

Not Just Paris: Why Is Beirut's Brutal Terrorist Attack Being Ignored?

As the world mourns for Paris, I'm left wondering why my people aren't deemed worthy of the same collective grief

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Friday's devastating attacks in Paris left hundreds dead or injured, paralyzed the city and brought ISIS's terrorism to the Western world for the first time.

In the days since the attacks, love and support for the beloved French capital has poured out from every corner of the world. The Empire State Building and Sydney Opera House were lit in the colors of the French flag. Facebook quickly rolled out a tricolor profile picture filter so users could “support France and the people of Paris” and a “safety check” feature to allow people in Paris to alert their friends and family members that they were safe.

President Barack Obama [noted that](#) “this was an attack not just on Paris... not just on the people of France, but... on all of humanity and the universal values that we share.”

But there was another ISIS attack late last week that was every bit as tragic. It took place in Beirut – the city that many of my ancestors called home, and where I now also live and work, as a foreign correspondent. Yet the attack was barely noticed in the West. As messages of solidarity with France flood my social media feeds, and friends and peers express horror at the atrocities committed, I'm left wondering why my own people — and my peers, who make up the bulk of my stories — aren't deemed worthy of the same caliber of coverage, the same palpable collective grief.

On Thursday evening, two ISIS operatives, whose identities are still unknown, exploded themselves in a crowded marketplace in the Bourj al-Barajneh neighborhood of Beirut, killing 44 and injuring more than 200 others in the worst terrorist attack the city has seen in years.

Although the terrorist group behind the attacks in Paris and Beirut was the same, the Western media narrative has been vastly different. In Paris, ISIS attacked the city's progressive youth, massacring dozens enjoying their night out at a concert, a soccer game and a restaurant. In Beirut, ISIS struck a “Hezbollah stronghold” in the “southern suburbs of Beirut,” a poor, majority Shia area often characterized as a bastion of terrorism in the region. The attack was portrayed as little more than strategic punishment for Hezbollah's ongoing involvement in the Syrian civil war and support of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's regime.

Most media did not mention that, while Bourj al-Barajneh is located in the southern suburbs of Beirut, and does, like many traditionally Palestinian refugee camps, have a Hezbollah

presence, it is also a diverse neighborhood, full of Lebanese, Palestinians and Syrians with a variety of political and religious affiliations. The attackers that exploded themselves in the crowded marketplace intended to massacre as many civilians as possible, taking with them men, women, children, students and older people of all faiths and backgrounds. One of the casualties was a Lebanese-American woman who was visiting for just a few days from Dearborn, Michigan, hoping to bring some of her family back to the United States.

But when the blasts went off in Beirut, there was no “safety check” on Facebook for Lebanese — or Syrians or Palestinians — living in Bourj al-Barajneh. No world leader called it an “attack on all of humanity.” There were no visible solidarity demonstrations, showing support and compassion for those who lost their lives.

Needless to say, the Empire State Building did not project a cedar tree — the iconic symbol of the Lebanese flag — over the New York City skyline.

It is scientifically proven, and emotionally understandable, that a small tragedy in one’s own backyard elicits more grief than a global catastrophe on the other side of the world. But in the case of Paris and Beirut, it’s perplexing why one is worthy of collective grief and mourning, while the other is not.

Why is violence in one part of the world barely worthy of news coverage, while violence in another collectively mourned?

Is it because bombs and violence are considered routine in the Middle East, but not in Europe?

This is not only about Paris and Beirut. It is also about the daily bombings and frequent massacres in Syria and Iraq that have largely fallen off the media’s radar. It is about the borders that are rapidly closing for Syrians and Iraqis fleeing ISIS violence in their own countries, leaving them with no option but to make dangerous sea crossings and walk through Europe, illegally crossing borders until they can hope to claim asylum. It is about the fact that the passport one holds — an accident of birth, in most cases — makes some people worthy of safety and compassion, and others not.

It’s not just Paris: All of these tragedies are “an attack on all of humanity.”

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