

Israeli drone strike massacres family in southern Lebanon with ties to Dearborn, Michigan

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On Sunday, September 21, Shadi Charara, a car dealer, was driving his family home after a lunch at his father-in-law's house in the southern Lebanese town of Bint Jbeil when their vehicle was destroyed by an Israeli drone strike. The attack, which also targeted a nearby motorcycle, killed five people in an instant of fire and splintered metal, incinerating Charara and three of his children: eight-year-old Celine and 18-month-old twins, Hadi and Silan. The children's mother, Amani Bazzi, and another daughter, Asil, were wounded but survived the slaughter of their immediate family. The fifth victim was the motorcyclist, Mohammed Majed Mroue.

Lebanese Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri immediately reported that Shadi Charara and all three of his murdered children were citizens of the United States, but the US State Department quickly moved to disown the victims. A spokesperson stated, "While the situation is fluid, so far, indications are that the five killed were not US citizens. In fact, one had an unused immigrant visa petition in the past." Family members clarified that while Shadi did not have US citizenship, his father and siblings are citizens, and he had recently received approval to join them in the United States but was still waiting for the visas. Whether they held passports or merely a petition for a visa, they were killed by the military of a client state that is armed, funded and politically shielded by the US government.

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) issued a cynical statement, claiming its target was Mroue, a "Hezbollah terrorist," who "operated from within a civilian population". The IDF acknowledged that "several uninvolved civilians were killed," adding with feigned regret that the "incident is being investigated."

This promise of a "review" is a well-worn public relations tactic designed to deflect accountability and allow the crime to fade from the news cycle. The Israeli state does not conduct credible investigations into the killing of civilians because its military doctrine and targeting policies make such killings inevitable.

Lebanese President Joseph Aoun denounced the strike as a "massacre." Prime Minister Nawaf Salam, a former president of the International Court of Justice, correctly identified the attack's political purpose, calling it a "blatant crime against civilians and a message of intimidation targeting our people returning to their villages in the south."

The strike was not a mistake or an accident. The targeting of a family car in a town that has become a symbol of Lebanese resistance, in brazen violation of a ceasefire that was supposedly in effect, was a deliberate act of state terrorism. It was a political message aimed at terrorizing a population that has dared to resist Israeli occupation and US imperialist domination for half a century.

The attack was the latest in a series of near-daily Israeli military operations in southern Lebanon. Since the November 2024 truce was signed, Israeli airstrikes, drone attacks and artillery shelling have continued, killing dozens of civilians and preventing more than 82,000 people from returning to their homes due to the ongoing violence and occupation of several border areas.

The Israeli missile that tore through the Charara family's car in Bint Jbeil also struck the heart of a community 6,000 miles away in Dearborn, Michigan. Of the city's nearly 23,000 residents of Lebanese descent 10,000 trace their direct lineage to Bint Jbeil,

including members of Charara's extended family. The same US foreign policy that fueled the conflicts that drove generations of Lebanese to seek refuge in Dearborn still provides bombs, missiles and political cover for the Israeli state.

The news of the massacre sent a shockwave of grief and fury through Dearborn. At the funeral in Bint Jbeil, the coffins of Shadi Charara and his children were draped in Lebanese flags, while their mother, Amani Bazzi, her face bruised and swollen, was carried through the crowd on a stretcher. In Dearborn, commemoration services were held at the Bint Jebail Cultural Center.

Shadi's sister, Amina Charara, who lives in Dearborn, spoke through her grief of the family's constant fear for their relatives in Lebanon. She recalled to the Associated Press how their homes were damaged in last year's war, but they had felt lucky that no one was harmed. "We always said thank God we only lost stones and not human beings," she said. "The houses and stones can be rebuilt, but how can my brother return?"

"My brother was a man who loved life and loved his family. He had nothing to do with politics. He was working to provide for his family," she added. "What was the fault of the children for Israel to kill them?"

The diaspora community in Dearborn has poured millions of dollars into rebuilding Bint Jbeil, funding homes, businesses and a community center after the Israeli withdrawal in 2000. Organizations like the Dearborn-based Bint Jbeil Benevolent Association regularly conduct fundraisers, transferring hundreds of thousands of dollars in humanitarian aid to support their families and neighbors.

Bint Jbeil is a perennial target of Israeli violence because it is a historical center of popular resistance to foreign domination. In the 1930s, Bint Jbeil was a center of the "tobacco revolt," a popular uprising of farmers against the economic exploitation of the French colonial Mandate authorities. For the past fifty years, the town has been on the front lines of the struggle against Israeli aggression, enduring invasion in 1978 and a brutal military occupation from 1982 until 2000.

The population paid a horrific price. During the occupation, as much as 75 percent of the town's residents were forced to flee, many of them making their way to places like Dearborn. When the Israeli

military was finally forced into a humiliating withdrawal in 2000 by the armed resistance, Bint Jbeil became known as the "Capital of the Liberated South". It was in the town's stadium that Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah delivered a famous speech, declaring that Israel was as weak as a "spider's web."

Because of this powerful symbolism, Bint Jbeil was targeted for annihilation during the 2006 war. It was fiercely bombarded, and large sections, including its historic souk (market) and old town, were systematically destroyed. This was a calculated military strategy aimed at erasing the "collective memory" of the city and its history of resistance. The murder of Shadi Charara and three of his children is a continuation of this decades-long war against a people and their history.

The immense grief and anger in Dearborn is a powerful expression of a fundamental truth: the working class has no country. The autoworkers, teachers, nurses and small business owners of Dearborn, Michigan have infinitely more in common with the people of Bint Jbeil, Lebanon, than they do with the blood-soaked politicians and corporate oligarchs in Washington D.C.

Workers in the United States must join with their class brothers and sisters in Lebanon, Palestine, Israel and across the Middle East and the entire world to build a unified movement against war. This requires the construction of a new political leadership armed with the program of world socialist revolution. This is the only perspective capable of creating a society where families like the Chararas can live in peace, security and dignity.



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