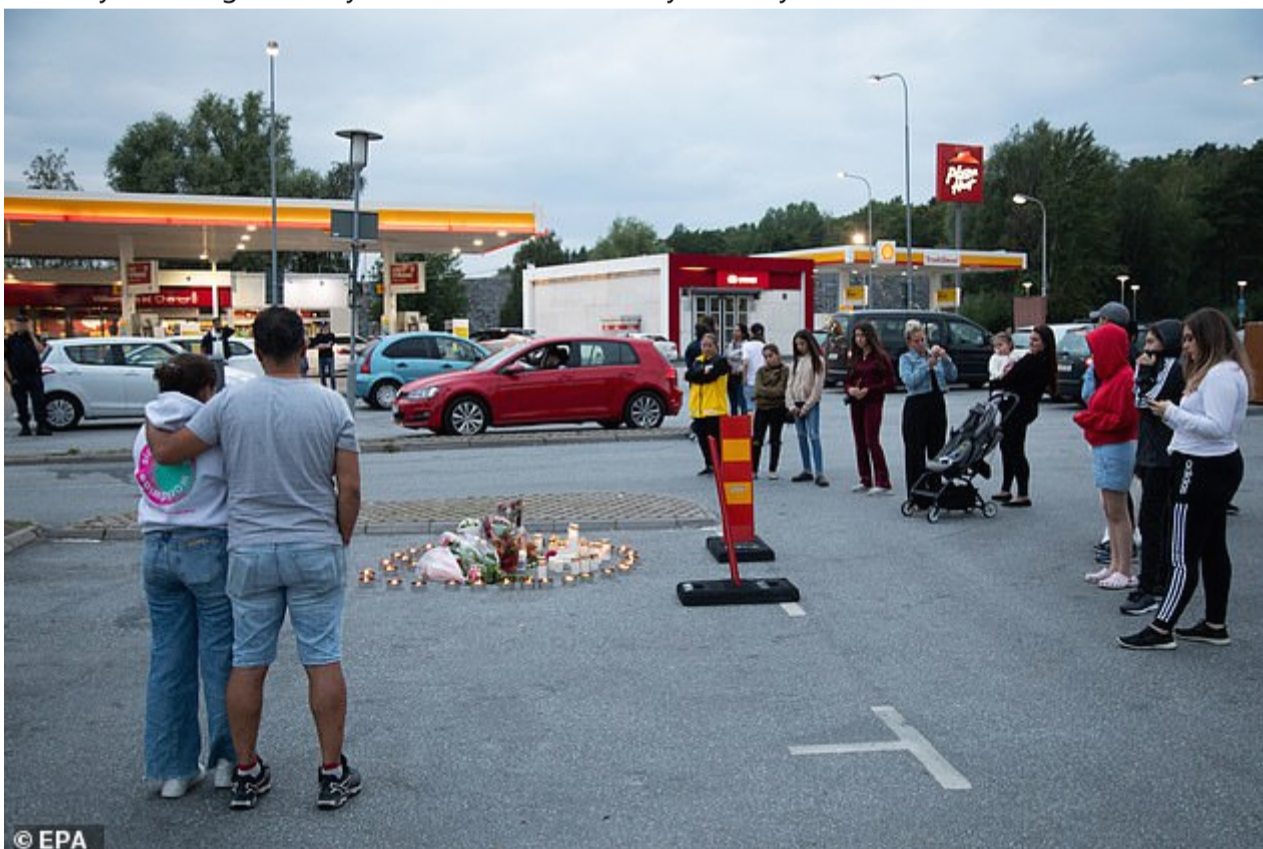
'This can't happen again. It's a 12-year-old girl,' said Christina Lundstrom, 51, who had come to pay her respects.



Police working at the site today, where a twelve year old girl was shot near a petrol station in Botkyrka, south of Stockholm, Sweden on Sunday morning



Police take photographs as they gather evidence after a 12-year-old girl was shot dead in an allegedly botched drive-by shooting, in Botkyra, south of Stockholm yesterday



People pay tribute by putting candles and flowers at the site where a twelve year old girl was shot near a petrol station in Botkyrka, south of Stockholm, Sweden, today. The girl was taken to hospital, but later died from her injuries

No arrests have been made, but police told AFP that they had opened a murder investigation and were seeking information about a white car seen at the time of the shooting.

Justice Minister Morgan Johansson described his 'dismay and disgust' to news agency TT, and promised 'more police and harsher sentences'.

Speaking on Swedish radio, opposition MP, Johan Forsell, called for a re-think 'to make Sweden safer.'

Sweden has given police added surveillance powers, stepped up witness protection schemes and toughened sentencing for drugs and weapons-related crimes after a wave of shootings and bombings in recent years.

During the first six months of 2020, 20 people have been killed in 163 shootings, in the country of some 10.3 million inhabitants, according to police.

In 2019, there were some 42 deaths in 334 reported shootings.

Last August, two women, who were also not the intended targets, were shot in incidents just weeks apart.

Criminologist Ardavan Khoshnood told broadcaster SVT that in the last 10 years, about 15 innocent bystanders had been killed.



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Local police chief Carolina Paasikivi said she could not confirm the reports until her team had gathered evidence.

'I cannot confirm any such reports, but want to underline that we are in great need of witnesses and observations. It's only when we have that that we can say what happened. Let us determine whether or not they are relevant observations,' Paasikivi told the TT newswire.

The shooting happened shortly before 3.30am on Sunday morning outside a petrol station in the Norsborg area of Botkyrka, south of Stockholm.

Paasikivi said police were currently trawling through hours of CCTV footage and that investigators had found 'interesting' scenes they'll be able to analyse.

As of this morning, no arrests have yet been made, but Paasikivi said several people have been brought in for questioning to assist with the case.

Sweden's Interior Minister, Mikael Damberg, said: 'I am aware that no words are enough for the one who lost a child in this terrible way, but I still want to say that our thoughts go to you and that we share your grief in this difficult time.'

'From the side of the government, we will continue to vigorously expand society's ability to fight crime with more police, tougher penalties and preventive work.'

Pictures from the scene yesterday show investigators combing through the area, which is outside a McDonalds restaurant and Shell pump station.

'We will investigate and do everything in our power to bring the people behind this terrible act to justice,' national police chief Anders Thornberg told TT.

'We will collect witness statements, forensic evidence and all material that could help us move the investigation forward. But how successful we are also depends on those who know anything about the incident coming forward and helping us solve the crime.'

Local Michel Rizk told Aftonbladet that he arrived at the petrol station to refuel, but found the premises shut off by investigators.

'I think it's tragic. You get worried,' he said.

'I have children myself and it is only a matter of time before they run down to the gas station to buy something.'

Locals have gathered to light candles and hold a vigil for the 12-year-old.

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