



## **Putin's UN proposal for Ukraine, EU's militarization & Israel's attack on 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 begin this interview, I would like to remind you to join our alternative channels on Rumble, Telegram and the podcast called Podbean. If you're watching our content, you'll know that corporations such as Google, which owns YouTube, have a long history of shadow banning and censoring content of independent media such as ours. Even though we have 156,000 subscribers on YouTube, only a few thousand have made transition to our alternative platforms. If that day ever comes that we get shadow banned and censored, we won't be able to reach you with our information, let alone with an announcement. So we are asking all of our viewers as a precautionary measure to join these channels. You will find the links to them in the description of this video below.

Today I'll be talking to independent journalist and lawyer Dimitri Lascaris. As a lawyer, Dimitri specializes in class actions, human rights and international law. He's also the founder of the YouTube channel Reason2Resist. Dimitri, welcome back to the show.

**Dimitri Lascaris (DL):** Always a pleasure, Zain. Thank you for having me again.

**ZR:** Let's start with the latest developments in the war in Ukraine. During the election campaign, Donald Trump was quite optimistic about ending the war in Ukraine and even stated that he would do so within 24 hours of taking office. However, since assuming office, ending this war appears to be very difficult for his administration. The US announced this week that Ukraine and Russia had agreed to halt military strikes on ships in the Black Sea. However, the Kremlin responded by stating that this agreement would not go into effect until Russia's state bank was reconnected to the International Payment System, also known as SWIFT. And European leaders have made it quite clear that this would not happen until Russia withdrew completely from Ukraine. The US had also announced that both sides had agreed to halt the mutual targeting of each other's energy infrastructure. However, Ukraine has reported that Russia continues to carry out drone attacks, including on its energy infrastructure, undermining the agreement.

Just today, it was reported that Russian President Putin is proposing that Ukraine be placed under the temporary administration of the United Nations and other countries until new elections can be held. In essence, he is questioning the legitimacy of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky as a credible representative of the Ukrainian people. Before we look at Putin's proposal, let's first talk about the agreement to stop the attacks in the Black Sea and on energy infrastructure. It seems that the Trump administration is taking a step-by-step approach, tackling one problem at a time in the hope that it will then spill over and solve the bigger problems such as NATO and territorial issues at some stage. What do you think of this step-by-step approach?

**DL:** I think that Trump is caught between a rock and a hard place because in order to end the war, which he promised to do within 24 hours repeatedly, when he was running last year in the US presidential election, he would have to meet certain core demands of the Russian Federation, which has unquestionably the upper hand on the battlefield. And that's really what is driving the negotiating positions of the parties. One of those core demands is that Ukraine must see Russia for Oblast in the southeastern part of Ukraine, plus Crimea. And the West must recognize Russian sovereignty over these territories. Trump has given absolutely no indication that he's prepared to do this. He has not put a plan on the table, as far as we know, we are privy to the private discussions, but it seems he's put no plan on a table which would accommodate that demand.

Then, of course, there's the question of NATO. Russia has been absolutely adamant that Ukraine cannot be a part of NATO, but Zelensky continues to insist that his country be either permitted to join NATO or be given security guarantees, as he puts it, which would be the equivalent of NATO membership. It would be a guarantee from the United States military that it would come to Ukraine's defense if it were attacked. So unless and until he addresses these core demands, everything else, Zain, is window dressing. Even if these two 30-day ceasefires, one relating to the Black Sea and one relating to energy infrastructure, were to come into effect and were to be respected, the war would continue, and it has continued at the same level of intensity. If one follows the reports from the battlefield from independent sources, one would have concluded long ago that Russia is winning the war decisively. The most recent success they had on the battlefield was they expelled Ukrainian forces, tens of thousands of them from almost all of Kursk. The Ukrainian forces tragically suffered huge losses in men and materiel in that escapade which was a debacle of epic proportions. But this is just the latest in a series of battlefield successes. And unless and until the West takes into account that Ukraine cannot win this war, then all of this is window dressing, I'm sad to say. And I think that the fundamental problem is that Trump doesn't wanna do a peace deal, which can be characterized as a victory for Russia. He wants to be able to say that NATO won or that it was at least a draw. But you cannot satisfy Russia's core demands without making it clear to the entire world that NATO has lost. That's the quandary he finds himself in, and I think he's just flailing around.

I also have to say – and this is very, very important, it needs to be said – Volodymyr Zelensky has a personal stake in continuing the war. Why do I say that? Because Volodymyr Zelensky

had an opportunity to resolve the war early on in the conflict in a way that would not have required Ukraine to cede any of those four Oblasts to the Russian Federation. Instead, at the insistence of the American and British governments, he rejected the deal that he could have done. What has happened now, number one, is that hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian men have been killed and wounded. The casualties they've suffered since then are far greater than the casualties they had suffered when that peace deal was on the table. And number two, they will have to cede very substantial portions of those Oblasts, if not all of them – 100% of those four Oblasts in order to do a peace deal. So Zelensky, if he were to accede to Russia's demands, would effectively be admitting that he made a colossal, unforgivable mistake when he rejected the peace deal that was on the table and he listened to Boris Johnson. And so if the Ukrainian people are going to find a way out of this terrible situation in which they find themselves, they need to replace Zelensky with someone who does not have a political stake in continuing the war. Someone who is free to act in the best interest of the Ukrainian people and that means they need to have an election.

**ZR:** The argument advanced in much of the Western media is that Russia's condition for the Black Sea agreement to integrate it into the SWIFT payment system first, as well as the proposals to involve the United Nations, is just a delaying tactic aimed at buying time as Russia – as you have mentioned – is achieving battlefield success not only in retaking Kursk but also capturing new territory in eastern Ukraine. That Russia is not really interested in ending the war, but emerging from it as triumphantly as possible, no matter how many lives are lost, which would further strengthen Putin's political hold on power domestically. For example, questions are put in front include: why were these conditions being put by Russia not expressed in the initial talks? What do you make of these arguments?

**DL:** Well, I tried to look at this from the perspective of just common sense. If I were in the Russian president's position, I would make the same demand. I would say: "In order for us to allow freedom of navigation in the Black Sea, it has to be open and meaningful for both sides. And you have imposed sanctions on us, which are effectively preventing us from benefiting from our agricultural exports. many of which travel through the Black Sea and we just don't trust you. So you lift the sanctions first and then we will stop the hostilities in the Black Sea." Now let's suppose that the Russians, after these sanctions are lifted, do not respect their commitment to refrain from attacking Ukrainian shipping in the Black Sea. It would be a very simple thing at that point for the West to re-impose the sanctions. It's not as though the West's hands would be tied. They could just do it again. So, if I were in his position, given the fact that the United States has shown itself time and again to be completely disrespectful of its treaty obligations – it withdrew from the Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty with Russia, it withdrew from the nuclear deal with Iran, even though Iran was respecting the deal, it has completely disregarded its obligations and Israel's obligations under the ceasefire in Lebanon and the ceasefire in Gaza – who would trust the US government and its allies at this stage? I certainly wouldn't. So I understand why Russia is demanding this. But at the end of the day, Zain, it doesn't really matter. These are minor inconsequential ceasefires that are not going to affect the course of this war. If you want to bring it to an end, you're going to have to stop, you know, dilly-dallying about by talking about short-term

ceasefires related to very discrete sections of the conflict, and address the core issues. And the Trump administration simply doesn't want to do that apparently.

**ZR:** Let us look at Europe's approach. Around 30 leaders met in Paris this week in what is being called the "coalition of the willing" – an initiative that is being spearheaded by France and Britain, which is focused on supporting Ukraine militarily, as well as assessing how this coalition could be involved if a peace deal is struck with Russia. One of the major points is the role that Europe will play, in particular France and Britain, in providing security guarantees to Ukraine. They propose providing peacekeeping forces that could serve to deter any future Russian aggression. However, Germany is against it under the outgoing Chancellor Olaf Scholz and is reluctant given the risk it entails. Russia views this initiative with great skepticism and sees Europe as conjuring plans for military intervention under the guise of a peacekeeping mission, which could, as it states, lead to a direct confrontation with NATO. What do you make of the European proposal?

**DL:** The European proposal is just as ludicrous as the idea that the United States can act as a mediator between Ukraine and Russia. The United States is a party to the conflict. The United States has been providing real-time battlefield intelligence. It's provided tens of billions of dollars of weapons to Ukraine. It has provided training to tens of thousands of Ukrainian soldiers. It has imposed sanctions that were intended to destroy the Russian economy. And that's precisely what Europe has done. Who are we kidding here? The European military forces can be trusted to act as peacekeepers, as neutral arbiters in the line of contact? That's absurd. You know, if you want to send in United Nations peacekeeping forces from countries that have not had any involvement in this conflict on either side, that would make sense. But the Europeans, I think, must think that the Russians are insane to accept any such proposal. They are not neutral parties in this. They're in no position to act as peacekeepers. They are co-belligerents.

And by the way, Zain, I don't believe for one second that they will send their forces in there because their forces are going to get annihilated. All of this is just flailing about. The Europeans are failing to come to grips with the fact that they have lost this proxy war. They refuse to accept that reality. And the tragedy of this, is the people who are suffering the most as a result of their obstinate refusal to accept the reality, the Ukrainians themselves, the very people whom they claim to want to protect. It's such a shameful moment in Western history and politics that I myself just want to tear up my Greek and Canadian passports and go and live in the global south somewhere. I'm so ashamed of the way they're conducting themselves.

**ZR:** Let us look at the bigger picture, namely the geopolitical picture, in the context of Europe. Since Donald Trump took office, there have been a number of incidents that marked a significant turning point in NATO and their long-standing transatlantic relationship with Europe. First, there was US Vice President J.D. Vance's speech criticizing Europe's attack on free speech at the Munich Security Conference. And then there was a heated exchange between Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and Donald Trump in the Oval Office.

Since then, leaders of Western Europe have called for the development of a new security architecture and the rearmament of Europe. For example, under the name "ReArm Europe", EU Commissioner Ursula von der Leyen has proposed a plan that could mobilize around 800 billion euros for military spending. However, not everyone is on board. Since the EU summit in Brussels last week, some critical voices were heard from Southern European countries such as Italy and Spain. For example Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez made the following comment: "I don't like the term rearmament. I think that the European Union is a soft power political project."

Furthermore, Kaja Kallas, the head of the European Union's foreign policy, initially sought to mobilize 40 billion euros in military aid for Ukraine. But due to geopolitical differences with countries like Italy, France and Hungary, she was only able to muster 3.5 billion euros. The EU rearmament has been justified by the argument that Europe is facing an existential threat not seen since the Second World War, namely that Russia will eventually invade Poland and the Baltic states after Ukraine in order to restore its former empire. How do you assess this geopolitical shift and the new position Europe finds itself in now?

**DL:** I think that Europe is grasping at straws trying to maintain the imperial stature that it had for the last 500 years. I think that's what's going on here, Zain. They simply cannot accept the fact in the halls of power in Paris and London and Berlin that Europe now is a geopolitical pipsqueak. And you know, I think the only person who makes even remotely good sense is the Spanish leader whom you just quoted who talked about the need for Europe to play the role of soft power. That's the future of Europe. I cannot stress enough to our fellow citizens in the EU what is coming if we go down this path. The way they're going to finance this rearmament is through deficit spending and debt. Eventually that debt will have to be repaid. As the German government has been so adamant about telling people in the EU ever since the formation of the monetary union, you know, you have to pay piper one day. So that's why they put all these brakes on the accumulation of deficit spending and debts in the European Union, which had a very disastrous impact on countries of the south, for example, Greece, and led to the imposition of austerity.

But at the end of the day, this is going to be paid for by debt. And you can be absolutely sure that one day, the European leaders – maybe not these ones, but their successors – are going to come to the peoples of Europe and say, we are now going to have to sacrifice on social spending in order to pay these debts. If we don't, we're gonna have a financial crisis. We're going to have hyperinflation. We're going to have the collapse of the financial system. We absolutely have to scale back dramatically on social spending. What actually is happening here, in my opinion, Zain, is that there's a class war going on. The European elites are using military spending as a way to wage class war on the workers of Europe. And eventually the chickens will come home to roost and the people who will suffer as a result of these gigantic military expenditures will be the working class and the poor of Europe.

**ZR:** I mean there's a lot of fear in Germany that Putin will invade after Ukraine. And usually they cite statements that he made in the past. For example, in 2005 Russian President

Vladimir Putin stated in an interview with the Russian news agency RIA Novosti, and I quote him here: "The collapse of the Soviet Union was the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century", unquote. And he has repeatedly expressed the same sentiment over the last 20 years in interviews and public speeches in which he characterized the collapse of the Soviet Union not only as a political failure but also an emotional and social tragedy for people, especially in Russia, as they were left without a central authority, creating conditions for instability. Given this context, wouldn't it be reasonable to assume that Putin is trying to restore some semblance of the Soviet Union, even in a limited way?

**DL:** That quote that you just repeated, which has been used so often to mount an argument that Putin wants to reconstitute the Soviet empire, is only half of what he said. He also went on to say something, I'm not using the exact words, but you can check it. The substance is correct: Those who do not feel sadness for the collapse of the Soviet Union don't have a heart, but those who want to rebuild it don't have a head. That's what he said. So he was clearly expressing the view that the attempt to reconstitute the Soviet Union would be disastrous. And when he expressed sadness for the decline of the Soviet Union, I think if you look at the context of what he said, what he was really talking about was the fact that millions and millions of Russian speakers became stranded in countries like Ukraine, like Poland, like the Baltic States where they were no longer welcome because they were replaced by Soviet governments with governments that were hostile to Russians. And that has been a drama that has been playing out ever since. He wasn't talking about rebuilding the Soviet Union. He was talking about the plight of those Russian speakers who were now stranded in these countries and who were confronted by hostile elites. And this is exactly what has been going on in Ukraine. This is one of the main causes of the Ukraine war, is that there were Russian speakers there who, after a coup orchestrated by the EU and the United States in 2014, suddenly found themselves under the control of a government that was intensely hostile to Russian speakers. And the Minsk Accords were meant to deal with that reality in a way that wouldn't have required Ukraine to be carved up. And the West did not fulfill its obligations under those agreements, neither did Volodymyr Zelensky.

And the last thing I wanna say about this, Zain, okay, this whole argument that Russia intends to attack NATO countries once the war in Ukraine is over, completely contradicts what the EU and the United States government and Canadian government have been saying about the need for Ukraine to join NATO – their claim is that you have to put Ukraine into NATO in order to protect it from a Russian attack. If in fact it is true that Ukraine's membership in NATO would deter a Russian attack, then how can you say in the same breath, that Russia intends to attack NATO countries like Poland and Germany and France? It makes zero sense, zero sense. And just look at what's happened on the battlefield for three years plus. The Russians have lost tens of thousands of men, probably at this stage in excess of a hundred thousand killed in action, just to acquire control of about 20 to 25 percent of eastern Ukraine and Crimea. That's the price they paid in addition to the economic costs. And we're to believe that they're so irrational and crazy that after having taken on that burden, they think they can conquer Germany? That they think they can conquer France? I mean, this is ludicrous. And

the Russian president and all of the people inside his inner circle have said repeatedly and publicly, it's preposterous, we do not want to go to war with NATO.

So I think all of this, as I say, is just a pretext, Zain, it's very important to repeat this, for waging class war on the working people of Europe. And the way they're going to do that is by massively increasing military spending, enriching the executives and shareholders of these military industrial companies, and then using the debt they've incurred to fund military spending to justify the evisceration of social programs in Europe. That's what's coming. And people should realize that now and get out in the streets and demand that this extraordinarily excessive military spending not be pursued by European governments.

**ZR:** I want to switch to the Middle East. Tensions have been escalating among Yemen's Houthis, Israel, United States and Iran. On March 27th, Israeli forces intercepted two missiles launched by the Houthis from Yemen. On the other hand, the US initiated a bombing campaign against Houthi positions in Yemen starting March 15th, and it has intensified over the past weeks. The narrative that we hear by and large in the media in Germany is that the Houthis are a terrorist organization that indiscriminately fires on commercial ships as well as on Israeli citizens. For example, the Tagesschau – Germany's largest primetime news channel – while mentioning US airstrikes against the Houthis on March 16th, stated that the Houthis regularly attack commercial ships in the Red Sea, disrupting the global economy. Can you address the validity of this narrative?

**DL:** Well, the Houthis have only attacked ships that they say are complicit in business dealings with Israel, which is in the process of committing a genocide. And I think the Houthis would very much prefer not to do that. They simply want, and they've said repeatedly, that they will suspend those attacks if Israel respects the rights of the Palestinians in Gaza. This most recent round of attacks on Yemen was precipitated by a warning that was issued by the Ansar Allah government – that if Israel did not resume the delivery of humanitarian supplies to the people in Gaza, which they are withholding from them in brazen violation of international law and their obligations as an occupier, then they would resume attacks on those ships that are complicit in supplying Israel with weaponry and other goods during the genocide.

Before they even implemented the threat, Trump, the so-called peacemaker, began bombarding the country, which the United States and its proxies have been doing for over 10 years. This has been relentless, long before there were attacks by the Ansar Allah movement on shipping in the Red Sea. They were bombing the bejeezus out of Yemen and were killing tens of thousands of civilians, children and women and disabled persons and elderly, attacking medical facilities. Through their Saudi proxy they were doing this as well, and through the UAE. So this is a war that's being waged on Yemen for over a decade, for reasons that have nothing to do with terrorism. The real terrorists are those who have turned Gaza, as Donald Trump described it, into a demolition site and killed an excess of 17,000 Palestinian children. That would be Israel and those who are supplying weapons to Israel. They are the ones who are engaged in terrorism – the classic definition of which is intentional

targeting of civilians for a political, ideological, or religious purpose. It's very clear that the political, ideological, and religious goal of Israel's leadership is to ethnically cleanse Palestine, and they are targeting civilians to achieve that end. That is squarely within the definition of terrorism. We should be designating the state of Israel as a terrorist entity. They are committing acts of terrorism that far surpass anything that has been alleged against the resistance groups in the region.

**ZR:** In addition, a significant security breach, or better put mishap, recently occurred when high-ranking Trump administration officials inadvertently included Jeffrey Goldberg, editor-in-chief of The Atlantic, in a Signal messaging group in which they were discussing sensitive military operations, in particular detailed plans for airstrikes against Houthis in Yemen. What was particularly interesting was the concerns that US Vice President J.D. Vance raised in the chat. And let me quote him here: "I am not sure the President is aware of how inconsistent this is with his message on Europe right now. There is a further risk that we see a moderate to severe spike in oil prices. I am willing to support the consensus of the team and keep these concerns to myself, but there is a strong argument for delaying this a month, doing the messaging work on why this matters, seeing where the economy is, etc.", unquote. He goes on to further state that only 3% of US trade runs through the Suez canal while 40% is European trade and that he hates bailing out Europe once again. The Defense Minister Pete Hegseth account responded by stating, quote, "I think messaging is going to be tough, no matter what. Nobody knows who the Houthis are, which is why we would need to stay focused on one) Biden failed, and two) Iran funded", unquote. In your view, what is the significance of this exchange?

**DL:** Some have said that J.D. Vance proved himself by that commentary to be the adult in the room. Well, he certainly showed more restraint and reflection than anybody else who was involved in that conversation, particularly Mike Waltz and Pete Hegseth, but even J.D. Vans, if he was actually acting in a manner that was principled, what he would have said is the reason why Ansar Allah is resuming these attacks is because Israel refuses to provide humanitarian aid to the Palestinian people and it is in the process of committing a genocide. So the way we can avoid any further bloodshed in the region is to compel Israel – which we easily can do because we are providing all the weapons – to provide humanitarian aid to people of Gaza and to stop bombing Gaza. If he was truly the adult in the room – it's a sad state of affairs when the person who is most rational in the inner circle of Trump only thinks about, you know, the price of oil and how this is going to look to the public but doesn't actually give serious consideration to the basic human rights of the Palestinian people. The rest of them were absolutely indifferent, obviously. They couldn't care less about the basic rights of the Palestinian people.

But at the end of the day what this shows to us, Zain, is that this whole idea that Donald Trump is a peacemaker who aspires to win the Nobel Peace Prize during his second administration is a crock. It is complete nonsense. He is escalating these wars. He's done absolutely nothing of any real significance to end the war in Ukraine. We've heard a lot of talk about it, but the battle continues at the same level of intensity. There has been no real



reduction in the hostilities in Ukraine, and he's escalating the conflicts in West Asia, and I think with a view ultimately to waging war on Iran. This is a stepping stone to waging war upon Iran, and that'll be the most catastrophic war that West Asia has seen in, I think, our lifetimes, and it may well be the most catastrophic war that the world will have seen since the end of World War II.

**ZR:** Let us move to Gaza, where more than 50,000 civilians have been killed since Israel's assault began on October 7th, 2023. When Trump took office, there was, even if you disagree, some hope that Israel's war on Gaza would end, as it goes against his America First worldview. For example, shortly before he took office it was reported that Trump played a crucial role in brokering a ceasefire in January, which we know recently collapsed on March 18th. And let me provide some facts, too, before the collapse happened. On March 2nd, Israel imposed a blockade on the Gaza Strip, halting all humanitarian aid, including essential supplies, with the aim of pressuring Hamas to agree to the conditions of extending the ceasefire, in particular the release of more Israeli hostages. On March 18th, the cease fire collapsed, and Israel resumed its assault on Gaza, which included airstrikes and a ground invasion. So far, around 800 civilians have been killed, 1,900 injured and more than 142,000 people have been displaced. Israel provided two reasons for ending the ceasefire. First, Hamas' refusal to release more hostages before negotiations to end the war began. And second, the fact that Hamas was preparing a new attack on Israel, which the US also supported. These reasons are often cited by Western media. How do you assess these two reasons? Are they valid?

**DL:** My friend, you've left out a critically important fact, and the critically important fact is that under the ceasefire agreement, which Israel signed, on the final day of the first phase of the ceasefire, it was supposed to begin withdrawing from the Philadelphi corridor, which is the narrow strip of land along the border between Gaza and Egypt, and it was suppose to complete the withdrawal of its forces within nine days. Okay? This is critically important. First of all, because this is occupied land, and as the International Court of Justice ruled last year, the occupation of Gaza and the West Bank is illegal. So independently of any agreement that Israel may have struck with Hamas, they have an obligation to withdraw from the Gaza Strip and from the West Bank and to end the occupation, to end the control of its airspace, to end the blockade, to end the control of the borders. So they don't even, the Palestinians don't need to invoke the ceasefire agreement, but they entered into a ceasefire agreement with the Israelis, which required them to do that. Several days before the end of the first phase, Israeli officials began going to the press and saying, you know what, we're not going to withdraw from the Philadelphi corridor. Nope. We know we signed the agreement. So what? We don't care. We're not going to do it. But we are going to demand that Hamas continues to comply with its end of the deal by releasing more of the hostages.

So basically Israel just said unilaterally we're going to rewrite the terms of the agreement and if Hamas does not exceed to us tearing up the agreement we signed and forcing them to new terms then we're gonna starve the civilian population of Gaza. That's what happened. And the West allowed it to happen. The Trump administration was supposed to enforce that deal. It

easily could cause Israel to enforce that deal. This is all about Israel's refusal to respect a clear unambiguous ceasefire agreement that it signed. And that's how we got to this point. And it's quite clear, Zain, if you look at the commentary in the Israeli media over the last several months that Israel never had any intention of going to the second phase of the ceasefire. It was widely reported that Netanyahu had given assurances to Ben-Gvir and Smotrich that there would be no second phase, and that after they got a limited release of hostages, they would begin bombing Gaza again. They would resume the genocide. This was entirely foreseeable. That's what's going on here.

And again, it is absolutely disgraceful that rather than use their leverage over Israel, Western governments, to force it to comply with its obligations, not only under the ceasefire agreement, but under international humanitarian law, they have decided to escalate war against the Yemeni people, who have suffered so much over the last 10 years. It's just a terrible, terrible statement upon the total lack of principle and ethics. And this goes back to what I said, on the part of Western governments, this goes to what we said at the beginning when we were talking about Ukraine. Why would any government trust the West? These people are agreement-incapable. I mean, no wonder Vladimir Putin – and it's not just Vladimir Putin, the Chinese government, anybody. Anybody in West Asia trying to do a deal, the Iranian government – they're looking at the Americans and Europeans and they're saying, you people simply can't be trusted to respect your agreements. And that's a very, very dangerous place for us to be.

**ZR:** During the entire phase of the hostage release during the ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, I followed the German media quite closely. When it came to Israeli hostages, the media took a strong qualitative approach, in my opinion, and correctly so, by emphasizing the emotions and suffering of the hostages' families and so on and so forth. However, when it came to the release of hundreds of Palestinians, they were referred to as prisoners instead of hostages or captives, even though they included hundreds of women and children. We did not observe such a strong qualitative coverage focusing on their treatment and what their families suffered, their grief and pain. Sometimes there was only a brief mention that there were women and children among them but the focus was on the men that the media claimed were convicted terrorists. Can you comment on this discrepancy in reporting and who these Palestinian captives really are?

**DL:** So the Palestinians are subjected to military law. And it's important to note that settlers who are in the West Bank illegally, as the International Court of Justice has ruled, and as Western governments themselves have acknowledged for decades that the settlements are illegal, they are subjected to Israel's domestic laws, even though they're living in the West Bank illegally. They have no right to be there. They're violating international law by being there and they get the benefit of a legal system that has relatively robust due process protections, whereas the Palestinians who are living on their own land and are being dispossessed by illegal Israeli settlers have to be governed by a system of military law. Under the military law of Israel, the military of Israel can incarcerate someone for six months under something known as administrative detention without not only ever securing a conviction, but

not even charging them militarily or charging them with a crime. And then they can renew their detention for a further six months and another six months. And so what you have in these dungeons, which by the way, it's been extensively documented, these detainees, these Palestinian detainees are being tortured, women and children and men being tortured. Many of these people, not only have they've never been convicted, they've ever even been charged with a criminal offense.

And the ones who've been convicted, Zain – you're talking about a kangaroo court in which the conviction rate is something like 99.5 percent. Like, almost nobody is acquitted in the military tribunals of Israel. It is an absolute joke of a judicial system. And so the operating assumption should be, if we were being fair to the Palestinian people, that the people who are in those prisons are innocent of any criminal activity unless proven otherwise by Israel, which has a long and sordid record of lying. But instead what the media does is that they presume them to be guilty because Israel put them in prison, therefore they're criminals, therefore they're terrorists without any scrutiny whatsoever of whatever evidence there may be against them. And oftentimes as I say, there's no evidence. None whatsoever. Maybe they put out a social media post that the Israelis found offensive, you know, which called for the Palestinian people to resist their oppression. They'll send them to prison for that. A little child, you know, who saw his friend gunned down by an Israeli soldier, throws a rock at an Israeli armored vehicle, they'll throw him into jail, even though there was never any significant risk posed to any of these occupation soldiers. And some people simply because they wave the Palestinian flag, they're put into administrative detention.

What the coverage of the prisoners' release shows is that Western corporate media are profoundly racist. That's the only way you can explain this, the differential treatment. They're still talking every day about the Bibas children, those two young children who tragically died. The evidence suggests that what killed them was an Israeli bombardment while they were in detention with their parents. But the Israeli media or government and military, which have a long record of lying shamelessly, claimed that they were killed with the bare hands of their captors. There's no evidence to back that up. There's absolutely no evidence, and it doesn't make any sense because those children alive would have been a much better way for the Palestinians to secure the release of their own hostages from Israeli prisons. You know, they had absolutely no motivation to kill them and there's no evidence that they did. But looking at the level of bombardment that Israel subjected the Gaza Strip to, it's entirely plausible that those children were killed tragically by an Israeli bomb. And yet all they do in the West is talk about those two children and say nothing, nothing about the innocent children, far more numerous, who are being held in Israeli dungeons, many of them being subject to what amounts to torture.

**ZR:** We are seeing that over 50,000 people have been killed in Gaza, and some report that there's over hundreds of thousands still buried in the rubble. We also saw that the International Criminal Court released arrest warrants against Netanyahu, and the US blocked that in many ways and is now sanctioning the court. Western media is providing a completely different set of accounts to what is happening in Gaza. Is there any hope there? Do you think

even if the International Court of Justice comes out with the ruling that Israel has committed genocide, the West will undermine it? Do you think there's any possibility that a Palestinian state can emerge or this war will end? How do you foresee the future?

**DL:** It's very difficult to predict, Zain, but I believe that ultimately – I've said this many times, and I try to be realistic in my assessment of these situations, neither be unduly pessimistic or unduly optimistic. I am absolutely convinced that in my lifetime, if I live to be the average age of a man of the West, I will see the liberation of the Palestinian people. I truly believe that. That's not to say that, you know, horribly, many many people are going to die in Palestine before that day comes. That does appear to be inevitable at this stage, as is as painful as it is to admit it, but will ultimately there be freedom? I mean, let's recall the Algerians, something that I know because I have family members who are Algerian and they talk about it all the time. Millions of them, millions of them were massacred by the French colonial power before they finally obtained independence from France. You could go all around the world, including India, for example, countries in Africa – horrible, horrible costs were incurred by the peoples who sought their independence until they finally achieved it.

Justice will ultimately prevail. And I think that the number one reason why that's going to happen is because Israel has been completely delegitimize in the eyes of the world as a result of its savagery. And within Israel itself there are the seeds of a collapse. You know you have Netanyahu now dismissing the former leader of the Shin Bet, the internal security agency, Ronen Bar, the attorney general objected to this, he's fired her as well. The Israeli courts are becoming involved. There are massive protests in the streets. You know, the stock market in Israel just took another beating. People are refusing to show up for military service. The country is, in many ways, a house of cards that I think will collapse one day. No one can say exactly when that day will come, but I do believe that this is radically unsustainable what Israel is doing.

**ZR:** Dimitri Lascaris, independent journalist and founder of the YouTube channel Reason2Resist, thank you so much for your time today.

**DL:** Always a pleasure, Zain. Thank you for having me.

**ZR:** And thank you for tuning in today. If you've been watching our channel regularly, make sure to donate. We are an independent and non-profit media outlet. We are not affiliated to any political party or politician and do not accept any money from corporations or governments. Hence we only depend on you, our viewers, to continue our critical and independent journalism. You will find the links to all of the donation platforms in the description of this video below. I thank you for your support and for tuning in. I'm your host Zain Raza. See you next time.

**END**

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