

As France enters yet another period of mourning, Lebanon is just emerging from one. If you didn't know better, you could be excused for believing that the planning behind the latest terrorist attack in Paris is about more than just causing widespread death and fear in the West. It looks like it's also designed to highlight our selective outrage.

Overnight, dozens of people have been confirmed dead in a series of coordinated attacks in Paris. News sites have fired up live blogs. Serious news Channels such as Sky are providing blanket 24-hour coverage of the event, and, as with all things tragedy, media are competing with each other for scoops and gory videos. World leaders are also out in force, condemning the attacks. Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull held a press conference in Berlin a short time ago, after sending out this message of solidarity with the French people.

French president Francois Hollande has declared a national State of Emergency, and closed its borders. Meanwhile, in a brown part of the world, as the attacks began in Paris, Lebanon was just emerging from a National Day of Mourning, after 43 people were killed and 200 more were injured during a series of coordinated suicide bombings in Beirut. But the bombings in Lebanon drew no tweet from Malcolm Turnbull, no social media statement from Barack Obama, no live media blogs from Western media, no wall-to-wall media coverage.

How do we explain our identification with French suffering and our apparent indifference to Lebanese suffering? Or more to the point, how do we explain our indifference to the suffering of people we perceive as different, Lebanese, African, Hazara, Muslim.... Brown people.