



Iran's retaliatory strike against Israel - The Missing Context

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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. Today I'll be talking to Dimitri Lascaris about a breaking incident in which Iran retaliated against Israel with a massive airstrike. Dimitri Lascaris is an independent journalist and lawyer who specializes in class actions, human rights and international law. In 2020, he ran for the Green Party leadership in Canada, finishing second. Dimitri, welcome back.

Dimitri Lascaris (DL): Always a pleasure, Zain. Good to talk to you.

ZR: I want to begin with a breaking development. Yesterday, Iran fired more than 300 projectiles at Israel that included around 170 drones and over 120 ballistic missiles. According to Israel's Defense Ministry, 99% of the incoming missiles and rockets fired by Iran were intercepted by Israel's air defense – a military base was slightly damaged and a young girl was hurt. According to Iran, it acted in self-defense and was merely responding to an Israeli airstrike, which took place on the 1st of April that destroyed an Iranian consulate in Syria, Damascus, killing seven Iranian military advisers, including a high ranking general. G7 nations that include the United States and Germany unequivocally condemn this attack in the strongest terms and express their full solidarity and support for Israel, while accusing Iran of further destabilizing the region. However, in a phone conversation, US President Joe Biden told Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that the United States would not participate in any Israeli counter offensive against Iran. Whether Israel would respond is unclear as of yet, as its war cabinet has yet to make a decision. Can you provide your assessment on this development?

DL: Well, as we previously discussed, first of all, Iran's retaliatory attack – and that's what it was, it was retaliation – was entirely justified under international law. So not to say that we should celebrate the fact that Iran resorted to an attack upon Israel. But to say that this was illegal, is simply wrong. Israel attacked a diplomatic mission. Destroyed it in Damascus. It was under international law Iranian territory. This was effectively an attack on the sovereign territory of Iran. It was a grave violation of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations. Article 22 of it says that the diplomatic mission is inviolable. The pretext that Israel is given for destroying the diplomatic mission is completely invalid as a matter of international law. And if you applied its reasoning to its own diplomatic missions, effectively, Iran would have the basis to strike them, as would other adversaries of Israel. So, all that Iran did and it

properly invoked this, was to rely upon article 51, I believe this is the United Nations charter, the right of self-defense that all states have.

So first of all, this was entirely legal. Secondly, it was provoked by Israel. Thirdly, the United States and other Western states did absolutely nothing to condemn Israel for the destruction of Iran's consulate, and in fact, had the audacity to effectively justify what it did. Certainly they took no steps to restrain Israel and at the United Nations Security Council, the United States and Britain and France effectively blocked a condemnation of the destruction of Iran's consulate. So, the West is entirely complicit in all of this. And finally, in terms of what happened, this claim that the Israeli military and its Western allies shot down 99% of the drones and the missiles, I think is implausible in the extreme. It may well be that they shot down most of them. But it's extremely unlikely, given the size of the barrage and the limitations of even the best air defense systems in the world that they shot down 99%. And in fact, there's video circulating, which appears to be authentic of a number of ballistic missiles, anywhere from 5 to 10 actually striking Israeli territory and causing large explosions. On their mass, no more than 2 or 3 – because they say basically 1% got through – so no more than 2 or 3. And by the way, Israel's government and military have no credibility at this stage. They routinely lie, and they have been determined to have been lying for many years about many important subjects. So at the end of the day, this is a game changer of an event. I don't think that this was a devastating impact on Israel by any means, but it has demonstrated that even when Israel is protected by the air defense forces in the region of the United States, Britain and France, and Jordan apparently participated in defending Israel, even when Israel was given advance notice – and it was, they were saying for hours, you know, the Americans and the Israelis were saying for hours that Iran has launched drones. And Iran really made no bones about the fact that it was about to strike Israeli territory. So they had advance notice for several hours. And still a number of ballistic missiles got through. What this says very clearly is that Iran has both the willingness, at this stage, and the military capacity to strike Israel with missiles from its own territory, which is over 1000km away.

So now Israel has to think very, very carefully about its next step. This claim that Biden is, you know, trying to restrain Israel, frankly, Zain, I don't buy it one iota. We've been hearing that about the genocide in Gaza for six months. And yet, Joe Biden and his administration have continued to give munitions to Israel in huge quantities. They're being used to commit a genocide. No matter how much frustration administration officials profess to have with the Netanyahu government, they continue to arm him. And I think that this is posturing. I think that Joe Biden going to The New York Times or his officials going to The New York Times and saying, you know, "we told Netanyahu not to retaliate" is Biden posing as a peacemaker and a man of reason and a man of restraint, when in fact, it's entirely possible that he has given Netanyahu's regime the green light to retaliate. And I would be very, very surprised, shocked, actually, if there isn't retaliation in some form from the Israeli military.

ZR: The perspective that is being largely transmitted in the mainstream media here in Germany is that Iran supports terrorism throughout the region. In Syria and in Iraq its proxies have attacked US military installations. In Lebanon, its proxy in Hezbollah – which the EU and US considers a terrorist organization – routinely attacks Israel. In Yemen Iran supports the Houthi rebels, who have been striking ships in the Red sea, disrupting global shipping. In Gaza Iran backs Hamas and Islamic Jihad, who have also been attacking Israel. Given this context, don't you think Israel – not Iran – has a right to defend itself by targeting Iranian targets such as consulates and other installations that could potentially be used for planning and preparing attacks?

DL: Well, first of all, most of the world doesn't consider these organizations to be terrorist organizations and the vast majority of states that do are in the West. This should tell you something. Why is that? Secondly, if we are going to categorize an actor at the state level or non-state level as a terrorist organization using the conventional definition of terrorism, which is the targeting of civilians and civilian infrastructure for a political purpose, there is no worse terrorist entity in West Asia than Israel itself. Israel is engaged in horrific acts of terrorism. It is destroying the civilian population of Gaza, depriving it of food and water. It's killed over 14,000 children. Whereas Hamas, which is portrayed by the West as the most evil terrorist organization in West Asia, is alleged by Israel itself to have killed 33 children on October 7th. 14,000 children versus 33 children – and we're to believe that Israel is acting in self-defense but Hamas is the world's most evil terrorist organization? At the end of the day, what Iran is doing – and by the way, I interviewed late last month, the director of international relations of Hezbollah in Lebanon. And for what it's worth, he stated emphatically that their organization prohibits attacks on civilians. So they certainly don't accept this characterization. But at the end of the day, if it is permissible for Israel to attack Iran because of its arming of groups which the West alleges to be terrorists, then by the West's own definition of terrorism, Iran and these groups allied with Iran have every reason to attack Israel. And frankly, its main backer, the United States, because they have committed far worse acts of terrorism. The bottom line here is that by any rational measure, Israel is the aggressor. It is Israel that has stolen land. It currently, according to the Western governments themselves, illegally occupies the Syrian Golan Heights. It illegally occupies pieces of Lebanese territory. It illegally occupies Palestinian land and has been building settlements for over 50 years in the West Bank, in flagrant violation of international law. In 2004, the International Court of Justice unanimously ruled that those settlements are a violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention. So how can anybody with a straight face, after all of these years, claim that Israel is the victim, and the people who are being dispossessed by its brutal force are the aggressors? This is the reality standing on its head, Zain. Let's actually begin to look at the facts in a sober and rational and objective manner, and recognize that Israel is a colonial project that is relentlessly dispossessing peoples of their land and relentlessly committing acts of aggression against neighboring states.

ZR: After the October 7 attacks, you were one of the experts on our show who repeatedly warned of a major escalation in the region after Israel began its assault on the Gaza Strip, which to date has killed more than 33,600 Palestinians and seriously wounded over 76,000. Most of them, as you have said, are women and children. Now it seems that this is increasingly becoming a reality. This question consists of two parts. Firstly, do you believe that Israel would drag the West into a regional war? Despite what President Biden stated that he will not support an Israeli counter strike? And secondly, what should be done at this stage to prevent this conflict from escalating, potentially into a Third World War?

DL: I have no doubt that Israel's government is trying to drag the West into a devastating war with Hezbollah and Iran. The destruction of the consulate itself, you know, whether Israel believed it had a moral justification for doing this – it must have known that an Iranian retaliation was inevitable, that Iran could not simply allow Israel to destroy its diplomatic missions with impunity. And Iran waited long enough for the West to do something about it. And all the West did was justify Israel's destruction of its consulate. So at the end of the day, it was entirely foreseeable that Iran would do this. It was entirely foreseeable that it would articulate a legal basis to retaliate. And Israel did it anyway. And personally, I have great difficulty believing that the United States didn't have advance warning of this. It almost

certainly did have advance warning and allowed Israel to do it. So, what can we infer from all of this? And not only this, there's the fact that Israel's attacks in Lebanon have expanded all the way to the north of the country. Hezbollah, by contrast, has not targeted Israeli territory to the south of the country, in the southern parts of Israel. Israel has now basically covered the whole of Lebanon with attacks that have killed far more civilians in Lebanon than it says Hezbollah has killed on the Israeli side. It has killed far more military personnel of Hezbollah than it says the IDF has suffered in terms of what it was trying to do. It is trying to draw the United States into a major, devastating war. And I just see absolutely no indication that the West is willing to restrain Israel at all. Absolutely not. And, as I say, given the six months of kabuki theater we've been watching where every few weeks, Biden administration officials, anonymous ones, go to the Western media and say Joe Biden is so upset with Benjamin Netanyahu. And then the next day, they authorize another massive delivery of weapons to Israel. There's really no reason to believe that the Biden administration either has the capacity or the willingness to say no to Benjamin Netanyahu. And he's clearly hellbent on escalating this. As you said, Zain, I've been saying this from day one. I've been saying this from October of last year when the genocide began. We are heading to a major conflagration in the Middle East, and this could easily go nuclear. People need to put massive pressure on their governments to stop sending weapons to Israel. That is the solution to this problem. That will solve the genocide in Gaza, that will solve the war on Israel's northern border. That will solve the escalation with Iran. But as long as we're sending weapons to Israel, Israel will continue to escalate. You can take that to the bank.

ZR: Dimitri Lascaris, journalist and lawyer. Thank you so much for your time today.

DL: Thank you again, Zain.

ZR: And thank you for tuning in today. If you're watching our videos regularly and you would like to support our journalism going forward, make sure to support us with a standing order either via Better Place, Patreon, by PayPal or a bank account. If all of our 147,000 subscribers donate just only 2 to 3 dollars or euros a month, we would be able to cover all of our costs for the next 4 to 5 years. Also, if you want us to reach you in times of censorship or shadowbanning, make sure to join us on our other channels on Rumble, Telegram and a podcast called Podbean. YouTube, which is owned by Google, can shadowban and censor us at any time, and if that day ever comes, we won't be able to reach you even with an announcement. I'm your host, Zain Raza, I thank you for tuning in and see you next time.

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