



The Hospital Attack & the Destruction of Gaza | 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 current situation in Israel and Palestine. Dr. Shir Hever is an independent journalist, economist and author. He's also the military embargo coordinator of the Boycott National Committee of the BDS Movement. Shir, welcome back.

Shir Hever (SH): Thanks for having me.

ZR: Before we talk about the wider situation in Gaza and Israel, I want to start specifically with the recent attack on the Al-Ahli Arab Hospital that killed 500 people, many of them who were taking refuge from Israeli air bombardments. The Tagesschau, Germany's leading primetime news channel, started their segment on the 18th of October by stating and let me quote them here, quote, "The day after a rocket hit a hospital in the Gaza Strip, it is still unclear who was responsible. The terrorist organization Hamas blames the Israeli military. Israel denies this and considers a misdirected Palestinian rocket to be the cause of the explosion at the Al-Ahli Arab Hospital compound in Gaza". US president Biden speaking to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu during a meeting in Israel, said, quote, "And based on what I've seen, it appears as though it was done by the other team and not you". The other team obviously referring to Hamas. What is your assessment on this hospital attack?

SH: I thought about that, that you're going to ask me this question. And I don't think that the right thing is to get into the evidence and the facts that make the case, because this is something that only professionals can investigate. At the moment, the Israeli military doesn't allow international observers to come and investigate the area. Let's put it this way. We have here a tremendous atrocity and the number of dead is close to 500; completely defenseless, innocent civilians in Gaza. What strikes me as implausible is that the Israeli authorities, the Israeli government thinks that it matters that they claim it was an accident by a Palestinian

fighter that caused a fire and the death. Why would it matter? I mean, we have a situation in which the north part of the Gaza Strip, is under direct military occupation of the Israeli government, of the Israeli military. They said everyone, 1.1 million people have to leave the area or they will die within 24 hours. People started to leave and then the Israelis were bombing the convoys of refugees on their way to the south. So this is a trap. This is an ethnic cleansing. It is genocide. And so desperate people took refuge in that hospital trying to cower and huddle together with the belief that maybe, maybe a hospital would be a safe place that will not be bombed by the Israeli forces. But the Israeli forces are responsible for that, meaning that it doesn't matter if it was caused by a missile or by something else, the responsibility for the well-being and the right to life of the people in that area rests on the occupier. That is the Israeli government, the Israeli military. So they think that if they blame the other side, it will somehow absolve them of guilt.

And we've seen so many lies, so many lies, when the Israelis claimed, Oh, we had nothing to do with the murder of Jamal Khashoggi the Washington Post journalist. An Israeli company provided the spyware to the Saudi government in order to have them assassinated. Then they said, Oh, we had nothing to do with the murder of Palestinian journalist Shireen Abu Akleh, which was later, of course, found out to be a lie. And very recently, when they attacked on October 7th killed also a lot of Israeli citizens, and the Israeli government started to spread fake news and lies about atrocities committed and things that I don't know if this show is appropriate for me to repeat or to describe those atrocities, it could be difficult for some of the listeners. So I will not describe them. I will say that President Biden repeated those fake claims in his speech. He did not recount. He did not apologize even after a serious journalist proved that this was fake. And on a side note, I should say, what about the Israeli families, I mean, of these victims who hear their own government spreading those lies? And how does it make them feel when they hear these atrocities committed against their own family members in the name of some kind of opportunistic desire of the Israeli government to gain popular support for committing genocide in Gaza? It's simply... So why would anyone believe them now when they say the hospital was not an Israeli attack? And the International Organization for Islamic Cooperation, it's an organization of 57 countries, maybe we can talk a little bit more about this soon, they issued a very powerful, clear statement. And in that statement, it says, you know, it doesn't matter who pressed the trigger or what exactly caused this death, the responsibility is on the shoulders of the occupier.

ZR: You already talked about the situation in Gaza. I would like to elaborate on that. A few days after the Hamas attack on October 7th, Israel cut off electricity, water supplies in Gaza and ordered, as you mentioned, 1.1 Million Palestinians to flee to the south of Gaza. The only way out is through the Rafah border crossing, which has been closed by Egypt, causing extreme shortages of food, water, fuel and medical supplies. Egypt has also rejected calls to open a humanitarian corridor within its borders. The Guardian reported earlier today that the United States vetoed a resolution in the United Nations Security Council that called on Israel to allow humanitarian corridors into Gaza to halt fighting and to lift an order that is forcing

civilians to flee from the north to the south. Yesterday, in a meeting with President Biden, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu while referring to the situation in Gaza, said, quote, "As we proceed in this war, Israel will do everything in order to keep civilians out of harm's way. We've asked them and we'll continue to ask them to move to safer areas", unquote. How do you assess Israel's response to Hamas' terrorist attack? Has it acted in self-defense as well as protected Palestinian civilians from harm's way?

SH: I honestly don't see the connection between the first part of your question and the second. Because what you've described, the world, especially the West and being complicit with the Israeli genocide and the US vetoed a Security Council resolution to call for a cease fire, a humanitarian cease fire. So they want more death, want more killing. And what does this have to do with an Israeli response? When we're talking about what is a state according to the rules of law, according to the rules of the international law, of engaging in war, is allowed to do, is expected to do in protecting its own citizens, in respecting the rights of citizens of other countries or a population under military occupation, which is not citizens of any country, there are very clear guidelines there. And it's very clear that one thing they're not allowed to do is to say, because we are going to fight a certain group of Palestinian resistance. We are going to simply cleanse the whole area of its indigenous population and just tell them to leave and if they don't leave, we just kill them all.

This doesn't fall under the rules of law. This is a war crime. It's a crime against humanity. The context of this is a very, very brutal wave of incitement and racism and dehumanization of Palestinians. I have never seen anything like this from Israeli officials, from the Israeli media, from the Israeli soldiers who are describing Palestinians as "human animals"; this is a quote from the Israeli Ministry of Defense, but it is only one of dozens of quotes. And when you have dehumanization, calls for revenge and nationalistic fervor in the population where people are just afraid and the people on the Israeli side afraid to raise the slightest doubt that maybe this is actually not something that will bring any security and not help the victim's families or the hostages. And then you go in with overwhelming military force against a defenseless civilian population, ordering an ethnic cleansing and attacking civilian targets, this is a genocide. And a very important scholar of genocide and professor Raz Segal, whom I know, and maybe we can say something about him and about his work in Germany as well, he said this is a textbook case of genocide. Because exactly all of these components are there, the dehumanization, the incitement, the racism, the ethnic cleansing, the out of control military operation against the defenseless civilians.

ZR: In the last few days, both German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and US President Biden have visited Israel and the Middle East. The Tagesschau in both cases, stated that the intention is to resolve, mediate and defuse the conflict. However, The Huffington Post recently reported after reviewing internal emails from the US State Department that the US is discouraging diplomats working on Middle East issues from making public statements suggesting the US wants to see less violence. Three specific words were asked not to be used, that included:

de-escalation cease fire, end to violence bloodshed and restoring calm. How do you view the situation? Is the West, notably Germany and the US playing a constructive or destructive role when it comes to this conflict?

SH: Well, we can easily identify the four countries that are playing a destructive role. This is the United States, France, the UK and Germany, four countries that are the leadership of NATO and are supposed to be the leaders of the free world and the democratic world. But the level of hypocrisy is amazing, it's hard to fathom when it comes to the killing of civilians in Gaza – we hear a completely different language. And these visits by Biden and Scholz and now Sunak from Great Britain are, well, sort of colonial interventions where they want to support the colonialist side. And we should also say they are motivated and financed by the military industry. And here Germany absolutely plays a very big role because maybe Germany likes to cultivate a certain reputation for itself as a peaceful country that doesn't engage in hostile wars anymore after the Second World War, but the military industry of Germany is deeply complicit.

And what is happening specifically in Gaza is that Germany decided to loan to Israel 16 heavy attack drones that the German Luftwaffe, the Air Force, is leasing from Israel these Heron TP drones. Each one is capable of carrying 2.7 tons of ammunition. And they are supposed to be training in Israel. But now when they are loaned to the Israeli air force, then we don't know exactly if German members of the Bundeswehr of the German military are operating the drones, are they loading them with ammunition? Are they maintaining them as they are doing bombing runs against civilians in Gaza? This is a level of complicity which is criminal. The International Criminal Court said that it does have jurisdiction in the Gaza Strip and that soldiers, officers and also politicians who are complicit in violating human rights and international law within that area would be culpable under the law and could face charges. And I think the only thing that Germany can do from a legal point of view to prevent its own soldiers from facing charges in the International Criminal Court in The Hague for war crimes is if they prosecute them locally in Germany. So this is a call to the German government, release the names of those soldiers who have illegally obeyed illegal orders. Who gave these illegal orders? And these people must face justice because otherwise it casts doubt and suspicion on the entire German military.

ZR: For many days, we've been hearing that an Israeli military invasion of Gaza is imminent, with the objective of wiping out Hamas. And it has been delayed over and over again and nobody knows when it will begin. Some say that Israel is contemplating invading Gaza because once it goes into Gaza, this is the point when Hezbollah might be drawn in, Syria and perhaps even Iran, and this could cause a wider conflict in the region. What do you think about this assessment and what do you think or why do you think Israel has not launched its ground offensive yet?

SH: The situation is very much irrational. I can see a lot of voices from Israel despite this

environment of fear and people are afraid to speak out and people are arrested for expressing opinions. One member of the Israeli Knesset was suspended for warning that this is the beginning of genocide. Nevertheless, people are saying, what exactly does Israel hope to achieve with this war, with this invasion of Gaza? Is it even conceivable that Hamas can be defeated or eliminated? And, of course, all rational people are saying, No, it's not. There is no way to defeat a guerrilla organization and a resistance organization with force. That never happens. And I'm pointing out, look at the United States in Afghanistan, look at Vietnam, look at Algeria. There is no scenario which ends well for the Israeli side. They know this. Now, seeing that there is this irrational fervor and seeing that a ground invasion would not be only a catastrophe of unimaginable proportions for the indigenous Palestinian population, but also a very clear recipe for defeat for the Israeli military. See that Biden from the United States, realises the only way he can prevent the ground invasion is by physically coming to Israel and telling them, As long as I am here, you are not able to make it a ground invasion. But he cannot now move to Israel and he can't stay there forever. So now he passes that to Sunak from Great Britain, but he won't be able to stay forever. Either sooner or later, and the calls within Israel for blood, for vengeance, these calls might prevail and maybe they're thinking that things will come down on their own somehow and that the Israelis will realize that this would be a terrible strategic mistake.

This is, of course, because of the strategic interest of the United States and Great Britain and Germany as well, to have a strong bastion of Western support in the Middle East within close reach to important energy resources and so on. So that's much more than any kind of fake statements about supporting the Jewish state and protecting Jews. I'm sure all our viewers realize that Israel is not a safe place for Jews and that it must have heard, of course, that Jews from all over the world are protesting this genocide. I mean, my family also went through a genocide. I've also heard the stories from my grandparents. And so when I see people being crowded in a ghetto and without access to food and water, then I am reminded of those stories. And because of this in New York just yesterday, 500 Jewish activists were arrested, I mean, out of a much larger demonstration, but 500 arrested for protesting Israeli genocide and chanting: Not in our name. So, yeah, I mean, the Israeli government is not acting in any kind of mandate, not of its own population, not in the name of the Jewish people, not in the name of security. But it has to do something. And the only thing it can think of doing is to use aggression and violence, even though everybody knows it will only end in a greater disaster.

ZR: I've been watching the Tagesschau, Germany's leading primetime news channel, and from its coverage since the Hamas attack until today, October 19th, it has not once mentioned Israel's longstanding policy towards Palestine, which Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and the UN Human Rights Office have called apartheid and occupation. According to The Guardian, even many prominent Jewish voices, including a former head of Mossad, Israel's intelligence agency, have stated that Israel is imposing apartheid on Palestinians. In your opinion, can we invoke Israeli occupation, apartheid and settlement expansion at this time, or is this justifying and even downplaying the brutal and inhuman

actions of Hamas on October 7th?

SH: We are not allowed to forget the root causes of this violence and when the violence begins. Of course we have to invoke these things, but I wonder, Zain, why you keep quoting from the Tagesschau and giving Tagesschau all of this credit as the prominent German media source, when in fact, what we see in the German public sphere right now is a moral failure, which is so disappointing. I mean, it's not just Tagesschau, it's everywhere in Germany. It's in every academic institution on various levels of government, I see that in different newspapers. And where the Germans have prided themselves of having the culture of memory, "Erinnerungskultur", and how much this is something that they cultivated, that never again, they will never again commit a genocide. But in the end, it has corrupted into very right wing identity politics, where actually the German public sphere is only concerned about never again for Jews. And they forgot completely what it means to commit genocide and what genocide is. And I keep receiving statements from Germans who are saying, How dare you call what is happening in Gaza genocide? How dare you compare it to the murder of Jews in the Holocaust and the Second World War?! And I'm just baffled by this way that Germans have turned the Holocaust into something they are proud of. We have a monopoly of committing genocide. Nobody will ever compete with us. And so the state of Israel must always play the role of representing only the victims and there is never going to be any kind of criticism against what they do to Palestinians.

And so, I mean, let's put this in perspective. Germany is not a voice for progressive thought right now. It's not a voice for human rights. It's a very, very aggressive and colonialist voice that we are hearing in the world. We hear much clearer voices from the Global South, let's acknowledge that, where people are demanding accountability and a ceasefire and humanitarian help to people who have already run out of food and water. So let's put that here. But yeah, I mean, your question was about talking about the root causes of violence. Violence begins with the act of oppression. Long before there was a party called Hamas, long before there was a movement called Hamas, there was already a military occupation and there was already apartheid and there was already ethnic cleansing. These things started much before. And I think most people would agree that 1948 is the time to say when was the large ethnic cleansing that started. And of course, there were some cases before and also some cases after, but 1948 is the beginning of the Palestinian Nakba, the disaster. And then more land was occupied, more people were killed, tortured, detained without trial. All of these things are crimes that were committed with impunity, with impunity by the Israeli state, by the Israeli military, by the Israeli government and they were allowed to get away with it. Mainly by countries like Germany, mainly by Germany, who didn't want to voice any kind of criticism. And that gave the Israelis this sense that they can get away with more and more and more.

And now things have gotten completely out of control. So of course, we have to remind people that the resistance, even if this resistance is brutal and illegal according to

international law, because it is illegal to target civilians and murderous and wrong, but if you just say, okay, that's the end of the conversation, then you completely dehumanize both sides. Because there is a story there and people remember that. It's interesting that if you listen to Israeli voices, they haven't forgotten. They know. Let's listen to the people who are the survivors from the Kibbutzim around the Gaza Strip. And I hear the voices where they say, Look, we had lived through several hours of hell and lost so many of our family members and friends in the Palestinian attack. But the help for us has ended and now we are on the path of recovery, but the people in Gaza, just a few kilometers, are still going through hell. And more and more people are killed. And as long as this happens, we know that it's not over for us, also. Because there's not going to be peace, there's not going to be calm when more atrocities are being committed.

ZR: To my last question. Edward Snowden, the whistleblower who in 2013 revealed the NSA documents, that exposed how the US collected data domestically and around the world, even from its allies at neutral forums such as the United Nations tweeted the following statement on October 7th, upon Hamas's attack, quote, "Netanyahu nurtured a \$1,000,000,000 industry selling spying tools to despots that use them to break into iPhones of critics, elected opponents, human rights lawyers and even students. Turns out they're not useful for spying on Hamas, though", unquote. As someone such as yourself who has been researching the Israeli military and security complex for many years, how would you evaluate the statement?

SH: Well, even in very dark times, sometimes a cynical and humorous statement can strike very true. I've read this tweet and of course, we have to understand something about spyware. And Snowden has revealed a lot of the structure of how spyware actually works, but there are other sources that confirm it as well. First of all, we should say there is no country in the world that allows private companies to sell spyware for money to the highest bidder except Israel. So this oppression has been spread around the world and we see this all over. And actually, it was President Biden of the United States, who said this is a very dangerous technology. Of course, he wants the US intelligence agencies like the CIA to have spyware and they do have spyware, but that should not be on the commercial market and should not be used against American citizens, because one of the reasons that spyware is so dangerous is, it's not just a tool for obtaining information and surveilling and taking information, but it's also a tool for planting fake information into devices. So you can use spyware in order to plant text or voices or whatever in somebody's phone as if they wrote it. Or you can use it to express things through social media accounts with people, as if they made a statement they didn't want to make. And this is not a tool for law enforcement. It's a tool for misinformation, so in chaos, destroying and distrust and so on.

So Biden said, this has to be banned in the United States. And The New York Times actually found that the ban was not very effective. Israeli companies found ways around it. But now we see that, yes, it is working on Biden, actually, because twice he has repeated Israeli disinformation. So the Israelis are still using disinformation technology against him. And it

doesn't matter if they use spyware for this or they use other things, they could manufacture evidence through phones by using spyware. And this is why spyware needs to be banned altogether. It's not just about Israel. All countries should ban spyware, absolutely. It's a very dangerous and wrong technology. But this is how surveillance works. And we should also pay attention that from the point of view of the Israeli public, this is not a war that is just fought against Palestinians and Palestinian resistance groups on the field of battle, you know, with bombs and guns. It's a war that is fought with information and misinformation. And the Israelis are calling for volunteers to do hasbara. Hasbara means propaganda in Hebrew. And they try to attack people who express solidarity with Palestine on social media networks. It's certainly happening in Germany. A lot of misinformation, a lot of false information that is spread by mainstream media and institutions uncritically just because it's pro-Israeli, so they believe it automatically. And this is, of course, very dangerous to democracy and to free speech all over the world. So that's something that we have to always remember. And as long as Israel gets a free pass to commit genocide, and of course, and the way that its actions undermine our freedoms as citizens in other countries is taking a second priority, unfortunately.

ZR: Dr. Shir Hever, independent journalist and author, thank you so much for your time today.

SH: Thank you, Zain.

ZR: And thank you for turning in today. Please don't forget to join our alternative channels on Rumble, Telegram and our podcast called Podbean. We are providing a different perspective on the issues taking place, for example, in Ukraine and Palestine and the danger has never been so high of getting shadowbanned or censored. So we are asking all of our viewers as a precaution to join these alternative platforms. You will find the links to these platforms in the description of this video. And if you're watching our videos regularly, make sure you donate a small amount via PayPal, Patreon or a bank account. We are a small, independent and nonprofit media organization that does not take any money from corporations, governments and doesn't even allow advertisement, all with the goal of providing you with information that is free from external influence. Even though we have 142,000 subscribers, only a few percent donate to us on a regular basis. So if you want us to continue providing you information that is free from external influence and that enhances your knowledge and perspective, make sure to donate today. I'm your host Zain Raza, see you all next time.

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