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Collateral Damage Comes Home: Lebanon, Palestine, Iran to Michigan

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The already unbearable horrors engulfing the peoples of the Middle East exploded into U.S. domestic news on March 12 with the attack in suburban Detroit at Temple Israel, the country's largest Reform Jewish congregation.

By the grace and luck of the quick security-team response inside the building, and that the explosives reportedly in the attacker's truck didn't detonate, a potential mass casualty catastrophe was averted. The building filled with smoke, but evidently there was no explosion.

The temple was successfully evacuated, including some 140 in its early childhood center. A lockdown of all Jewish institutions in the vicinity was lifted a few hours later.

The suspect Ayman Ghazali, a 41-year-old restaurant worker in Dearborn Heights and U.S. naturalized citizen, was killed in the truck he drove into the temple and through a hallway. It's been confirmed that four of his close family members, including a brother, niece and nephews, had been killed by an Israeli bombing strike in Lebanon.

There have been no reports that Ghazali had militant or terrorist connections. A trained operative or someone receiving expert assistance might have had "success" in a suicide-bombing attempt. In the unimaginable worst scenario, carnage at the synagogue could have approached the numbers of children at the Iranian school incinerated by the U.S. missile strike at the beginning of Donald Trump's "little excursion."

Pending any further information, then, we should assume that Ayman Ghazali was a human being driven to suicidal madness by Israel's murder of his family in Lebanon. On our daily news feeds, it registers only marginally that over a thousand civilians in Iran have already been killed by U.S. and Israeli strikes; that Israeli military and settler killings of Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank continue without letup; and that the Israeli assault on Lebanon has displaced seven hundred thousand people from the south, and killed at least hundreds in the bombing of Beirut.

The Israeli defense minister has openly announced what's been evident from the beginning, that Israel's intentions include occupying or even annexing a part of southern Lebanon. The stated military goal of annihilating Hezbollah "once and for all" cannot be achieved without effectively destroying Lebanon itself — even though much of its population despises Hezbollah for what it's contributed to ruining the country.

The political culture in the United States is largely immunized from understanding what this mass destruction means and where it's leading. The atmosphere is further poisoned with the incoherent ramblings of Donald Trump, the cynical proclamations of Marco "Israel made us strike first" Rubio, and the maniacal ravings of Pete Hegseth announcing "our victory" while the world economy threatens to burn down.

In the wake of the Temple Israel attack and the shooting the same day at Old Dominion University (by a formerly convicted "Islamic State" sympathizer), we should be fearful of further violence against synagogues and mosques, Jewish and Muslim institutions, and redoubled government terror on immigrant communities.

Combine this with the racist and increasingly open antisemitic Tucker Carlson-Candace Owens far right spreading the toxic mythology that "the United States has gone to war for Israel" or even "for the Jews" — as if Washington were the junior member in the partnership of U.S. imperialism with the Israeli state.

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As Donald Trump's catastrophic war escalates, even beyond its absurd initial calculations of "quick victory," it's up to the people of this country to rise against it. The alternative, not only globally but also as collateral damage comes back home, is a degenerative spiral that is nowhere near the bottom yet.

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