



Jeffrey Sachs speaks out on Israel's war and ethnic cleansing in Gaza

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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 that we recently started a crowdfunding campaign with the goal of reaching €20,000 so that we can continue with our independent and non-profit journalism in 2024. Journalism that is viewer funded and does not take any money from corporations or governments. If we reach this target, we would be able to cover all of our costs associated with our journalism that include tax advising, website maintenance, insurance, video editing, production, post-production, translation, voice-over, and many others. If we fail to reach this target, we will unfortunately have to scale back on our capacities. So if you are watching our videos regularly, make sure to participate today by just donating two to three Euro or Dollars. If our 145,000 subscribers donate that amount only, then we will not only be able to achieve our crowdfunding target, but also be able to cover our operational costs for the next two or three years. Today, I'll be talking to Jeffrey Sachs about Israel's war in Gaza and the war in Ukraine. Jeffrey Sachs serves as a director of the Center for Sustainable Development at Columbia University, where he holds the title of Professor, the institution's highest academic rank. He's also a world renowned economist, best selling author, innovative educator and a global leader in sustainable development. Jeffrey, welcome back to the show.

Jeffrey Sachs (JS): Great to be with you again. Thank you.

ZR: Let us begin with the war in Ukraine. Ukrainian President Zelensky recently visited the United States for the purpose of drumming up support for a \$60 billion aid package. In a meeting with Zelensky, US President Biden strongly praised Ukraine's resilient defense against Russia and reiterated his commitment to Ukraine by stating, and let me quote him here. Quote, "Mr. President, I will not walk away from Ukraine and neither will the American people", unquote. However, in reality, the state of Ukrainian support looks quite grim, both in the US and Europe. In the US Congress, Republicans have blocked a \$60 billion aid package

on the condition that any additional money for Ukraine must follow a strengthening of immigration rules. Even in the European Union, a \$52 billion aid package for Ukraine was vetoed by the Hungarian Prime Minister, Viktor Orban, recently at the EU summit in Brussels. How do you assess these developments? And secondly, why do you think the West is failing to still publicly entertain the option of diplomacy and negotiations with Russia?

JS: Ukraine is getting slaughtered and losing thousands and thousands of young men and now women every week, and it is absolutely a shame of the United States and Europe to continue to feed this human destruction. It's cynical, it's stupid, and it is a complete failure of diplomacy. Where are our leaders that understand it's time to sit down now and negotiate? And by the way, the main negotiation needs to be between the United States and Russia, not between Ukraine and Russia, because this conflict from the start was a conflict between the United States and its NATO push and Russia and Ukraine was the fodder. And we, yes, provided the weapons and the dollars for hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians to die. And you just have to listen to our stupid, cynical senators who say it's best money ever bought: they're weakening Russia and not an American is dying. And the Europeans play into this. So this war needs to stop and it needs to stop through negotiation between the US and Russia. The core has to be stop NATO enlargement and Russia stop its war and peace comes and there's going to have to be a territorial settlement. Now, if this war hadn't taken place, there wouldn't have had to be a territorial settlement the same way because we in the West kept playing a losing hand and Ukraine kept losing more and more as a result of this. And it was completely predictable that this so-called Ukrainian counter-offensive that started in June would fail. But our leaders are so cynical and they're such liars, by the way, that they said this is going to be a great occasion and it's been nothing but destruction and they still don't tell the truth to this day. So we've been saying it for a long time, this war could have been avoided through negotiation. It could have been stopped in March 2022 through negotiation. It could be stopped today through negotiation. But that takes the United States negotiating and it takes the Europeans just having a smidgen of honesty for a change and stopping following the narrative of the United States and saying, We don't really need this war and we don't really need NATO to be in Ukraine. And we would actually get somewhere through diplomacy.

ZR: According to a recent report by Reuters, Germany's economic downturn worsened this month with both manufacturing and services activity contracting, sliding Germany into recession. Germany's strong manufacturing sector was hit particularly hard in 2022 following Russia's invasion as it was heavily dependend on cheap gas from Russia. Amidst the crisis, the German government is backing an austerity program that will cut funds in the social, agricultural, transportation sectors, as well as climate change initiatives. One place where no cuts are being made, however, is in the special €100 billion military fund that the German government created in 2022 to counter the threat posed by Russia after it invaded Ukraine. Any cuts on Ukraine aid has also been ruled out by the German chancellor, Olaf Scholz and let me quote him here, quote, "If the situation worsens as a result of Russia's war against Ukraine, for example, because the situation on the front deteriorates because other

supporters reduce the aid to Ukraine or because the threat to Germany and Europe continues to increase, we will have to respond", unquote. In fact, Germany's aid to Ukraine is set to double in 2024 from four billion to eight billion Euro. How do you assess the German government's action? Should they continue to militarize and support Ukraine amidst a crisis at home?

JS: Look, the German government has utterly failed to help find solutions to make peace and to actually respect the German economy and the European economy. And this is why, unfortunately, Scholz is one of the least popular leaders in Europe, and it's a huge disappointment for me. I like the guy. I knew him when he was mayor. I thought he would be a reasonable and effective leader. He has not been. He's been a huge disappointment. The Greens have been unbelievable. Who would have dreamt that the dreams would be the most militaristic foreign policy imaginable? Maybe not imaginable, but just terrible. Against European interests, German interests. Without a word about diplomacy. It's as if diplomacy doesn't even exist. So this government has been a failure, and it shows up in the polls. Both the left and the right are gaining tremendously. The parties in power are losing support tremendously. This is true election after election right now. It's not surprising; the government doesn't make sense. It doesn't have the strategy. Now, why? Well, I think the basic reason is, follow the US. No thought that is independent at all. What does Schultz know about the Nord Stream pipeline? Why doesn't he tell us? Well, the US blew it up. Is that really in Germany's interests and Europe's interests, in the interests of peace? No. Everything's been a lie. But Germany has gone along with it. It's sad and it shows up politically. This is a failure. The public doesn't support it because it's bad for the economy. It doesn't solve any problems. It's not helping Ukraine. Let's understand this. All this pro Ukraine rhetoric; Ukraine is getting slaughtered. The longer this goes on, the more territory Russia is going to take. What would have stopped the war entirely is the common sense that you don't push NATO to Russia's border. It's not exactly a genius needed to understand that, since it was said repeatedly, every day, every year since 2007: Don't do it. And why can't the German leaders figure this out? Well, I think, again, whether they figured it out or not, it's basically follow the US, and don't say a word against this. And it's hurting, it doesn't work.

ZR: Let me switch to Israel's war in Gaza and also recap the situation for our viewers. After the October 7th terrorist attacks of Hamas that killed at least 1200 Israelis, 138 of whom were military personnel, Israel responded by declaring war in Gaza. So far, Israel has killed 18,700 Palestinians, 70% of them being women and children. According to the UN, around half of the people of Gaza are facing starvation, eight in ten Gazaners are now homeless and a total of 1.9 million people have been displaced. On the 12th of December, the United General Assembly voted to demand an immediate humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza. A clear majority that included 250 nations voted in favor of a cease fire, but ten voted against it and 23 abstained. The most powerful nation that voted against the ceasefire was the United States. Today, the United Nations Security Council will vote on another resolution drafted by the United Arab Emirates that calls for an urgent and sustainable cessation of hostilities to allow

safe and unhindered humanitarian access. It is expected once again that the United States will veto this resolution as it did earlier this month at the Security Council. Could you first assess Israel's response and thereafter talk about why the US continues to shield Israel on the international stage?

JS: Absolutely. Look, this is, again, a war that has political roots. And I think every German listener should know the [inaudible] von Clausewitz in *On War* in 1832 after the Napoleonic Wars, said that war is a continuation of politics with other means. At least that's the English translation of von Clausewitz. And this is a war that is a continuation of politics. Now, what's the politics here? The government of Israel wants to rule all of the land from the Jordan to the Mediterranean. Hamas, in this case in Gaza, wants to rule all the land from the Jordan to the Mediterranean. The Palestine Authority in the West Bank says we want a two state solution and has agreed with international law and UN security Council resolutions for decades. The main point to say right now, from my point of view, is that the mass destruction of a civilian population being carried out by Israel is not only mass war crimes tantamount to a genocide, according to many legal experts, but more than that is in pursuit of a completely illegitimate political aim, which is the so-called Greater Israel, in which there is only Israel ruling over all of Palestine. This is not subtle, what I'm saying. This is the words every day of Netanyahu and of extreme right wing cabinet ministers, including Galant, the minister of defense, so-called, although it's offense, the Minister of Finance, Smotrich, the minister of Interior, Ben Gvir, these are radicals and what they say is one country, Israel, which governs everything as a Jewish state and with control over millions of Palestinians or with ethnic cleansing of millions of Palestinians. So let's be clear. The second point to be clear is that this war continues each day with the United States arming Israel in real time. In other words, not just supporting Israel in a vote in the Security Council or in the General Assembly. Not just supporting Israel through past shipments of munitions, but daily supporting Israel with new munitions. In other words, this is a US Israel war. It's not just an Israel attack on Gaza. It is an Israel-US war on Gaza. It is against international law in countless ways. It is killing thousands and thousands of people, mostly women and children, each week right now. It is destroying hospitals, schools, basic infrastructure, and homes. As you mentioned, it has displaced at least 1.9 million people. That's a lot of people to have been displaced in a few weeks. That's because Israel bombed with US bombs the housing of millions of people, and then it sent them to the south of Gaza and then bombed in the south of Gaza. And it's not even subtle. We have to move beyond the idea that this is somehow subtle. It's just like Ukraine. The facts are out there even if the mainstream media will not report them. And the facts are that in the Hebrew press in Israel, Netanyahu makes absolutely clear: We are against completely any Palestinian state. We are against any control of Gaza by Palestinians, afterwards, we are out to make Gaza uninhabitable. This is not subtle, so it has to stop immediately. And my view is we need the Security Council today – I'll put it that way – to vote 15 to nothing. That it is international law under the UN charter that this war stops and that two states, that a Palestinian state is established and two states live peacefully side by side, and the UN security Council puts in peacekeepers to enforce the will of the international

community. This is not about new negotiations between Israel and Palestine, because Israel has said quite clearly, it stands flagrantly against international law, as expressed repeatedly since 1967 by the UN security Council, starting with Resolution 242 and in 1973, 338. So we need peace. Now why is this happening? Because the United States is blocking it. That's it. And in the United States, public opinion is turning sharply against Israel, especially young people. And the administration is shocked at that because it's been a standard assumption of US politics, always side with Israel. Well, that may be what certain groups want in the United States, but it's not what the American people want. They see war crimes in front of their eyes. They want the war crimes to stop and they don't want America to be complicit in those war crimes.

ZR: Whenever the US casts a veto, the argument that is usually made and which is widely circulated in the German media is that the UN resolution text that is drafted never condemns Hamas' violence or recognizes Israel's right to self-defense. What do you make of this argument that is cast that whenever the US invokes a veto?

JS: I think that this is completely irrelevant and beside the point. What is relevant is we need the fighting to stop and for two states to exist. And the United States is providing the munitions for an extreme right wing government that explicitly is against any Palestinian political rights. So this isn't Israel saying we need our security, but of course we recognize Palestinian rights. This is an Israeli government saying we do not accept any Palestinian political rights. So you cannot support what is a complete violation of international law, not only the laws of warfare against civilian populations, but the political need for two states to live there, because otherwise all you're doing is directly supporting a government that claims ethnic cleansing or claims the right of apartheid, or something even worse.

ZR: I want to highlight some developments taking place in Germany in regards to Israel and Palestine. In November, the use of the slogan "from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free" became a criminal offense in Germany, punishable by a prison sentence of up to three years or a hefty fine. However, the statement "between the sea and the Jordan there will only be Israeli sovereignty", which is stated in the founding charter of the Likud Party from 1977 – the party which the current Israeli prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu heads – has not been criminalized by the German government. Furthermore, starting this month, a written declaration of commitment recognizing the right of the state of Israel to exist must be submitted in the eastern federal state of Saxony-Anhalt in order to obtain German citizenship. Commentators and analysts are warning that these moves by the federal and regional governments pose a danger to civil liberties. How is the situation on your end across the Atlantic in the United States in terms of civil liberties and academic freedom?

JS: Well, we have lots of student protests. We have lots of powerful interests trying to shut down the student protests, but they're not going to do it and they're not able to do it. And that's because there are war crimes underway. What you say is absolutely right, that you have two sides that are claiming exclusive political rights, whereas the whole international

community is saying two states, and that's been the international law since 1967, that Israel is an occupied territory and a settlement needs to be made with Palestinian political rights based on the 4th June, 1967 borders. And so to criminalize one side, where the other side is the government carrying out mass war crimes and murder, in the name of Greater Israel, is something really sad. Shocking. Come on, people, open your eyes! What's happening right now?! This Israeli government is an extreme right wing government that doesn't hide its aims.

ZR: What do you think? There's this difference between the way the West approaches Ukraine; for example, when Russia annexed Ukrainian territory, the West was very quick and swift to impose sanctions, condemn it publicly and do everything possible with the ICC to pursue Putin and his cabinet. However, when it comes to Israel, the West has regularly condemned Israel for its settlement expansion. But why has it not followed up with sanctions? On one hand, it implies international law and all this lofty rhetoric when it comes to Ukraine, but on the other hand, you only have rhetoric but no concrete actions. What is behind this double standard?

JS: Well, I'm sorry to insult European governments and leaders again, but basically the United States calls the shots, period. So we don't have to look too deep at Europe. We just have to look at what the United States does. And the United States does not exactly operate with any consistency; it operates with interests, with imperial interests. In Ukraine the imperial interests are to expand NATO. This is, again, not subtle. This was spelled out in 1997 by Brzezinski and has been pursued ever since. In the case of Israel it is to support Israel no matter what. That's the US security state position. Europe, I'm afraid, doesn't have almost an independent thought in its head, in most cases, with a few exceptions, like Pedro Sanchez in Spain, who's actually thinking – but not Meloni, not Scholz, not Macron. It's sad. Come on, this is Europe. Europe should think. And instead they're parroting the United States and don't look for consistency according to principles in the US. Look at US interests perceived by the security state. And that is a might, makes right ideology. And in Ukraine, it means we fight to weaken Russia no matter how many hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians lost. And in the case of Israel, it means we arm Israel to carry out its mission, because for a variety of political reasons, the United States government, not the people, but the government backs Israel unconditionally, at least to this moment. But we should look at the world opinion. The world opinion in both Ukraine and Israel is the same: Stop the fighting. Don't side with US imperialism of expanding NATO alliance or don't side with Israel's attempt to crush any kind of Palestinian political sovereignty. Abide by international law and that would actually get us somewhere. And Europe is lost because it follows the US. The US doesn't have principles. The US just has thought for the last 30 years that power is enough. But power isn't enough. It doesn't solve anything. And Israel's going to destroy itself actually, over this because it's losing its international legitimacy, including in the United States, by the way, including in the young people of the United States. There's a complete change of opinion in the United States among young people. And so I don't think Israelis understand

this. And as long as there are these neocons in power, which is Biden, Blinken, Nuland, Sullivan, they've been there a long time, and there are the neocons in the other party as well; so this is a deep state phenomenon, not just a set of personalities. As long as that continues, there isn't going to be peace.

ZR: To my last question, we are currently in our crowdfunding campaign to continue our independent journalism in 2024. Why is it important for viewers to support independent journalism that does not take any money from corporations and governments and provides an alternative perspective to the mainstream media?

JS: Look, the mainstream media shut down in recent years. The New York Times, Wall Street Journal, Washington Post, MSNBC in the United States, worthless. They don't tell the truth at all. Oh, the war is going great until it's not going great because they lied all along the way. Nord Stream, we didn't hear a word about it. In Israel, they're just shocked. They don't understand that the American public isn't siding with the official narrative. But these mainstream media outlets have revealed themselves to be utterly subservient to the official narrative. And in Europe, there's even outlawing of statements that are obviously true. It's not even a matter of truth or false. So it's a really bizarre situation. But the saving grace has been that there are more ways to be heard now. And this is extremely important because the truth does get out. And what's interesting about the official narrative, by the way, people don't believe it. They get hit by it every day. They read it. But the status of the mainstream media in public respect has plummeted. People know it's not true. So everyone's looking for outlets right now where truth can be spoken. This is why the alternatives are so vital.

ZR: Jeffrey Sachs, world renowned economist and best selling author, thank you so much for your time today.

JS: Great to be with you. Thank you so much and happy New Year.

ZR: And thank you for tuning in today. If you watched this video to the very end, please take a few minutes and click on the description of this video and check out the information to our crowdfunding campaign. If we can achieve our target of our crowdfunding, then we will be able to cover all of our costs associated with our journalism going forward in 2024. It is essential, especially in times of crisis, to support independent media so that we can continue providing an independent and critical perspective that you would not hear in the mainstream or state media. Thank you for your support. And see you next time.

END

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