



Dr. Shir Hever - Israel's assault in Jenin & the hypocrisy of the West

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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. Before I start this interview, I would like to share with you important news. Glenn Greenwald, the Pulitzer Prize winning journalist and the publisher of the Snowden leaks, has just released a video which documents how YouTube, which is owned by Google, is censoring content from independent alternative media channels that are taking a critical stance on NATO and the role of Ukraine. I will provide the link to this video within the description below. Even though we have 140,000 subscribers and I've been asking our viewers to join us on Rumble and Telegram in case a censorship occurs, only 3 to 4000 people have joined these channels. So, please, if you're watching this video, make sure to join these channels. The links to all of these platforms are provided in the description below.

ZR: Today, I'll be talking to Dr. Shir Hever, who is an independent journalist, economic researcher and author. He's also the military embargo coordinator of the BDS movement. Dr. Shir Hever, thank you so much for your time today. On July 3rd, 2023, the Israeli military conducted a so-called operation in the Jenin refugee camp in the Israeli occupied West Bank. According to many Western media networks, it was Israel's largest military operation in the West Bank since the second intifada. And the Israeli government called it Operation House and Garden. Before we get into the details, which I will discuss in the next question of this interview, could you first provide us with some context to Jenin and also talk about the socioeconomic conditions in which the population resides there?

Shir Hever (SH): Sure. Jenin is not just a city, but it's also a refugee camp, which is at the heart of the city. It's actually a very small city. So in Jenin, we have less than 50,000 people. And the refugee camp is another 40,000, more or less. So altogether, we're talking about a rather small area, especially if you compare it to the size of the Israeli military operation with tanks and helicopters and brigades. So it's really almost absurd. But Jenin is a city which has suffered very, very much under the Israeli occupation. And for many years it has been a symbol for Palestinian steadfastness in the face of occupation because of their freedom

theater of Jenin, for example, where people use culture as a means of resistance. And also, more recently, Jenin, as well as Nablus, have become cities that openly rebel against the Palestinian Authority. So they refuse to be part of the Palestinian Authority system of security cooperation with the Israeli government. And even the Palestinian Authority security forces in Jenin just tell their bosses, tell their officers We cannot work with you because the population will just simply not accept it. So Jenin has become a sort of symbol for Palestinian steadfastness, rebellion and the demand for freedom.

ZR: Can you talk more about this refugee camp? Where are these refugees from and what conditions are they living in?

SH: Most of the refugees in Jenin come from Haifa. Haifa is a very famous Palestinian city on the Mediterranean coast. And Jenin is not very far away. But even though it's maybe 30 kilometers [60 km] away from Haifa, many people in Jenin have never seen the sea because they're never been allowed on the other side of the separation wall, of the Apartheid wall. And in 1948, the Zionist militias that took over Palestine, used mortars to scare the civilian population of Haifa into leaving. And what they actually did is drive people towards the seaport and tried to drive them into the sea. And there is this sort of myth that the Arabs want to throw the Jews into the sea. And this is not true. But the myth comes from the fear that Israeli Jews have, that Palestinians will want to seek revenge for the same act that they did against Palestinians in 1948. At the time, the British mandate, the British military was still around, they were on the way out and they arranged for boats to rescue Palestinian refugees and take them mostly to Lebanon. But at the time of 1948, Jenin was taken over by Jordan as part of the West Bank. Jordan took over the West Bank. So Jordan allowed refugees to come from Lebanon and live in Jenin and arranged a refugee camp there, which was also financed and operated by the United Nations. But after 67', these people who escaped for their lives, were driven out in 1948, became once again under control of the Israeli forces.

ZR: The Tagesschau in this July 3rd segment called Jenin, quote, "the largest retreat of militant Palestinians". In the Western media generally, the Israeli defense statements are recycled and this sort of military move is often called a military operation, while other foreign channels, such as, for example, Al Jazeera, it is classified as an attack or an assault. How would you define this operation? What really happened in Jenin and what were the intended goals the Israeli military was trying to achieve?

SH: Well, the way that the German media is covering this story is barely worthy of coverage, I think. And the TAZ newspaper called Jenin a powder keg. I don't see any more absurd levels of blaming the victim than I see in the German media, as if the Palestinians are to blame for being so attractive to Israeli bombs and bullets. That's ridiculous. No, the reason that the Israeli forces chose to attack Jenin is not because Jenin has some strategic value or there were some people there that they wanted to arrest. They didn't make arrests, let's make that very clear. They attacked for 45 hours. They killed twelve people, five children. And

they didn't make any arrests. They achieved zero strategic goals. The only reason that they chose Jenin was that they wanted to help preserve the Palestinian Authority as much as possible. And if they've chosen a Palestinian city, which was still under the control of the Palestinian Authority, then that would probably cause the collapse of the Palestinian Authority. The Palestinian Authority itself has been speaking to the people of Jenin for a while, and there was even a visit by President Mahmoud Abbas immediately after the attack where they tell the people, Look, if you cooperate with us and of course you don't like our politics, but at least we can protect you because the Israelis are not going to launch an attack into a city like Ramallah, which is still loyal to the Palestinian Authority. So, "be like Ramallah and be part of it". And the people of Jenin say, Well, freedom is more important than safety. But that doesn't make them terrorists. I think every human being would agree with that statement. So just to put that right there on the table.

But you wanted the context for this attack. And this can only be understood in the context of the severe crisis that is happening in Israel right now with the far right government, more right wing than any in history and protests that are against the government, which pretend as if Israel used to be a democratic state and trying to return to this a illusionary state of democracy. But the government, Netanyahu's government or Netanyahu himself is very, very careful about exploiting this internal rift to his own purposes. And as long as it seems like these two forces are more or less balanced, he can do whatever he wants. The problem is what happens if one side becomes more powerful than the other? And the attack on Jenin happened at the beginning of the week. But just before that, on Saturday night, there was a big demonstration in Tel Aviv where Israelis from the liberal Zionist movement were protesting against the government. And in that protest there was the Anti-Occupation Bloc which comes to those demonstrations. It's rather a small, pitifully small block, unfortunately, of Israelis who say you cannot have democracy with occupation. At the very least, if we're talking about democracy and opposing the government, we have to recognize that occupation has to end. And they have some signs about Palestinian rights or maybe a couple of Palestinian flags with them, not many unfortunately. The majority of the protesters in Tel Aviv on that Saturday evening launched a physical attack against the Anti-Occupation Bloc. They broke their signs, they beat them up, they drove them away. The police, of course, offered no assistance to the ant-occupation block because who wants to help the leftists?

But this sent a very clear message. There is no balance between the opposition and the government or the far right elements within the government. Netanyahu knows that the far right is having a very strong lead and the opposition is turning against itself and is collapsing from inside. So in that moment, he wants to appease the far right elements and that is why the attack on Jenin [occured]. Bezalel Smotrich is the head of the far right religious Zionism Party, and he's also the Minister of Finance. But most importantly, he's the governor of the West Bank. By appointing him to be the governor of the West Bank Israel has effectively annexed the West Bank because it allows the Israeli government to make political decisions of an occupied territory. That is in complete violation of international law and also in

violation of Israel's former policy of allowing the military government to make those decisions in the name of technocratic decisions or professional decisions instead of the political echelon. So Bezalel Smotrich has famously announced his decisive plan on how to deal with the Palestinians. And when asked the question: How are you going to deal with the fact that the Palestinians – there are so many and they are already the majority in Palestine and Jews are a minority now, I see Palestine, I mean the whole area. And then Smotrich said: "Palestinians will have three options. They can obey us and give up any kind of political rights. Or they can leave. Or they can die". This is his decisive plan. Now he's the governor and now this operation in Jenin was in many ways a manifestation of that plan. So we can talk about what actually happened during the attack. And I think it's important to mention some of those facts.

But let's talk about what the people on the ground reported and the Palestinians who live in Jenin said: What we experienced is the Israeli soldiers driving us out of our homes, giving us just a few minutes to collect, pack a suitcase with an extra set of clothes and maybe something to eat or drink and then we were driven out at gunpoint in a large column of people outside of the city of Jenin. So flanked by soldiers who were pointing their guns at them. This scene was a scene that reminded everybody of 1948. This is the second option in Bezalel Smotrich's decisive plan: leave. In other words, ethnic cleansing. And it wasn't an actual ethnic cleansing because people were allowed to return to their homes after a few hours. But it was a dry run. It was a test. And that is something we really need to take from this attack that the Israeli government wanted to tell the soldiers, Look, we know what you really want to do, so we're going to let you train for that. And we also want to scare the Palestinians into submissiveness. So we're going to show them that if they dare stand up for their rights, we're capable of ethnic cleansing. So that's, I think, the context for the attack.

ZR: You talked about expulsion, annexation and a military assault. Can you talk about the reaction of the international community, in particular the West, that is so critical of these terms when Russia does this in Ukraine? How have they reacted to this?

SH: Well, almost no responses from the West. There were a few very weak condemnations. The European Union has actually invited the Israeli government to resume negotiations on upgrading the Association Agreement for the trade relations between the EU and Israel. And Israel is very happy about this. Now in the Association Agreement, there is a clause which is obligatory. Clause number two, that says that the agreements are contingent on both sides respecting human rights and international law. So the European Union actually is obligated to cancel the Association Agreement with Israel and instead they are offering to upgrade it. I think there's going to be a time where some European politicians will stand trial for complicity with war crimes. And we already see senior scholars of international law saying that the operation in Jenin was indeed a war crime. And we expect that the International Criminal Court will start the investigation against the criminals who are involved in it.

You mentioned Ukraine and Russia. Putin has been indicted by the International Criminal Court, and as a result, he's not able to travel to a conference in South Africa because South Africa as a signatory is obligated to arrest him and deliver him to The Hague to stand trial so he doesn't go. I think it is hypocritical that Netanyahu can travel and not be arrested. They absolutely have to start an indictment against him as well and against the heads of the military and the minister of defense and against Smotrich, of course, and Itamar Ben-gvir, the minister of national security. These are the people who are giving the orders to use disproportionate force against civilians, and these are clearly illegal. So in that sense, the response is very disappointing. You mentioned the West, but it's not just the West. Morocco has bought Israeli drones in very large numbers, and those are precisely the same drones that were used in Jenin. So these are attack drones armed with heavy missiles. Morocco bought them, I'm talking about the Hermes drones or Hermes 900 by Elbit Systems, the Heron TP drone, which is produced by Israeli aerospace industries, which Germany also shamefully bought and suicide drones like the Heron and IAI Harpy. These are drones that blow themselves up on top of a target and are very cruel and aggressive and cause a lot of panic and suffering and death of course. Morocco bought these drones and Israel just a week later announced that it recognizes the Moroccan occupation of West Sahara.

So you can see how things are progressing. It's not just the problem with the West. It's a problem that is widespread. But of course, there are also positive things. I don't want to just focus on the negative. Let's also recognize the fact that the European Parliament has voted with a very large majority to endorse the indictment of Israel in the International Court of Justice, as well as a side clause to support indictment in the International Criminal Court. This is very important because until now Europe, almost all the members of the EU or maybe all of them, I'm not sure, are signatories to the Rome Statutes of the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice. So it matters a lot what the European Union says. And until now, Germany has tried to defend Israel against that indictment. And the former minister of foreign affairs of Germany, Heiko Maas, has said that he doesn't think that Palestine is a state and therefore the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice should not start proceedings against Israel, which is a very weak argument, considering the fact that there are 138 countries in the world that recognize Palestine as a state. Germany is not one of them, but Germany is in the minority here. And maybe the solution is not to try to cover up for Israeli war crimes, but instead to recognize Palestinian statehood.

ZR: Shir Hever, we will be in touch with you. Thank you so much for your time today.

SH: Thank you very much.

ZR: And thank you for tuning in today. Once again, please do forget our alternative channels on Rumble, Telegram and Podbean. The links to these platforms are provided in the description below. And if you're watching our videos regularly, please make sure to take into

account, there is an entire team working behind the scenes from audio, light, technicians in the case of a German video, translation, voiceover. So in case if you're watching regularly, make sure to donate. If all our viewers today, all 140,000 subscribers donate just 1 to 5€ a month, we will be able to cover our costs for the next five years and provide you with daily nonprofit news and analysis. I'm your host Zain Raza, see you guys next time.

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