

Austin on high alert as SXSW begins



Jay Janner/Austin American-Statesman file photos

Seenachan of the band Tokyo Syoki Syodo performs last year at the Mohawk during SXSW. This year's event begins Thursday.

Bloodshed ranks among shootings with highest victim counts in Texas in 12 years

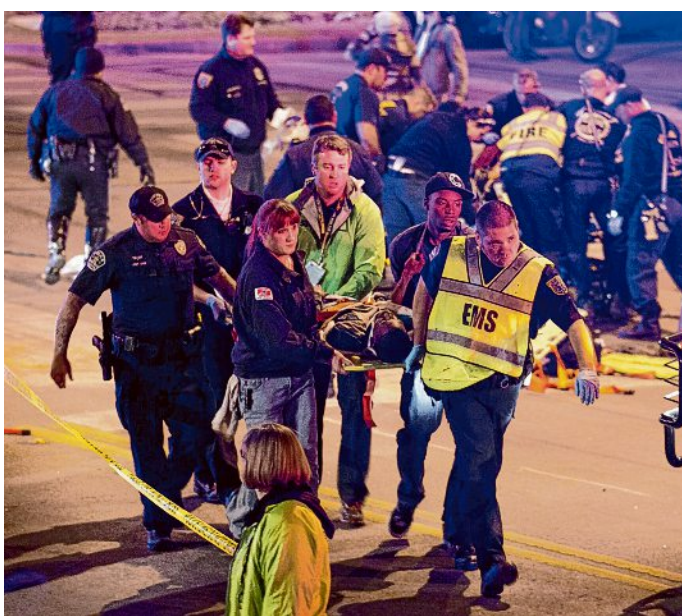
By Karina Kumar and Michael Barnes
STAFF WRITERS

Ryder Harrington and Savitha Shan never made it home from their night out on West Sixth Street. A gunman opened fire along the bar-lined street early on March 1, killing both of them and wounding 16 others in a burst of violence that stunned the city.

By the next day, the death toll had climbed again. Jorge Munoz-Pederson, who had been on life support, died from his injuries, authorities said.

The gunman was pronounced dead at the scene after an exchange of gunfire with police. In all, 19 people were shot — four fatally and 15 others injured.

The bloodshed marks the **Ranks continues on A4**



Jessica Cohen, third from left, carries an injured man to an ambulance after a drunken driver plowed through a crowd at the 2014 South by Southwest. After that, the city put up concrete barricades to enforce street closures.

IN AUSTIN360

Ten things you need to know before heading to this year's South by Southwest festival. **D1**

Security reviewed after mass shooting; police chief says event will be safe

By Deborah Sengupta Stith, Karoline Leonard and Mars Salazar
STAFF WRITERS

The 40th anniversary edition of the South by Southwest Conference and Festival will open Thursday in a city shaken by a deadly downtown shooting that left four people, including the shooter, dead and 15 injured.

The gunman fired on a crowd of revelers at a cluster of popular college student hangouts on West Sixth Street in the early hours of March 1. The incident is being investigated as a possible act of terrorism.

Two days after the shooting, Austin Police Chief Lisa Davis said she feels confident that the city has the resources to secure the event.

"South by Southwest will con- **Security continues on A4**

Texas gas prices climb as Iran war rattles oil

Crude briefly spiked near \$120 a barrel

By Travis Webb
STAFF WRITER

U.S. crude briefly jumped to about \$120 per barrel Monday — nearly twice its price in the run-up to the U.S.-Israeli war with Iran — as widening hostilities impacted Mideast oil production and crimped shipping lanes.

Texas and U.S. drivers are among those feeling the pain, with average pump prices up about 50 cents in the past week.

They're rising along with the price of crude oil, the largest component of retail gasoline prices.

West Texas Intermediate crude, the U.S. benchmark, briefly climbed to \$119.48 a barrel before falling back to \$95.32 by noon. Brent crude, the international benchmark, hit \$119.50 — its highest level since the summer after Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022.

"In economic terms, this is already the largest oil supply shock ever," said Nicholas Mulder, an assistant professor of history who studies the economic impacts of wars at Cornell University.

Last week, a Texas Christian University professor said "there may be no upper limit on oil prices" amid the conflict and another researcher predicted international crude could hit \$140 by the end of next week.

Prices were whipsawed Monday by the possibility of an agreement among Group of Seven leaders to tap emergency oil reserves in an effort to contain soaring oil prices. Though they held off on releasing oil for now, the possibility appeared to calm markets.

Such efforts come amid concerns that continuing oil price increases could trigger higher costs at a time many U.S. consumers are already struggling to make ends meet. Higher oil and gas prices can push overall inflation higher, further straining household budgets and denting the consumer spending that is the dominant engine behind big economies like the U.S.

In Texas, drivers Monday were paying \$3.13 for a gallon of regular gasoline, up 51 cents from a week earlier. In Austin, the average price jumped to **Gas continues on A6**

Action by feds might hit refugees in Texas hard

By Julián Aguilar
STAFF WRITER

In late January, the Rev. Milan Homola boarded a 5 a.m. flight from Minnesota to Texas after his church learned that a refugee was stranded in Houston following his arrest by immigration agents in Minneapolis.

The refugee was swept up in the Trump administration's Operation PARRIS, an effort the Department of Homeland Security described as an anti-fraud campaign that is reexamining the status of thousands of refugees who haven't applied for permanent legal residency.

"We got a call that he is just out on the street in Houston. They let a group out ... and literally told them to find their own way home," said Homola, a pastor at a bilingual church in the Twin Cit-

ies. "He couldn't fly because they didn't give them back passports or papers or anything like that."

The Trump administration has since expanded the "reexamination" effort beyond Minnesota — a move that could significantly affect Texas' refugee population. Refugees and advocates argue that the new policy creates impossible deadlines and undermines long-standing legal protections.

In a memo issued Feb. 18 by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the agency said a refugee must "return or be returned" to custody after one year of being admitted into the country and be vetted for permanent residency, also called a green card. If they don't return voluntarily, ICE will arrest and detain them.

The guidance replaces a 2010 memorandum that said failure to **Refugees continues on A2**



Rozan Munir Arafat, 12, center, a Palestinian refugee from the Gaza Strip who lost her family and her leg in the Israel-Hamas war, is surrounded by supporters gathered in Houston to welcome her arrival from Turkey in 2024.

Houston Chronicle file photo

