IN DEFENCE OF THE MEDIA

Posted on March 29, 2016 by Eddie

All newspapers and media concentrate on issues which have local relevance; that's how it works. But we have the ability to break out of our locality and read the world's press. But it's easier just to share pictures on Facebook complaining about things.
Category: Observations

I didn't always watch the TV news when we lived in Ivory Coast, but on the evening that Princess Diana died, I sat down to watch the coverage. The event which caused an unprecedented outpouring of grief in the UK wasn't the first item on the news, nor the second. In fact, it didn't get mentioned until the second half of the bulletin, following on from an item about onion growing in the north of the country.

Over the last few weeks, this story has been on my mind as I've been reading Facebook posts complaining about the lack of coverage of terrorist attacks around the world. You've seen the sort of thing; articles comparing the number of people who died in an attack in Europe with those who were killed in Asia and then looking at the amount of coverage in the press. The European events get much more coverage which proves how evil/uncaring/racist the press are.

Is this really the case?

First of all, let me say loud and clear that all lives matter. I don't care whether the victims of terrorismÂ are European, Asian, African, Christian, Muslim, Buddhist or Jedi Knight, they are equally valuable and should be equally mourned. However, it is also true that we take more of an interest in those who are close to us; I mourn the death of family and friends more than I mourn the death of a complete stranger. This doesn't mean that the stranger is less important or valuable as a human being, but it does mean that their death touches me less than the death of someone close to me.

Likewise, a terrorist bombing in Brussels, a city I have visited many times and where I have close friends, touches me more than one in a part of the world I don't know. It is understandable that the British press would concentrate on an eventÂ close at home; on a city that can be reached by train from London in a couple of hours, rather than on an equally terrible event on the other side of the globe. Equally, I'd expect the local press in, say, Ankara, to give more coverage to events there than they did to the bombings in Brussels.

When the news about the beach attacks at Grand Bassam first hit twitter, I was stunned. Our family have spent many Sunday afternoons on that beach, we know it well and as I discovered later, a close friend of ours was caught up in the violence. The attack on Bassam touched us more than most terrorist incidents overseas, because of our connection to the place. To be honest, there wasn't a lot of coverage in the British press. However, there was a lot of information available internationally (though you have to read French to get some of it). By following the story on Twitter and following a few links, I was able to stay well informed about the attack and its aftermath.

This is the point of the internet; we have unprecedented access to information from around the world. We are not limited to reading the British or Western press. A quick Google search canÂ turn up newspapers from just about anywhere and we have Twitter as an unrivalled source of breaking news.

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