

PATRIOTISM OR POLITICS?

Politicized sympathy seen in media and declarations of lowering flags to half-staff

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NOV. 13, 2015, AN INFAMOUS DAY known for two unfortunate events: The first in Paris, France where ISIS, terrorist organization, attacked innocent civilians in key locations of the Paris nightlife killing 130 people. Earlier that day, about two thousand miles away, ISIS attacked the capital of Lebanon, Beirut, in a shopping mall killing 43 people. Both of these events occurred at a far distance from one another but the scenarios mirror each other. Yet, the American media only report one of the two attacks.

In the aftermath of the Paris attacks the whole world watched as the news attempted to cover as much as they could on the event. People used #prayforparis innumerable times on all social media platforms. Cities lit up with the French tricolour and those colors were reflected on buildings as a symbol of support.

Additionally, the flags at BV West and the rest of the United States flew at half-staff to show awareness and support for those in Paris. This amount of sympathy is not at all inappropriate and is necessary for bringing out the humanity in the midst of all the chaos. What is troubling is that most Americans, including students at BV West, were not even aware of the attacks on Beirut.

Beirut did not get a hashtag. Beirut did not get the beautiful colors symbolizing their country reflecting on any buildings. Beirut did not get any flag of any sort lowered for them as a sign of respect. Most importantly, Beirut did not get the appropriate, well-deserved news coverage it needed. In fact, awareness of the event seemed so little it was as if it did not even happen. It did.

Some have tried to explain that this slight could be a coincidence or the attention was focused

more on Paris because of its proximal time to the Beirut attacks. But this was not the only time that a terrorist attack occurred in two places and the attack on the Western nation received the most attention. Most recently, the attack in Brussels, Belgium received mass media attention comparative to the Paris attacks. Days after the Brussels attack, both Iraq and Yemen were also attacked by ISIS. As most know, these two attacks in the Middle East had little to no news coverage even though they were on such a similar scale of events and only three days apart.

This lack of awareness and support for Eastern countries in the midst of a crisis is a form of discrimination and gives the sense that lives of those living farther away are less valuable than those closer to home. This is inhumane treatment from the media and quite ridiculous of the major news channels. To be totally oblivious to an event that, for a moment, shook a country and made their citizens feel unsafe in their own homes.

The news is meant to be a platform to bring awareness for significant world events. It is concerning when this lack of coverage starts to be used to play a part in a system of discrimination against Middle Eastern/Eastern countries and the lives of their people. Reevaluation needs to occur in order for there to be a solution to this ongoing issue of ignorance.

It is detrimental towards many groups of people when the news media continues to use proximity to derive importance. All places where a significant crisis occurs deserve to have news coverage, signs of sympathy and support through social media, and have the flags at BV West and the rest of the United States respectfully flown at half-staff.