Students lead national gun-control rallies

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By Zhang Ruinan in New York |   
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While Washington was the center of nationwide protests against gun violence on Saturday, many other cities across the US participated in the March for Our Lives, called one of the biggest youth protests since the Vietnam War.  
The protests were the result of a mass shooting at a high school in Parkland, Florida last month in which 17 people were killed. A former student at the school was charged in the massacre.  
In New York, as many as 175,000 people from newborn babies to grandparents were in the crowd that went from Central Park West to Midtown.  
Led by a group of blue-clad drummers, advocates carried signs says with expressions such as: "No more silence. End gun violence." "Our schools are not cemeteries."  
"The adults failed us, and now 17 people are dead," Meghan Bonner, a student from Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida told the crowd at West 61st Street and Central Park West, accompanied by classmate Sam Hendler.  
Hendler read the names of the victims and asked the crowd to honor them with a moment of silence.  
"I want to see change," Bonner said. She wept as she recalled the day of the shooting on Feb 14 that was the impetus for a nationwide outcry by student activists.  
US Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo and New York Mayor Bill de Blasio were among the Democratic Party politicians who joined the march.  
"I'm out here today because we need common sense gun control," said Susan Gold, a mother of an elementary school child. "And I'm terrified every day about what will happen on campus when he goes to school; it's ridiculous - 2018, we should not be afraid of sending our children to schools."  
"We are high school students in Long Island, and we came here to march for gun control and safety for all," said Dylan, a high school student who marched with her classmates. "When the incident happened in Parkland, it was very scary for us because our school is very like that."  
Co-organized by Ballard High School student Emilia Allard, the Seattle March For Our Lives event attracted thousands of students, parents and other concerned citizens calling for gun reform. The march kicked off at Cal Anderson Park on Capitol Hill.  
"In the Constitution, it says we have the right to a well-regulated militia; it just does not mean a teenager who can't even buy an alcohol beverage is able to walk in any gun shop and buy a gun that can fire 10 rounds a second," said Lucy Keegan, a ninth grader from The Center School in Seattle. "There is no reason why you should need that gun in this country."  
The Second Amendment of the United States Constitution, adopted in 1791, states: "A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed."  
Some supporters of the amendment argue it means that anyone has the right to arms, while some opponents say it was referring to the army, as the US was eight years removed from the Revolutionary War against Great Britain.  
More than 25,000 people joined the march at the San Francisco Civic Center Plaza.  
"Young people around this country are standing up to make sure the grown-ups in DC are listening to their voices, said London Breed, San Francisco Board of Supervisors president.  
Lucas Hackett-Provenzano, 17, from Redwood City, California, said, "I hope once we can vote, we can vote out the politicians and change the gun laws."  
About 15,000 people packed the Tranquility Park in downtown Houston. Mayor Sylvester Turner, US Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee and Houston Police Chief Art Acevedo were in attendance.  
Garrison Martin, a seventh grader at Presbyterian School, was selling T-shirts he designed with a "Never Again" message.  
"I think it's messed up how they try to protect guns, not children. Children are getting injured and dying in school. It's scary to me. I don't want to have to worry about it when I go to school," said Martin, who will donate his sales proceeds to support children injured in the Florida shooting.  
A few gun-rights supporters bearing rifles stationed themselves at a corner across Tranquility Park.  
One of them, who identified himself as Carl, said that he does not like the National Rifle Association but considers owning a gun an inherent right of self-defense, similar to property rights.  
"We are entitled to owning a gun as long as we are responsible," he said.

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