



“We are on the brink!” Israeli MK Ofer Cassif Denounces the War

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Glenn Greenwald (GG): That a lot of people with whom Prime Minister Netanyahu has partnered part of his coalition are more extremist than ever before and a lot of them simply don't see the West Bank and Gaza as being Palestinian land at all. They kind of see it as part of Greater Israel. Is there any validity...

Ofer Cassif (OC): They say so explicitly...

GG: They say that explicitly, exactly. Is there any concern or any validity to the possibility that by trying to make northern Gaza uninhabitable, and they've already ordered northern people in northern Gaza to evacuate to southern Gaza, but now with the attempt to try and open up that border with Egypt, is there an attempt to kind of drive the people out of northern Gaza or Gaza entirely into the Sinai so that the Israelis can then retake control of Gaza and make it their own kind of annex it?

OC: How much time do I have? Because if you want the full answer, I need ten minutes.

GG: Take it.

OC: That's great. So let's start with the end of your question or with the beginning and the end, because you made the same kind of closure there. There are many fanatic activists that are associated with some of the parties that constitute the coalition in the government in Israel who explicitly have been saying in the last few days, as the blood still flows, they said that that's the time to re-occupy Gaza Strip, to drive the Palestinians out, one way or another and to help build the settlements that were there before. People said that explicitly, it's not a secret and they don't try to hide who they are. And some people within the coalition, they try to be more cautious, especially the ministers. But it's very clear. Everybody knows that some of the ministers are lunatic and they believe the same and they want the same thing [inaudible] to

us. So perhaps, as I said, most of them do not say that explicitly at the moment, but indeed, they did say that in the past. One, her name is Orit Strock, a fanatic bigot, she said, a few months ago, a few years ago, and I am quoting – I do not have it in front of me, but I remember more or less even the exact words. She said, "that the land of Israel is acquired by suffering". And she said that the Israelis and she referred to Jews, must probably suffer in order to get Gaza back. But it's more important to get Gaza back, Jews will be suffering, but that's a divine decree that should be followed. She said so a few months ago. She hasn't changed her mind. She simply would have not said that now, given that she is a minister. But she still believes that. So the amount of lunatic bigots in this coalition and government that actually aspired to achieve that is unbelievable. It is unbelievable.

You know, and again, I must say this, because we are in an American program, I speak to the American public: Look who your administration now supports. This is no support for Israel. This is no support for the people of Israel. This is a support for a bunch of lunatics and fanatics who do everything that harms Israel. It is against the interest of Israel and of course, of Palestinians. But I want to put it in an even wider context. In 2017, Smotrich, who is now the Minister of Finance and a Minister in the Ministry of Defence, while then he was relatively marginal, a weirdo, a member of the Knesset, he published a plan that is called – normally it is translated as the "subjugation plan". I understand that in some other translations it appears as a "decisive plan" – it doesn't matter. I think subjugation is more accurate as a translation. And this plan consists of three basic elements. One, is that Israel must annex all Palestinian occupied territories, primarily the West Bank, and later possibly the Gaza Strip. It is a plan from 2017 and without granting rights to the Palestinians, who are there. That means a full fledged official apartheid regime. The second point that he mentioned is that those Palestinians who are not going to accept their status as subjects without rights are going to be expelled from their homeland, which he, of course, does not recognise as their homeland, because he denies that there is a Palestinian people at all. And the third point, although he mentioned it implicitly but it is very clear, is that those Palestinians who are going to resist their status as subjects are going to be killed.

In my view, this government, since its very establishment, decided to realise the subjugation plan of Smotrich, if not in full, at least partly. The coup d'etat which is sometimes wrongly regarded or entitled as the judicial reform that the government of Netanyahu has tried to pursue and carry out, as you remember in the last few months, we should decide that that is not a judicial reform. That was a coup d'etat because the idea was to totally change the government and regime of Israel into a full fledged fascist dictatorship. And the main ingredient of this coup d'etat was the elimination of the independence of the judicial system; so as the government were to control it. That means that the government would have been, if they had succeeded in this plan, the government would have been the sole authority because the government already controls the parliament. The parliamentary system is of course different from the American one. So that would have meant, of course, a dictatorship. They failed. They failed in doing so because and thanks to the millions of citizens in Israel that

went to the streets to protest against this coup d'etat. So they needed an alternative. And by the way, it means that the coup d'etat was not the end, it was the means. The end always was the subjugation plan of Smotich. And as they failed, they needed an alternative path or alternative means to realise this fascist, racist plan. What can be the alternative in general and specifically in Israel? A little war.

Now what I want to say, and I said that, is that the government of Israel was interested in tension and confrontation. I want to emphasise, to be very clear, I have no intention whatsoever to imply that the government of Israel was interested in the carnage or massacre that we saw in the south of Israel. Absolutely not. As I said, I know that this government consists of lunatics and bigots, but I don't believe that anyone is so crazy as to endorse and be interested in such a terrible slaughter like there was in the South. So I have no intention and I do not imply, let alone say, that the government of Israel was interested in the disaster that happened in the South. I do say that the government of Israel, and not for the first time in Israeli history, or in world history, that the government is interested in a sort of a confrontation. Because once there is a confrontation, you can use it as a smokescreen to pursue other plans. So what I want to say is that although the government of Israel did not do, or is not guilty, of course, of the carnage that occurred by Hamas, that was carried out by Hamas in the south – and I must emphasise, it is not the guilt, of course, of the Israeli government – but once it happened, the Israeli government could use it as an excuse to pursue this subjugation plan. And that's what they've been doing.

So there is one strategy and here is the answer to your question: One strategy is vis a vis Gaza, assaulting Gaza, bombarding Gaza, to just destroy it and perhaps drive people out of fear and others. And that's part of the subjugation plan. And some people are very explicit, including in the coalition and members of the Knesset, that there is a group that signed the letter calling Netanyahu to conquer the Gaza Strip and drive out, or at least to the south, the Palestinians, and accommodate Jews there. Even from within the Knesset, and from the coup party as well, Netanyahu's party, but there are some members of the Knesset, not all of them, but some of them that actually called Netanyahu to do so. So that risk exists. There's another strategy in the West Bank, and I advise anyone not to turn one's back on the West Bank because the situation there is on a continuous deterioration and it's going from bad to worse on an hourly basis, not a daily basis. For many months now before the massacre, there have been pogroms by settlers under the auspices of the Israeli occupation forces and of course, encouraged by the government. There are pogroms of settlers against Palestinians, torching fields, cutting trees off, setting fire into houses, very often when the people are inside. There are even some assassinations of Palestinians, talking about innocent civilians, many pastors and farmers. And I warned the Minister of Defence in ten different letters, official letters that I sent him as a member of the Knesset in the last eight or nine months; I warned him against the pogroms. And I said that, first of all of course, these are to say at least immoral, are criminal. Those are war crimes that should be dealt with, stopped, and the criminals should be prosecuted and arrested. And I also added on those letters that it will lead to an explosion. On

top of the ongoing 16 year old siege on Gaza that turned it into a volcano waiting to erupt. And I warned the minister. I haven't got one reply from him, not even a laconic one saying: Got it. Nothing. So now it's even worse because under the smokescreen of the war, settlers are not only setting fire and cutting trees as before, they're actually just marching freely throughout the West Bank, entering villages and killing people. A few days ago, they entered the Palestinian village of Qusra in the West Bank. Shot all around them. Killed four innocent civilians and went off, without anyone stopping them. No police, no army, no nothing. They did what they wanted. Masters. This is the KKK kingdom. And the day after the funeral of those four, they came again and shot at the funeral and killed another two, a father and son. As far as I know, perhaps I'm wrong, so I ought to be very cautious, as far as I know, since the massacre in the south and the assault on Gaza, in the West Bank, there are about 70 or 80 Palestinians who were killed either by settlers or by the occupation forces. And that means ethnic cleansing. I visited two weeks ago, about two weeks ago, just a few days before the massacre, the pastors, the communities of pastors in that area, and realised that four communities were already driven out. Forcefully, forcibly expelled by those bigots. Now we are talking about six and we are not talking about small communities with two tents. We are talking about the size of the double of Tel Aviv, which was ethnically cleansed in the West Bank. Where's the international community here?

GG: Right. And the amazing thing is, too, for all this attempt now to focus everything on Hamas in light of, of course, this massacre that, as I said, provoked a lot of revulsion, there is no Hamas in the West Bank. Whatever Israel is doing in the West Bank and the violence against Palestinians can't be justified by Hamas because Hamas doesn't govern the West Bank. Let me just ask you as a final question, and there's so much I wish I could talk to you about, and I'm going to ask you to come back on our show, especially as this war continues, as it looks like it will. But this is the last question. As horrible as everything is now in Gaza and it was in Israel last Saturday, it could be a lot worse, meaning that this war could expand to include Hezbollah, to include various other parts of the Arab world, Iran is capable of doing a lot of mischief. And the concern, I think, beyond just their desire to do that, is at some point the populations of these countries will force their leaders to do something because they can't just sit back and watch the bombing and killing of people in Gaza for all this time and not do nothing. What do you think is the likelihood or the possibility or probability of further regional conflict, an escalation?

OC: I'm afraid of two— I'm afraid, I'm worried about two possible scenarios which are combined. First, a civil war within Israel, because I mentioned just a second ago, two strategies to realise the Smotrich subjugation plan in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. There is a third strategy which applies to the Palestinians – 20% of the citizens in Israel are Palestinians. And as I mentioned before, there is a very serious persecution of Palestinians, mainly, although of democratic and progressive Jews, as well, within Israel. And as I said before, there are militias. And by the way, the Israeli police tend to be a private militia of the minister. So there are militias waiting for the green light, for the command for the D-Day to

attack within Israel. So there's a serious risk of a civil war within Israel, with rivers of blood. And that's a very serious risk for the Israelis, for the very existence of Israel. And that's why those who accuse me of being anti-Israeli, I'm trying to explain, not in an apologetic manner, but it's simply because it's important for me, as far as my values are concerned. And I'm afraid for the future of my country and for the future of my compatriots, because they are at risk of civil war. And I don't want that to happen, to say the least. Or in addition to my worries about the Palestinians who of course have their own rights, which I support. And so that's one danger.

The other, as you mentioned, is a regional war which may easily spread into a world war. And everything is connected because even though it is a civil war within Israel and obviously the targets will be primarily those 20% Palestinian citizens within Israel, [inaudible] of what's going on in Gaza and the West Bank. So as you very accurately said, the publics in the neighbouring countries will not shut up. They will go to the streets in their masses, forcing their governments to do something. So that is going to, may ignite the whole region. This is in addition to of course, the risk that Hezbollah will not forever just sit without doing nothing. We have seen already in the last few days that Hezbollah, even there, began to shoot at Israel and do some military operations, or at least tried to. And perhaps even Iran is going to get into the scene. And we know that the United States already sent battleships and many soldiers there, as if they were preparing for such a scenario. This is a disaster. This is a disaster. We are on the brink. In addition to what's already going on there, the rivers of blood, those spilled in the Gaza Strip and in the West Bank and will spill in the south of Israel and the continuous risk for Israelis and Palestinians and the dangers that I mentioned, that on top of that, there is a serious danger, an immediate one, that this war is going to turn into a regional, very deadly one that may destroy Israel as a whole. And I'm terrified of that. I'm terrified. And it may lead to a world war.

Just imagine what happens if Iran gets into the scene, and Russia and China and the States, what are the things that will happen, that it will end?! The time to end is now before it's too late. It's not now, it was supposed to be a week ago. But since we cannot turn the wheel back, let's do it now. Ceasefire is a must, it is in the interest of everyone involved or not involved yet. It's in the interest of the Palestinians. It's in the interest of the Israelis, it is in the interest of the region. It's in the interest of the United States. It's in the interest of the whole world to ceasefire, exchange prisoners, the kidnapped and hostages now and begin a move toward Palestinian liberation and peace between the two states and people. If we don't do it now, it's going to be too late and we are going to regret it. Everything is going to explode in fire and blood. And I'm warning everyone. I'm warning everyone. I hope that call will reach the ears of your administration and politicians. And I hope that if it does, they also listen not only here, we are on the brink of a terrible massacre and bloodshed that the world hasn't seen for ages. We have to stop it now. That's not anti-Israeli. That's not anti-Palestinian. That's not anti-American. It's for the sake of human beings everywhere.

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