

A Tale of Two Cities: Why Silence When Beirut Gets Bombed but Tears for Paris?

By [Mahdi Darius Nazemroaya](#)

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Universally, governments have condemned the attacks that took place in the French capital's northern suburb of Saint-Denis on November 13, 2015. Unquestionably, the murder and mayhem that happened in Paris was despicable and tragic. Questions need to be asked, however, as part of an important discussion about the narrative that is emerging.

Putting up French flags and showing solidarity for the people of Paris has immersed vast stretches of the international public. Memes and symbols of support are appearing everywhere. Showing support for Paris has become a major trend on social media and in Euro-Atlantic capitals.

A tale of two cities and two standards

The Saint-Denis attacks come a day after the attacks on Beirut's southern Dahiye area on November 12, 2014. The murder and mayhem in Beirut virtually went unnoticed in North America and the European Union. This is important to note, because it means that two different standards are being applied.

The role of the media and the messages it is sending to audiences cannot be overlooked whatsoever. If the terrorist attacks in Beirut were even mentioned, the mainstream media casually only did so. On the other hand, the mainstream media reports about the tragedy in Paris have shown concern and emotion for the attacks there. Victims in places like Baghdad, Mogadishu, Damascus, Donetsk, Tripoli, Gaza, and Sanaa do not even register as newsworthy. News channels have continuously broadcast images and reports about the violence in Paris while politicians and officials across the US Empire have begun their epithets, in the process stoking fear and saturating public opinion and emotions. Facebook even began asking users who were in Paris if they were safe by checking in, but did not provide the same service for Beirut users. Has this service even been provided once for the Baghdadis that have been plagued with consistent terrorist bombings since the illegal Anglo-American invasion of Iraq in 2003?

As an example of how people's emotions can be engaged and influenced, the Lebanese-Canadian singer Sari Abboud, known by the stage name of Massari, who was in Paris at the time, was engrossed in the misfortune of Saint-Denis to the point where he made a statement on social media saying that he was praying for Paris. He overlooked his own ancestral land and said nothing about Lebanon. One of his fans quickly responded by asking him why he did not pray for the people of Beirut. The revealing comments were removed quickly. Massari was clearly swept up by the current of the day.

Political interests define terrorism and atrocities in conjunction to who it is perpetrated against. They try to define who merits our concerns and sympathy, and which peoples do not deserve our sympathy. There is a message when US, British, Australian, French, Canadian, and German politicians and leaders make statements in solidarity with the Parisian people, but virtually ignore Beirutis and the peoples of Libya, Yemen, Somalia, Iraq, Nigeria, East Ukraine, and Palestine.

Differential politics

Audiences are being inundated by mass media about the tragedy in Paris whereas the terrorism in Beirut is being ignored or sanitized. This is happening for a reason. It is a matter of the differentials that power interests are projecting. As a part of this, a subtle discourse is tacitly implying that what happened in Beirut is not a tragedy and that the Lebanese people are less deserving of global sympathy than the French people.

This discourse is part of the illusive discursive process of the «Global War on Terror» that aims to justify conquest and domination in humanitarian and righteous terms. The victims of the terrorism in Beirut are disregarded and go unseen, because the people that were murdered in Beirut were an accumulation of Lebanese citizenry, Arab identity, Muslim faith, Shiite confession, the working class, and people that lived in a spatial entity known to back Hezbollah. The civilian victims in Beirut are essentially condemned to being lower on the hierarchical totem pole of humanity than their counterparts in Paris. Their crimes are the accumulation of things mentioned above that they are.

In the US, a Pennsylvanian candidate running for the US Senate, Everett Stern, wrote multiple times how he supported the terrorist attacks on Beirut. On Twitter, [he declared](#): «Good news!!! I hope Hezbollah terrorists were killed.» When confronted, Stern categorized the attack in Beirut as an attack on Hezbollah.

Hezbollah fights ISIL death squads, but the French government supports ISIL

Moreover, the historical patterns of how these events are manipulated cannot be overlooked either. Whenever these attacks take place and governments and mass media go into overdrive to inundate society, they opportunistically promote certain interests. These interests can take the form of curbing civil liberties or justifications for wars. This is what the US government did after the tragic events of September 11, 2001.

France quickly closed its borders when the tragedy in Paris occurred and before the dust has settled the opportunistic and unpopular French Francois Hollande has begun talking of a «merciless» war. This does not auger well. Migrants and immigrants are being blamed while Islamophobia and xenophobia in the European Union will be fuelled. Undoubtedly, the tragedy in Paris will be used to justify and promote the dirty wars in the Middle East that the French government has partnered itself up to wage with the United States. Already [reports](#) about Syrian and Egyptian passports found at the Stade de France are being widely circulated, especially with emphasis on Syria. Although the decision to send the French warship was taken earlier, it was soon reported after the attack that the Charles De Gaulle French Aircraft Carrier was being sent from Toulon to the Middle East to help the US-led military operations.

At the end of the day it cannot be ignored that the ilk behind the attack in Paris are the same breed of people that France has directly or indirectly supported in Syria, Libya,

Lebanon, and the broader Middle East. The French government and President Hollande have been supporters of Al-Qaeda, Al-Nusra, and the ISIL/ISIS/DAESH/IS in one form or another. These are the groups that the French government and its allies, such as the US and Saudi Arabia, have supported with weapons, trained, and provided diplomatic and political cover for as proxies in regime change operations in the Middle East. When the same criminals and offenders act the same way in Damascus or Aleppo, their crimes are excused or overlooked. Syrian President Bashar al-Assad quickly [made this point](#) about what took place in Paris on November 13, 2015.

President Hollande has described the attacks on Paris as a war conducted from abroad. The truth is the opposite. The source of the attack is not abroad as the French government claims. There is a connection between this violence and French foreign policy. France's government is one of the authors of the terror that has trained, supported, and encouraged these types of activities. «Now they call them terrorists because today they are killing French people, but when they used to kill Syrian people they were considered jihadists,» Bashar Al-Jaafari, the Syrian envoy to the United Nations, has commented.

Less than a year ago, an attack on the French publication Charlie Hebdo was conducted by individuals that were supported and encouraged by the French government to go fight in Syria and topple the government in Damascus. Ultimately, the people in France should be angry at the French government for supporting these individuals and groups when they went to fight in Syria and other countries. In one way or another, these attacks in Paris are the results of the regime change policies of the US and its allies, including France. If you encourage people to murder and fight overseas, or to support that type of conduct, what do you think they will do inside your country or when they get back?

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About the author:

An award-winning author and geopolitical analyst, Mahdi Darius Nazemroaya is the author of *The Globalization of NATO* (Clarity Press) and a forthcoming book *The War on Libya and the Re-Colonization of Africa*. He has also contributed to several other books ranging from cultural critique to international relations. He is a Sociologist and Research Associate at the Centre for Research on

Globalization (CRG), a contributor at the Strategic Culture Foundation (SCF), Moscow, and a member of the Scientific Committee of Geopolitica, Italy.

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