



Report: Shocking extent of Germany's support for Israel | 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. Today I'll be interviewing independent journalist, economist, and author Dr. Shir Hever. Dr. Shir Hever is also the military embargo coordinator of the Boycott National Committee of the BDS movement. Shir, welcome back.

Shir Hever (SH): Thanks for having me, Zain.

ZR: Let's start with the report titled, quote, "German Arm Exports to Israel", unquote, which hardly made any headlines in the German media thus far. It was published on April 2nd by a German nonprofit organization called Forensic [Architecture]. This report details how the German military is supporting Israel, particularly in its current assault on Gaza, which thus far has killed 32,600 Palestinians and severely injured 75,000 more. Around 70% of those killed are, being reported, women and children. An unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe is unfolding in Gaza, where 1.7 million people are on the brink of famine, while electricity, healthcare and other social infrastructure have largely been devastated. Can you first say something about the authors of this report, their background, and then provide your assessment on their findings?

SH: Sure. This report is extremely important. Forensic Architecture is an organization which is based in London. It was founded by Eyal Weizman who is a scholar of Israeli origin. And they have published some very important evidence about the Israeli genocide in Gaza, including three dimensional analysis of the bombing angles of Al-Shifa hospital and other hospitals – very important analysis. But for the group in Germany – there is a branch of Forensic Architecture in Germany which worked on this particular report, and trying to understand how deeply involved, how deeply complicit the German government is in Israel's genocide. And the group of researchers was not just from Forensic Architecture. I'm honored to say that I was also able to contribute to gathering the information for this report. I should

also mention that there are Hebrew speaking researchers who are collecting information from all of these pictures and videos that soldiers are uploading. And you have to speak Hebrew in order to track all of these videos and pictures on social media. But then to find from them the lot numbers and the serial numbers on the bombs in order to track them back. Without that, it wouldn't have been possible to show a complete picture of all of these weapons that Germany is selling to Israel in the middle of a genocide.

ZR: So talk more about the findings of this report. What has been uncovered thus far which stood out for you?

SH: Even though I've been working on this research for months, I was shocked by this report. I have to say that I didn't expect – because there's different methodologies of how you measure the amount of weapons that are sent. And if you follow the Israeli media or also the US media, there's a sort of an assumption that the US delivers more than 90% of all the weapons, especially ammunition, to Israel. And then of the remaining 10%, the biggest supplier is Germany. And, now, according to this report, it seems that Germany is playing a much bigger role than we thought. And this is something that didn't just start in 2023 with the genocide. The report starts with the year 2003, so actually it goes over a period of 20 years and shows that Germany has provided Israel with tremendous amounts of weapons, ammunition, bombs, missiles, armored vehicles, artillery, and, very importantly, naval vessels; ships, naval artillery, submarines. These are used all against Gaza. There's a lot of evidence of Israeli soldiers just taking the Matador anti-tank missile, which was a joint development of Israel, Germany and Singapore. And instead of using it as it was intended against tanks, they're using it against residential houses, to kill people. And the German authorities have seen the videos, they know of these facts, and they decided to continue to provide more of this ammunition to the Israeli military, which makes them completely complicit.

I was also shocked to see that of all of the export requests that were made by the Israeli government for licenses, from Germany to provide them with weapons after already a genocide is commenced and a massive destruction and killing of civilians has been already going on, the number of approved export licenses, according to this report, is 99.75%. So that means that only 1 in 4000 of those requests have been denied. This is almost unfathomable when you think about the way that these weapons, that the German government itself considers them weapons of war, have been sold to Israel; some of them with a major discount, by a subsidy given by the German federal government in order to make it cheaper for the Israelis to buy those weapons. And those weapons, according to the German definition of what are weapons of war, weapons that could be used in the course of war between states – this is not a war between states. This is an extermination campaign by the Israeli military against a population which is already under Israeli military occupation. The Gaza Strip is under Israeli military occupation, legally, and I mean in the legal sense, not that the occupation is legal, of course. The occupation is illegal, but this is an important point to make because those civilians who are bombed and have nowhere to run and are facing weapons like anti-tank weapons, heavy bombs, naval artillery, for which they have no defense, then the

German government itself, claiming that these are weapons of war and providing them to Israel under these circumstances, is simply criminal. I was also shocked to discover that it was actually not the German Ministry of Defense, which played the biggest role in facilitating those exports. I expected it was Pistorius, the German Defense Minister, because Pistorius from the SPD party, the Social Democrat, who has made this, I would say atrocious decision to invite Israel's defense minister, Yoav Gallant, to a big ceremony in Berlin to sign a big arms deal, in which Germany is buying Israeli weapons, not the other way around, but he made that invitation only ten days after Yoav Gallant made the famous speech in which he called Palestinians human animals and said that they will receive no food, no water, no medication, so when he basically declared genocide and Pistorius invited him. And so I thought, okay, Pistorius is a genocide enabler within the German government, but I was wrong. Because in fact, the two ministries that have established a task force to facilitate arms exports to Israel after October 7th were the German Foreign Ministry and the German Ministry of the Economy. So these are the two ministries in the hands of the Green Party. And the ministers, Annalena Baerbock and Robert Habeck, are of the Green Party, which has already been accused, among Germans, as the party of war. They were saying that their green has become olive green, because of their rabid support for escalating the war in Ukraine and sending more weapons to Ukraine. But the war in Ukraine, as horrible as it may be, is still not a fraction of the number of children who were killed, not a fraction of the number of civilians who were killed in Gaza and not a case in which mass starvation to this level is used as a weapon to cause really daily scenes of children who are dying of hunger. And they know it and they decided that their response to this is to send more weapons and to facilitate it. So that was another revelation in this report that really shocked me.

Now I'm thinking about these horrors that we see from Gaza. I don't want to go into too many details because I think these are really very disturbing descriptions and very heart wrenching events that are happening, war crimes. But, we know that those crimes are committed by these artillery guns that Israel has. And now I am learning from this report that the Israeli artillery, which you can see in all the videos, is a wheeled artillery, meaning that the artillery can move back and forth. And the soldiers are reporting from the frontlines, from Israel, that they don't have enough ammunition for bombing Gaza as much as they want. And they are trying to improvise and find various solutions so that they can escalate the bombing. Sometimes they have artillery shells that are only fit for a longer distance, and then sometimes they only have artillery shells that can only be fired at a shorter distance. Gaza is really small. So their location from which they bomb is already outside the Gaza Strip. But sometimes they just have to go a few kilometers back deeper into Israeli territory in order to fire all the way to Gaza, simply because they have the wrong kind of ammunition and they need to use longer range shells. And of course, at this point, I also have to clarify that every time they do this, every time they recalibrate the artillery and move back and forth, they have to fire a few shells in order to calibrate the target. Every time they do this, what they're actually doing is causing what you may call collateral damage – it's a very whitewashing kind of term – meaning just bombing civilian neighborhoods in Gaza, which are very densely populated and killing a lot of people until they reach the actual point that they intended to shoot. But the thing is that in order to do this, you need wheeled artillery. You need artillery,

which is basically a big truck. And this has been one of the biggest exports from Germany to Israel, those wheeled armored vehicles which Israel is using and also the engines, the engines for these artillery vehicles, the engines for the tanks, the famous Israeli Merkava tank and the engines for the various APCs. APCs are armored personnel carriers which are carrying the troops deep into the Gaza Strip, where they go out and kill people with light ammunition. And yes, Germany has also provided Israel with a lot of light ammunition. This part of the report is unfortunately less detailed because the light ammunition for machine guns and that sort of thing is interchangeable among NATO countries. The text on the bullets is so small it's impossible to identify from the pictures, so it's not really easy to prove that the specific killings that we see inside Al-Shifa hospital, for example, when the soldiers move from room to room and kill people are done with German bullets and not with other bullets. But we can say with a lot of confidence that the vehicle that brought the soldiers into the courtyard of the Al-Shifa hospital, where they started the massacre, this vehicle had an engine that was produced in Germany and authorized by the German government to be exported to Israel, with full knowledge that it will be used, at the very least, to commit serious war crimes, but now we also know to commit genocide.

ZR: For the sake of objectivity, I could already imagine that the argument would be that, although Hamas is not a conventional army, with tanks and airplanes and stuff like that, it still has the capability to do a lot of damage to Israel and it's considered a terrorist organization; as well as Hezbollah, which is in Lebanon, can also do significant damage. So I could imagine for that line of thought, the German government would state that we need to provide war weapons so Israel can defend itself from terrorist organizations. How do you counter this claim?

SH: Well, there are rules of war which say what is allowed and what is not allowed in a situation of war. And first of all, the Israeli team of lawyers that were sent to the International Court of Justice to defend Israel from the accusation of genocide, made the claim that Israel is applying self-defense. There is a serious problem in claiming that Israel has the right to defend itself in an occupied territory. So that already means that this is illegal what they're doing. But in addition to that, there are rules of law which say what is considered to be disproportionate use of force, what weapons are prohibited from using in civilian residential areas, and these arguments – I'm not a lawyer myself, I've been speaking to dozens of lawyers in the last couple of months to try to understand what it means, but I should say that these laws of war were written most of them as a response to the Second World War into the German genocides during that war against Jews, Sinti, Roma, and other minorities. So the German government is now blatantly violating the very same laws that were established as a response to that Second World War. And I think that is very worrying, because it shows that Germany, despite all of its claims to have learned something from history, has learned nothing from history. And I think your viewers should be aware that these laws exist. Not everything is permitted, in the name of fighting an enemy. And even if Hamas or Hezbollah have the ability to fight the Israeli army and have also shown some success in blowing up Israeli Merkava tanks, for example, but the laws of war are very clear about what is allowed and not allowed to be used. Phosphorous bombs are not allowed. And if Germany knows that

Israel is using phosphorous bombs in heavily populated areas, then they have a legal obligation. It's called the third state obligation not to provide these weapons.

But this has all gone to a new level now, because as soon as there is a lawsuit at the International Court of Justice and on January 26th, the International Court of Justice made provisional orders to the State of Israel to cease actions under Article II of the Convention for the Prevention of Genocide and under these actions under Article II, it also says killing members of the group, and they clarify the group are Palestinians in Gaza, Israel has to stop killing civilians, that also creates third state responsibility, third party state responsibilities, which makes the German arms deliveries to Israel a violation of international law. There was also a UN Security Council resolution, which was not vetoed by the United States, which called for a ceasefire. Israel has violated the ceasefire and violating a decision of the UN Security Council, also is considered to be a violation of international law. And that in itself is something that the German government is simply doing. They are violating international law. And the other issue is the next decision of the International Court of Justice, which ordered Israel, just two weeks ago, to allow aid into Gaza, to allow food and medicine into Gaza in light of the starvation of civilians and bans Israel from using starvation as a weapon. Israel has not only ignored that law, the Israeli forces have intentionally targeted locations where Palestinians have gathered to wait for food to stand in line for food, targeted the aid shipments themselves, targeted an organization called World Central Kitchen and killed seven aid workers. This particular killing of aid workers who were western, caused more uproar in the world because now Israel is killing the citizens of Poland and Britain and Canada. So these governments are now starting to say something after they said nothing about the killing of tens of thousands of Palestinians, but this is another clear violation of the order of the International Court of Justice. And Germany is once again violating international law by not immediately saying that all export licenses to Israel are revoked, and anyone who tries to smuggle weapons to Israel in a time of genocide will be put on trial by the German courts. And if the German courts fail to put these people on a trial, then that is why we have a system of international courts. That's why there is the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court and German officials are liable to be put on trial by these courts as well.

ZR: Let us examine another related development. A lawsuit was recently filed that demands that Germany complies with international law and ends all arms shipments to Israel. Can you provide details to this lawsuit? Who is behind it and how are they approaching this process?

SH: There are several lawsuits, and I think we should make a little bit of an order here. Because there was one lawsuit which under German law is more like a complaint, which calls for accountability against criminals in the German government for complicity in causing harm through war crimes and other international crimes, like genocide, by providing weapons. And this suit was filed by family members of Palestinians in Gaza who were killed. This, however, is a suit that will only be followed if the state attorney of Germany will decide to prosecute. And so far, he has not, and of course we need to put pressure to move on to the next stage and to start the prosecution. If he fails to prosecute, then there is a case, of course,

to bring these criminals to the international legal system. And I think that is the most effective way to pressure, because obviously, the German legal system will not want to appear to be incompetent in trying their own criminals. But there is another kind of lawsuit, and this is going to be filed very soon, based on the report that we've just been discussing. And that is not a lawsuit in the normal sense that is asking for accountability for criminals to be punished, but asking for an order to stop the weapons shipments and so there is no accountability. It's just to stop the weapons. Here the lawsuit is not based on family members who have lost their relatives to the Israeli onslaught, but rather by people who are still alive. And their right to live is protected under German law. The right to life. So in order to protect the right to life, these weapons have to be stopped. Therefore, it doesn't focus on the crimes that have already been committed, but on the crimes that could be committed with these weapons. It's still very important to stop the weapons, so I think that is a very important lawsuit. And it has another advantage that it doesn't depend on the state attorney to prosecute. So that would force the court to make a decision and the government will have to abide by the court's decision. And we don't have to also have the political element of the state attorney agreeing to prosecute.

ZR: I believe there was a similar lawsuit in the Netherlands which was able to gain success. It was filed by human rights groups and I believe it was able to curb some parts that were being supplied to the F-35. However, in Germany we have seen courts simply stand by and laws and regulations have been passed by the government that essentially support Israel from restricting the Boycott Sanctions Divestment movement to curbing pro-Palestinian demonstrations, calling for a ceasefire or regulating speech, such as "from river to the sea", or recognizing laws in states like Saxony-Anhalt that require a written declaration recognizing the state of Israel's right to exist in order to obtain German citizenship. In light of all of these, how do you see the chances for success of this lawsuit?

SH: Well, I think that all of this repression of Palestinian voices in Germany and free speech when it gets to the issue of Palestine in Germany is disgusting, but that's not the urgent matter right now. Because people are being killed in Gaza every day, and we have to stop it and now we know, based on this report, that a much bigger part of these people are being killed by German weapons than we thought. It's not 90% American weapons, a lot of them are German weapons; as much as 47% in some years, according to the SIPRI data, SIPRI is the Stockholm Institute for Peace Research. And to answer your question, all of these legal lawsuits that we see in the Netherlands, also in the United States, in Britain, in Canada, in Belgium, in Spain, all of these suits are a combination of legal efforts and political efforts. Because law is a very political thing, unfortunately we cannot count on the legal system to operate by the letter of the law, and that's that. We need to work on various levels. The court in the Netherlands, because it was shown absolute proof that the F-35 is used to commit atrocities against civilians in Gaza, ruled that the parts where the F-35 may not be sold, but also not be transferred from the Netherlands. That's very important because the big warehouse for spare parts for the F-35 is in the Netherlands. So even if those spare parts are owned by US companies, which are more than happy to sell those to Israel and ignore international law, the Dutch government cannot allow these parts to be shipped. And the

success of that court case, which was limited, I admit I have hoped for more. I also wanted the court to say in the Netherlands that it's also illegal for the Netherlands to buy weapons from Israel because that is the letter of the law. But unfortunately the court didn't say that and the Netherlands continues to buy weapons from genocidal companies like Elbit Systems.

But nevertheless, this was very important because in some countries, like, for example, in Canada, where there are these lawsuits that are still ongoing, the Parliament decided to move forward with a non-binding resolution for an arms embargo, anticipating that the lawsuits could put them in a very embarrassing situation. And the Ministry of Foreign Affairs decided to adopt the non-binding resolution and turn it into government policy. Again, we could certainly ask for more, we can hope for more. But this is important. Canada is, either between the third and fourth place, the biggest supplier of weapons to Israel, after the US and Germany and to some extent Italy. In Italy, there's also fierce debates ongoing, even though Italy has a far right government right now. But public support is very clear for the military embargo, and the government is maybe far right and pro-Israeli, but also populist. And they know that the public will not accept Italy providing weapons for the genocide. And in Spain, it has been successful. The Spanish congress passed a binding resolution to stop weapons shipments to Israel.

So I think that is the measure by which we need to make things. And you asked me how likely it is that the German courts will rule correctly and ban the arms shipments. I think the answer is with all the unions of transport workers, dockworkers, airport workers in other EU states, from Greece, Cyprus to Italy to Spain, to the Netherlands, to Belgium, in all of these countries, the unions are already making statements that they will refuse to allow transiting weapons to Israel. Now imagine what would happen if a ship from Hamburg carrying weapons to Israel will be stopped and searched in a port in Antwerp, or in Cadiz, or in Sicily or in, Greece – they have to make all these stops along the way – and the union workers who stop the ship will search the ship and find weapons intended to Israel in clear violation of international law, and then will immediately file a lawsuit against the German company, the shipping company and the German government for violating international law and sending weapons to Israel in a time of genocide, in order to defend themselves. The unions will have to file the lawsuit, because they don't want to get in trouble for disobeying their instructions to treat the ship and fuel it and so on. So they will have to file this lawsuit. And if in that situation, the German authorities will say, well, but we had an internal lawsuit filed and we chose to ignore it and not to treat it seriously and now because of this there are lawsuits coming from outside, and the international court system gets activated against Germany, that would be extremely embarrassing. That would be a failure of the German institutions of democracy. And also it would be a complete embarrassment for a state that claims to have learned something from the Holocaust and from the Second World War, and to respect international law. So putting that into context, and if the judges realize that this risk exists, then yes, I think that the court cases have a good chance to succeed because the judges have an opportunity to save face for their own government, for their own country, by stopping the weapon shipments before it's too late.

ZR: Let us look at regional development surrounding Israel and Gaza. On Monday, Israel carried out an airstrike that destroyed an Iranian consulate building in Syria's capital Damascus, killing 13 people, including Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Zahedi. He was considered one of the most prominent figures in the Iranian military. Israel also carried out an airstrike on the Syrian city of Aleppo last week, reportedly killing 53 people, including Syrian soldiers and Hezbollah members. Last month, Iran also accused Israel of deliberately sabotaging its natural gas pipeline, which runs from Iran's western provinces to Caspian Sea cities. Although Iran has condemned these attacks and even vowed to retaliate, it has by and large avoided any direct confrontation with Israel. Why do you think Israel is escalating the situation with Iran? Can it even fight a two front war with Iran and its proxy Hezbollah on one side, and Hamas in Gaza on the other?

SH: If you're asking me the question from a rational, strategic point of view, then of course the answer is no. Because Israel is already losing its fight with Hamas. It doesn't matter how many thousands of innocent civilians are being killed in Gaza, Hamas is not getting weaker, the Israeli military is not achieving any strategic objectives against Hamas, and Israeli soldiers die or are killed every day by Hamas fighters and the Israelis are not able to protect their own soldiers. So starting a second front with Hezbollah, which is much stronger than Hamas, and provoking Iran, which is even stronger, makes no sense from a rational point of view. We have to understand that the situation in Israel is anything but rational. There is, first of all, a lot of disinformation and misinformation. The public has no idea what's going on. A lot of Israelis don't realize what is happening, or they do realize, but they cannot face this reality. So they choose to believe something else. The Israeli parliament just passed a law to ban the Al-Jazeera broadcast in Israel, which is mostly a symbolic thing because Israelis won't watch Al-Jazeera at all. And if somebody really wants to watch Al-Jazeera, they can still watch it online, it's not like the Israeli government can really control the information. But what they can do is distribute fake information and claim that Israel is winning the war in Israel, could also defeat Lebanon and everything like that, which has no basis in reality.

But meanwhile, the political situation in Israel is very precarious. First of all, the economy is falling apart. Israelis realize that a lot of Israelis are leaving the country. And there is an unprecedented number of unemployed people. The economy is ground to a halt, the government is not able to pay its debts, not able to provide basic public services to the population. So there is a sense that the state is falling apart altogether. And, for the soldiers who have been fighting for five months or more, many of them have reached the limit and also know that they've lost their jobs back home because these are reservists and their jobs haven't waited for them for five months, and they have lost contact with family members, so there's a new movement among the soldiers saying we will not continue to do this forever, we will not fight for the government in Gaza forever, we demand that the ultra-Orthodox Jews will also be recruited to be soldiers and will share some of the tasks of the military operations that that are too much for them. The ultra-Orthodox are not going to join the military. This is very clear. I'm reading their newspapers every day. And there is no crack in their position that it's better to die than to go to the military. This is a very deep theological conviction of the ultra-Orthodox political parties and population and public and the rabbis, which may have

different opinions on many different issues, but this is a red line for them. So now Netanyahu really has a problem, because his approval rating is about 18% among the Israeli public. There are a lot of people who say there has to be an election, the government has to fall, but they don't want to protest as long as there is a war going on. So Netanyahu is trying to avoid a cease fire. As long as the fighting goes on, there are no protests, and he can keep going and says, we'll have the election after the war. And so he's postponing it ad infinitum. But Yoav Gallant – I mentioned him before, the Ministry of Defense, he plays a very pivotal role here and he is the orchestrator of this genocide more than anyone else – Yoav Galant has also joined this movement that says the ultra-Orthodox have to go to the military. Now Netanyahu has a problem within his own coalition. And he cannot fire Yoav Gallant in the middle of the war, because then people will say, well, then we can also have elections. But if Yoav Gallant doesn't vote with the coalition, the coalition will fall. So Netanyahu, remembers that right after October 7th, in the next couple of days, Yoav Gallant said, let's use this opportunity to invade Lebanon, which is an insane idea and just to think like, well, the whole world is supporting Israel, so let's do two for one and destroy Gaza and also conquer Lebanon. Netanyahu, who has a slightly more realistic perception of reality told Yoav Gallant, forget about it. There's not going to be an attack against Lebanon. But now, in order to mend this internal division within his government, Netanyahu is willing to consider maybe a war in Lebanon, which will certainly put Israel in a path of no return to self-destruction. It will also, of course, cause tremendous destruction in Lebanon. Let's not forget that human beings also live there and deserve to live. But regardless of how irrational it is, it will buy some more time for Netanyahu, because then Yoav Gallant will stay in the government, the ultra-Orthodox will continue not to join the military, the protests will be postponed a bit more... Yeah, until what? Until the whole country is in flames.

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

SH: Thank you, Zain.

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