



Censorship in Germany, Israeli Hacking & Saudi-Iran Peace Deal - Dr. Shir Hever

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Zain Raza (ZR): Thank you for tuning in today and welcome back to another episode of The Source. I'm your host, Zain Raza. And today I'll be talking to Dr. Shir Hever about the latest developments in Israel and Palestine. Dr. Shir Hever is an independent economist, author and journalist. He's also the military embargo coordinator of the Boycott National Committee, of the BDS movement. Shir Hever, welcome back to the show.

Shir Hever (SH): Thanks, Zain, for having me.

ZR: Last year in October, you were supposed to hold a lecture at the GEW in Heidelberg in Germany on the topic of child labor in Palestine under Israeli occupation. It was abruptly canceled. Our channel has grown substantially since we last interviewed you on this topic. And for those who missed this development, can you provide a brief overview of what happened and also update us on the case?

SH: Yeah, my case is just one out of many cases of censorship and silencing in Germany, especially when it comes to Palestinian rights. The GEW, which is one of the major teacher unions in Germany and refused to give the answer, to give the reasons why they chose to cancel this event about Palestinian children's labor. And there was a big scandal about this. Hundreds of people sent protest letters and there were some newspaper articles as well. In your channel, but also in the printed news. And the pressure on the GEW is not letting go, even though it's been a few months already. And in fact, just recently a member of the GEW has leaked the secret letter that was written behind my back by a Dr. Michael Blume. He is the person in charge of fighting anti-Semitism in the state of Baden-Württemberg, where I live. And he wrote a letter against me. He wrote many such letters against other people as well. And based on that letter the GEW made the decision to cancel the event at the very last

minute. They also refused to pay my fee, although they did say that they will pay my fee if I agree to be silenced on this matter and not say anything. So here I am speaking on this matter. So it was leaked because many members of the GEW are not happy with this culture of censorship. And they do think that the issue of Palestinian child labor is an important issue for the GEW and should not be simply silenced. And once I read the letter, I think it's very interesting to see, it clarifies a lot why the GEW are so silent about this. Because the letter is very indirect. There is no specific call for censorship and there is no specific accusation against me as an anti-Semite. There is no call to make this letter secret. So the GEW do not want to take responsibility for their actions. They want to put it on somebody else. They said "Oh, we got this letter", but they didn't agree to reveal the contents. Now we know the contents. We know it was their decision. And one last thing I think should be said about this, the GEW continues to refuse to have any kind of public debate about this or even private debate with me. And members of the GEW called Monica Stein - she's the chairwoman of the Baden-Württemberg GEW - and asked for a meeting. She said, "well, okay, I am willing to meet with GEW members", and they said, "no, but you also have to meet with Shir." And then she said, "well, I'm willing to meet only with you. And that's it." So once again, they're stonewalling. But I think this is not sustainable. The protest is growing. And if Michael Blume or Monica Stein think that through this kind of politics of censorship, they are going to prevent people from becoming informed about Palestinian rights and demanding equality and justice, they are very mistaken.

ZR: Talk more about the letter. What were they specifically asking the GEW? What were the reasons stated to avoid you from holding this speech? I mean, you're talking about child labour in occupied Gaza. And why would this cause such a big uproar?

SH: Well, child labour in Palestine is a very broad term in general. There are Palestinian children who go into Israel in order to work, and that also counts as Palestinian child labour. It's not just in Gaza. But no, the letter from Blume was very short. It mainly uses the same formula almost for all of these letters. And it's based on a line that the BDS movement, the movement for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions, he claims, is anti-Semitic. And he claims that the government of Baden-Württemberg has authorized him to fight this movement. Which is surprising, he's supposed to be a German official, not an Israeli official. But he's working for the state of Israel being paid by the German government. This is very problematic on many levels, and it's also undemocratic in the sense that the European Human Rights Court in Strasbourg has ruled that the BDS movement is not anti-Semitic. And the European Human Rights Court supersedes the policies of the state of Baden-Württemberg and the decision of this person, this individual, to just say, I'm going to ignore the court's decision and make up my own policy because my opinion is more important than the legal opinion is very reminiscent to what we're seeing with the populist right wing governments in Europe. We have it in Poland and Hungary, but we certainly have it very strongly in Israel right now. And this minister, who acts like an Israeli propaganda minister with a German salary, is actually reflecting the policies of the Israeli government, which is that the

government can decide to overrule the courts. He decided that he doesn't like the BDS movement, so he's going to write these letters and I think people in the GEW never even heard about the decision of the Human Rights Court. So they believe him.

ZR: In essence, this lecture of yours can be viewed as a criticism of Israeli policy in occupied Palestine. And in my view, this is a political issue. However, they are not being very open about the political suppression that they're undertaking and are guising this as anti-Semitism. Can you approach the courts with freedom of speech and freedom of expression and make your case on those grounds, or have you already done that?

SH: Anti-Semitism is also political. Let's be clear on that. It's all political. My talk was, of course, political. The GEW is a political organization. In their statement or in their mission statement, they talk about their belief in justice and democracy. It's a shame they're not implementing their own values. And so, of course, it's political. But the German laws don't allow for the right of people to speak for an organization that doesn't agree with that position. So the censorship - it's obviously censorship - but the censorship is not illegal. I cannot go to the court and say that you are not allowed to cancel the event with me because they are allowed. They are, however, obligated to pay me because I've already prepared my lecture. I've written it, I have conducted the study and I have filed a lawsuit to demand the payment. It's interesting what kind of responses they gave to the court, why they don't want to pay my fee, which I think shows that they are very uncertain in their position. But I think that the court decision will come soon. But this is, of course, just a step along the way. We're not talking about a lot of money. We're not talking about something so critical. I'm giving lectures almost every week. So it's not such a - it's a principle issue where my only way to get any kind of assistance from the court is over the issue of the payment. But I think the public pressure and the media pressure is important because it serves other people, especially Palestinians here in Germany, who are constantly getting silenced and constantly getting censored to scandalize this a little bit so that people will not have such an easy finger on the trigger of canceling events.

ZR: If I may say so, on a personal level, you have a Jewish background. A lot of people in the BDS movement have a Jewish background and they're critical about Israel's politics. How ironic is it that in the 21st century, Germany is silencing Jews for being critical of their government?

SH: The German government and a lot of German political institutions have decided to shift their support and their sense of responsibility for the Holocaust away from Jews and for the state of Israel instead. They consider the state of Israel to be the representative of the Jewish people. So actual anti-Semitism, which still exists in Germany on many levels, and physical attacks, verbal attacks against Jews for being Jews are often ignored and not given a lot of space by the government. But criticism of the state of Israel is called anti-Semitic, and that's simply wrong. The state of Israel does not represent Jews, and there are hundreds of Jewish

organizations around the world, but also here in Germany, which say "not in our name", meaning that, no, the state of Israel does not get to speak for the Jewish people. And attacking the state of Israel is not an anti-Semitic act. And it doesn't matter what kind of attack it is. If it's a verbal attack, if it's criticism or even if it's a violent attack, it doesn't count as anti-Semitism. But of course, the BDS movement is very much opposed to all use of violence, this has to be said very clearly. And I think this is now a very interesting moment with the Israeli government, the far right Israeli government, which is now evoking a lot of criticism from Jewish organizations who are using the methods and the language of the BDS movement. So there is now a petition of 1300 Jewish Israeli artists and academics to the British government saying you have to put sanctions on Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and don't invite him to speak in Britain. And this is clearly an act - they are supporting the boycott movement. And so now these 1300 Jewish Israeli artists and academics would be considered in Germany to be anti-Semitic. It is absurd, of course.

ZR: Let us switch gears here and look at another topic that did not get much attention in Germany. In 2018, it was revealed how Cambridge Analytica obtained the personal data of nearly 87 million Facebook users to influence and target voters. This data was sold to governments, political campaigns and even private companies. Some analysts say it played a factor in Donald Trump's 2016 election victory in the US and the Brexit vote in England. Now, Forbidden Stories has revealed that Israeli companies were also involved in this scandal. Could you talk about the involvement of Israeli companies and their activities?

SH: Right. Actually, we always knew that it was an Israeli company that provided programming services and information for Cambridge Analytica. It was called Archimedes Group. And the very famous whistleblower, Brittany Kaiser, who spoke about it - she was an employee of Cambridge Analytica. She spoke about this on the investigative committee of the Congress. And she mentioned, yes, there is this Israeli company, Archimedes Group. But when they were asking her who exactly was working in this group? Can you give us names? Can you give us information? She said, I don't remember anything. Now, that's - and she promised, I'll get back to you, you'll find out the names, I'll give them to you later. And she never did. Now, Forbidden Stories, which is one of the most important investigative journalism organizations in the world, have organized this investigation now into the source of disinformation campaigns. Disinformation campaigns, which mainly are used to change election results or to influence election results by spreading fake news, by creating avatars, fake avatars, humans that don't really exist with a stolen picture for one person with a different name from another person. And these avatars are very reliable, very believable, and they can create stories and create waves for a fake news story in order to change election results. There are companies who sell this. One of those companies doesn't really have a name. So Forbidden Stories called them Jorge's Team. Because the guy who runs it called himself Jorge. His real name is Tal Hanan. He's an Israeli and former Israeli military officer, and he sits in the city of Modi'in in Israel and operates this company and said to the journalists who pretended to be customers for €6 million, I can change the election results for

you. Starting from €6 million. That's not a lot of money. And that includes hacking into phones, creating those fake avatars to spread fake news and basically creating a scandal against the candidate you don't like in order to discredit this candidate and get another one to win. So this is a very, very serious threat to democracy. Tal Hanan then said in the interview with the journalist, "oh, you know Brittany Kaiser, the one who spoke about the Archimedes Group for Cambridge Analytica? I'm the one who put her in Cambridge Analytica." Maybe it was an empty boast. But if you believe him, then that really closes that mystery. Who are these Israelis who are involved with Cambridge Analytica? Now we know. It's one company out of several and the scandal is still ongoing. One of the biggest French TV stations just fired a very important TV host, because he spread fake news that he was given by an Israeli company. Now, allegedly he didn't do it maliciously, but rather just was incompetent and didn't check that the news that he was receiving was fake and didn't confirm it. But the problem is, it remains very difficult to find the actual culprits, to find those Israeli companies and make them accountable for spreading those lies because they use these fake avatars. And once the scandal is exposed, the avatars are deleted, and then the traces are gone. It's very difficult to find out who created this avatar in the first place. You know, their Facebook profile suddenly disappears, their Twitter profile. And now you cannot find this person anymore. This person never existed in the first place. When Tal Hanan, calling himself Jorge, was asked by these journalists, do you have authorization to do this kind of operation from the Israeli Ministry of Defense? He claimed, "no, I don't need any because I don't have a company. I'm not registered anywhere. I'm just doing what I want." But he also said that he's been doing this since 1997. So obviously there was no Facebook then. But there were other ways to create disinformation. And if he was operating from Modi'in in Israel for 26 years, the Israeli Ministry of Defense knows exactly what he's doing. This is clear that they know and approve it and allow it. And he said, well, we're only going to use this - I'm willing to do this in any country in the world except three. There are three countries where I'm not selling disinformation technology. And that is for the United States, for Russia and for Israel. But there are new discoveries that just came out now that the Israeli military had itself launched a disinformation campaign using fake avatars, using this very technology against the Israeli public. In 2021, there was - in May 2021 - an invasion or bombardment campaign against the Gaza Strip. There were riots and pogroms against Palestinian citizens of Israel in the binational cities, and there were - the Israeli binational cities - a lot of incitement for violence. It was a very, very tense time. And the Israeli military, which was at the time attacking Gaza and even bombed and destroyed a building used by the media, including by Al-Jazeera, and destroyed it and committed several war crimes. But they were very much concerned about the extent of destruction that they are causing because of the legal culpability, because of the problems that it could cause them. So they launched a fake campaign using disinformation targeted at the Israeli public in order to spread the fake news that they are causing more damage in the Gaza Strip than they really are. And that was because they believed that the Israeli public is so bloodthirsty that the military had to defend itself from accusations that it's been too soft. What they did is that they assigned fake news, those statements, "oh, we've just destroyed the neighborhood in Gaza." To Itamar Ben-gvir, one of the most right wing Israeli

politicians. As if he was spreading it, and he didn't. It wasn't his statement. But by assigning it to him, they actually gave him a lot of credibility and popularity. And now he is the minister of national security. That's one of the dangers of using this disinformation technology, because you deal in fake information. And if you assign it to somebody, then you are changing the popularity of that person. And now, of course, there's no way of taking it back. The minister of national security is a far right and very, very racist, very dangerous person who is now calling for using the maximum possible violence against Palestinian civilians. He's also using quite a lot of violence against Israelis if they are not loyal enough to the government. And so this is how those kinds of disinformation campaigns can backfire. It also proves that there is no such thing as saying, "Oh, we are not selling this technology to certain countries." It's a global technology. It's a global problem. And if there is no accountability, nobody's safe from it.

ZR: If Iran or Russia were using these technologies or even if it was originating from their countries and where the state was not involved, there would be openly outcry about it in the international community. How come Israel is allowed to have such companies that openly violate the most fundamental ethics regarding privacy, international law and human rights? And they can do this with impunity on the international stage.

SH: It's not a theoretical question. Iran, Russia, also the United States are engaging in disinformation campaigns. The technology exists and governments are using it. So, you know, there was a big scandal about Russia gate - about Russian interference in the US elections, which was blown out of proportion compared to the facts that were known. But I think it cannot be denied that there was some level of interference. Of course, U.S. interference in Russian elections was 100 times bigger. But that's something that governments do. I'm not saying this is okay, but there is a difference in the way that the Israelis do it, because there is a difference between what the government does and what the private sector does. And as far as I know, I've checked many different countries and many different examples. The only government that allows private owned companies to sell this technology to the highest bidder just for money, not for strategic purposes, is Israel. That's the problem, that you have these cases of election scandals in Nigeria, which, you know, are really just about corruption and not about strategic security issues or propaganda, pro-Israeli or anti Israeli propaganda. It's not the issue there. It's just that one candidate was able to spend a little bit of money to run a fake news campaign against the other candidate. And this causes tremendous damage to the democratic efforts in Nigeria. And the Israeli government tolerates it, not because they're trying to destabilize Nigeria. That's not the issue. It's not like, you know, Russia and the United States trying to destabilize each other. It's really because the Israeli government knows that there are very many young officers that are retired from the military and need a second career. They're still young and they want to work at something. And they become arms dealers. And one of the weapons that they deal with is this disinformation. The government tolerates it because otherwise these people might become leaders of the opposition, might criticize the government openly. So it's a sort of political

bribe that goes on within Israel. And the only way to stop it is international accountability. That means that the international community, international organizations, whether it's the EU, the UN, NATO as well - they have to tell the Israeli government that every kind of crime like this is the responsibility of the Israeli government. There will be consequences. There will be charges pressed against Israeli politicians that choose not to regulate this technology unless they are able to close these companies internally, which they have no intention of doing.

ZR: I would like to take a step back and examine a significant international development that took place on March 11th. China brokered a deal between Iran and Saudi Arabia, which would reestablish diplomatic ties between the two countries. Iran and Saudi Arabia are competitors in terms of oil, and also have been long term adversaries in the region conducting various proxy wars in Yemen, Syria and Lebanon. More meetings are going to be hosted by China in the future. And it was recently also reported that Saudi Arabia invited Iran's President Raisi to visit. What impact does this peace deal have on Israel's role in the region?

SH: A tremendous impact. You forgot to mention also that Iran and Saudi Arabia have a very deep theological disagreement. Because Iran is an officially Shia Muslim state and Saudi Arabia is a Sunni Muslim state. So that's one more reason for these two governments to be at odds with each other as the world - you know, Germany used to boast that its soft power kind of diplomacy, a country that they're very good at promoting and negotiating peace around the world. But China has really made a move here that is so significant for the possibility of peace in the Middle East that we cannot ignore it. You know, as much as I despise the governments of Iran and the governments of Saudi Arabia, very anti-democratic, very violent governments. But peace between them is so important because it has an impact on everybody. It's the civil war in Syria. It's the internal conflicts in Lebanon, in Iraq and in Yemen. Yemen, which is one of the bloodiest and most horrible humanitarian catastrophes in the form of a proxy war, a civil war, it's many different things. And now there are some first steps towards prisoner exchange and possible peace talks in Yemen as well, which is very important. But the thing is, the coalition against Iran that was built by the United States which was headed by Saudi Arabia with the UAE and with other countries there. And, you know, because Qatar was not really towing the line quite well enough and Qatar was willing to have some kind of contact with Iran. Then there was a threat by Saudi Arabia and the UAE against Qatar and all of this internal stress was built on this idea that, yes, Iran is very powerful. And all of these Gulf states, they have a lot of money, but they don't have strong armies. They don't have enough soldiers. They cannot really stand up militarily to Iran. But they have Israel. And Israel said, "oh, this is what we want. We want normalization. We want the Abraham Accords in order to become integrated in the Middle East, tolerated as this kind of western colony in the Middle East by these anti-democratic, authoritarian regimes, the Gulf regimes. Hoping that one day Saudi Arabia will also sign the Abraham Accords and finalize those accords. And in exchange, Israel can bring to the table weapons. And this is reflecting U.S. imperial interests in the region. But now this Southern peace treaty between Iran and Saudi Arabia has taken everybody by surprise. It's very interesting that the Saudis and the Iranians are saying,

"yes, we have been secretly negotiating for a year", but the Israeli intelligence didn't have a clue about it. They claim, "oh, we knew about it all the time", okay, but I don't believe them. And now that this has been announced, the United Arab Emirates declared that they are suspending all arms imports from Israel. So this is tremendous. The arms exports are really the heart, the meat of the Abraham Accords. Without that, what are the Israeli and UAE relations really about? It's not like they were at war before and now they're at peace. They were never at war. So, yes, there is some tourism. A lot of Israelis like to go to Dubai. But this is not really the issue. The issue is that if the UAE is not buying Israeli weapons anymore and if they don't need them in Yemen, and if they're not going to use them in Syria, and if Saudi Arabia doesn't need Israeli weapons in order to fight against Iran because there is no war with Iran, then - well, it means a lot for the ability of Iran to overcome sanctions. It means a lot for the ability of Iran to have trade with China, of course. It has tremendous consequences on the war in Ukraine as well. And I think without the war in Ukraine, this maneuver would not have been possible. And not that I think war is good, of course. But it is interesting that despite how most Western media is talking about the war in Ukraine as a complete failure and catastrophe for Russia. On the diplomatic level, Russia is actually gathering more allies, which is unexpected. And the U.S. is losing them. So the U.S. is now losing in Saudi Arabia, because Saudi Arabia is willing to to normalize relations with Iran. And Israel has lost its role as the fist of U.S. imperialism in the Middle East. And immediately the U.S. told Israel after signing that "we're not going to tolerate your neutrality about Ukraine anymore". Israel has always said, "oh, we don't want to take sides in the Ukraine-Russia war." How can you not take sides when you're a client state of the United States and receive U.S. weapons? Well, now the U.S. says, "okay, well, that's it, because you don't have this role anymore against Iran. You have to now support Ukraine." And Israel agreed to sell a system to Ukraine, which is an anti-drone system. I think it remains to be seen if this anti-drone system can do anything, because Israeli weapons have never actually been tested against real armies. They've only been tested against civilians, against Palestinian or defenseless and cannot really fight back. So I don't think that the Israeli weapons are going to be a game changer for the Ukraine war at all. But this is something, of course, the Israeli government also knows. They don't want their weapons to be used in a war where everybody sees that they are actually weapons against civilians and useless against the Russian army. So they didn't want to sell it, but now they have no choice. And now the ability of Israel to intervene in Syria is going to be impacted. When I say intervene, this is, of course, whitewashing. I mean, to bombard civilians and kill people unilaterally in Syria - that is going to be impacted, that is going to be restricted. So this is a very good thing, all said.

ZR: Let us now focus on recent developments taking place in Israel and Palestine. 2023 has been quite a violent year in Israel and Palestine. It was recently reported that Israeli forces have killed 84 Palestinians, including dozens of children, since the start of the year. Palestinian attacks, on the other hand, have claimed the lives of 14 Israelis. Israeli and Palestinian officials have agreed at a meeting in Egypt to take steps to lower tensions ahead of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. This included an Israeli pledge to stop discussion of

any new settlement units for four months. Do you think these agreements mediated by the United States, Egypt and Jordan, will help curb the violence?

SH: The problem is that the Israeli society and even the political system is so deeply divided right now. The real question is who is in control? Personally, I think that Netanyahu is very much in control. But I think Netanyahu is intentionally creating chaos by pitting different groups against each other. As long as he has these warmongers, racists, far right agitators who have no experience in politics, actually, they don't know what they're doing. They're just trying to call for more violence and more violence because that's the only thing they know how to do. Netanyahu is teaching them and giving them some advice on how to be good politicians and how to actually promote policy through the bureaucratic structures. At the same time, a very large part of the Israeli public, and mainly the liberal Zionists, who I don't want to call them left, but you know, they are considered moderate. They are very much opposed to these far right, insane people and trying to stop Netanyahu and his new government. But Netanyahu's strategy is not to find compromise, but actually the opposite. He tries to create more and more provocations in order to force the liberal Zionists into just saying, well, in this case, we have no choice but to accept all of his demands and let Netanyahu become basically a dictator for life and to do whatever he wants in exchange for him controlling these far right racists. So in this situation Netanyahu can profit from an escalation of violence. In this situation Netanyahu knows that he can push those provocations further. But that's not to say that it's so simple because the Israeli military itself is divided. And you have a very large part of the military which completely supports the far right, which are very violent and very aggressive. They are not functioning as an army anymore. They are functioning like an angry mob. They make up their own missions. They just go around with their guns, shooting at everyone they want. They know they're not going to be held accountable. They're not going to get into trouble for killing defenseless civilians. So they're doing that basically on a daily basis, as you've just described. And with so much violence, especially in the cities of Janine, in Nablus and also in East Jerusalem, and you see those raids where it's not the Israeli military command that said we now need a raid. No, it's the soldiers on the spot. Some low ranking officer says: let's go in and shoot some people. But there's the other side of the army. The other side of the army, the Air Force, which operates both the fighter jets, but also the drones and the intelligence units. And they're essential for the ability of the other half of the army to act with impunity. As long as these brutes, which are acting like an angry mob, have the support of the intelligence units, they can act without any risk to themselves. Because whenever Palestinians will try to defend themselves, the intelligence officers are going to have a drone and see the Palestinians coming, they will tell them, "okay, now you have to protect yourself. Now we have to withdraw." And so that's how they can act and kill and go away before Palestinians have a chance to defend themselves. Now, those intelligence officers are saying, we don't want to play this game. We can see what Netanyahu is doing. We can see how this escalation is actually undermining any chance of the state of Israel to survive as a state which gives extra rights to Jews. This apartheid system depends on stability. Like any colonial society. You need to have stability and you need to

keep the indigenous population in a constant state of fear and paralysis and under control. Netanyahu is pushing those provocations, those right wing politicians. They are trying to get the Palestinians to leave, basically. And that's not going to happen. So more and more Palestinians are saying, "well, in that case, we cannot just wait for this to pass. We have to do something. We have to rise up." And when they rise up, it's not sustainable. The colonial system has become destabilized, and this is very - well, in the short term, it's a disaster. A lot of people are being killed and there's a lot of fear and a lot of suffering, absolutely. In the long term, I think we need to think about what it means for this illusion as if the state of Israel is a democracy. When this illusion no longer exists and now the whole world can see: Oh, this is an apartheid state, wait. And actually the rights are not the same for everybody. And now for the first time, the state violence is also turning against the Jewish population if they're not loyal enough. And you can hear leftist Israelis accusing the government of being a fascist government. I think that's not correct. But it's certainly interesting that they're using this accusation of calling Netanyahu a fascist and his ministers fascists. Then it shows they have lost the willingness to operate within this state. They have lost the willingness to be loyal citizens. So the state has lost its political norms, its political acceptance. And it's now on the path of either becoming some kind of a totalitarian state or civil war. But I don't think this is very likely. I think what we really are seeing is actually the cracking of this colonial system. And this is a vacuum in which Palestinian groups can move forward and demand equal rights and democracy. So in that sense, I'm actually very hopeful. I don't think that whatever agreement is signed in Egypt or in Amman, in Jordan - there was also an agreement. These things are going to change the course of history. The course of history is written by the people themselves on the ground. And the people themselves say, well, the status quo that has existed for 75 years is no longer acceptable. And if neither the right or the left accept it, then it's not going to survive.

ZR: To my last question, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu recently visited Germany to talk with Chancellor Olaf Scholz about Iran's nuclear program, the war in Ukraine, the situation of Palestine, as well as the planned justice reforms in Israel. Regarding the justice reforms, Olaf Scholz voiced strong concerns, whereas Netanyahu assured and let me quote him here. Quote: "The accusation that this is a break from democracy is not true. I want to assure you that Israel will stay a liberal democracy." Unquote. According to the Tagesschau, Germany's leading primetime news network, around 2000 people, including many Jews, protested in Berlin against Netanyahu's plans. Tens of thousands are protesting Israel over many weeks. You just mentioned this, but do you think that these justice reforms will break Israel as the West and the international community have known it for a long time?

SH: Absolutely. It will not break Israel as a liberal democracy because Israel has never been a liberal democracy. But the judicial reforms are breaking the illusion and they're also breaking the kind of agreement, or unspoken agreement that Israel pretends to be a Western state and pretends to be almost part of Europe, on par. It's a member of the OECD, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. These laws that Netanyahu is

promoting as part of the judicial reform, are part of this provocation. They are so unsustainable that if they pass, there is no government, really. It's not just that - it's a very weird situation in which basically whatever the Prime Minister says is the law. I don't think this is a very realistic ending to this process. But I think Netanyahu went to Germany not in order to hear Scholz criticism. He went to Germany because he wanted to show the Israelis that, look, I can still do foreign diplomacy because in Germany, I'm still accepted and they still roll out the red carpet, even if I am breaking all the rules and doing whatever I want. And also because he wanted to show the Arrow 3 missile defense system. And the missile defense system, Arrow 3 is a scam, unfortunately. It's interesting that the CDU, the right wing German party CDU, has actually filed a question to parliament with 31 questions: is Arrow 3 really the best system that we want to have? Is this really it? Why did you choose this one and not another one? And the CDU is usually even more pro-Israeli than the current German government. But the Arrow 3 system just doesn't really exist. There is an Arrow 2 system. And Arrow 3 is still in development. But the Germans, they want to buy the Arrow 3 now. So the Israelis say, okay, no problem, we'll sell you the Arrow 2 and we put a sticker on it which says Arrow 3. But the Arrow 2 has been tested and not very successfully. And one of the missiles that was tested fell in Syria, and the Syrian government immediately sent it to Russia. So Russia knows exactly how this missile works. They've studied it, investigated it thoroughly, which means if Germany is buying this weapon, maybe it can be useful if Germany decides to go to war against Denmark, I don't know. But against Russia, it's not going to work. So that's really what's behind this meeting with Scholz. You also mentioned the protest. I think it was very disappointing to see how the German media covered those protests with all the Israeli flags when actually the demonstrators against Netanyahu's visit were not waving Israeli flags. Most of them were not waving Israeli flags. They were not pro-Israelis who just don't like Netanyahu and like the opposition. No, they believe that Netanyahu represents exactly what the state of Israel stands for: apartheid, occupation, colonialism, racism. And they don't think that Israeli flags are a proper way to protest that, but Palestinian flags are an appropriate way to protest that. And that kind of protest didn't get enough coverage in the news, unfortunately. But yeah, of course, among those protesters with Palestinian flags, there were a lot of Jews, obviously. Because the Jews have every reason to be furious at the Israeli government, which pretends to speak on behalf of all the Jewish people and commit those terrible crimes, and therefore expect Jews in Germany to pay the price - or bear responsibility or guilt for crimes committed by the Israeli government.

ZR: Dr. Shir Hever, independent journalist, economist and author, thank you so much for joining us today.

SH: Thank you, Zain.

ZR: And thank you for tuning in today. Don't forget to subscribe to our alternate channels on Rumble and Telegram YouTube can shadow ban us or censor us at any time. So we are asking all of our viewers as a precaution to join us on these alternative channels on Rumble

and Telegram. And if you're watching this video, be sure to donate. There's an entire team working behind the scenes from camera, light audio, and in the case of our German videos, transcription, translation, voice over, video editing. Be sure to donate so we can continue to produce independent and nonprofit news and analysis. I'm your host, Zain Raza. See you guys next time.

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