



## **EU Pledges Billions of Euros To 'Reformed' Terrorists in Syria w/ Eva Bartlett**

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**Dimitri Lascaris (DL):** Good afternoon, this is Dimitri Lascaris coming to you for Reason2Resist from Kalamata, Greece, on March 24th, 2025. Last week, donors at a European Union-led conference pledged 5.8 billion euros to help Syria's new regime. The annual conference has been hosted by the EU since 2017, but generally took place without any representative of the Syrian government because the EU had sanctioned and was seeking to overthrow the government of Bashar al-Assad. This time, however, in a first for a top official from Damascus, Syria's so-called foreign minister, Asaad Hassan al-Shaibani, attended the conference along with dozens of European and Arab ministers and representatives of international organizations. "This is a time of dire needs and challenges for Syria as tragically evidenced by the recent wave of violence in coastal areas", said EU foreign policy chief, Kaja Kallas, the former Prime Minister of Estonia. However, Kallas' sympathetic rhetoric omitted some harsh facts. In particular, the EU's foreign policy chief did not acknowledge that the wave of violence was being perpetrated against unarmed civilians by the very regime that the EU has chosen to embrace. Nor did Kallas acknowledge that until a few months ago, the jihadists who run the new regime in Damascus had been designated as terrorists by every major Western country. Now here to discuss all of this with me is Eva Bartlett. Eva is a Canadian independent journalist. She has spent years on the ground covering conflict zones in the Middle East, especially in Syria and Palestine, where she lived for nearly four years. She is a recipient of the 2017 International Journalism Award for International Reporting granted by the Mexican Journalist Press Club and was the first recipient of the Serena Shim Award for Uncompromised Integrity in Journalism, was also shortlisted in 2017 for the Martha Gellhorn Prize for Journalism. Eva, this is the first time you've joined me on Reason2Resist, and thank you so much for taking the time to speak with me today.

**Eva Bartlett (EB):** Absolutely. Thanks for having me on, Dimitri. You've been doing, I should say, fantastic work yourself reporting from occupied Palestine, as I recall last year,

and also Lebanon at great personal risk. So I commend you for that.

**DL:** Much appreciated. You've been following events in this region very closely for a very long time, Eva, and you've commented on some detail over the past several weeks on the horrors unfolding in Syria. Could you start by giving us an overview of the atrocities carried out there in recent weeks? Who has been targeted? Where has the killing principally occurred and how many have died? And of course, who is doing the killing?

**EB:** Thank you. I really do believe this is an important issue that everybody should be speaking about if you care about human lives. I mean, I don't know why we're so selective. The killing has been perpetrated by Jolani's terrorists. Now, we know, as you mentioned, he's been in the media and by Western politicians, he has been reformed. He's now wearing a suit and we're meant to believe that he is the new interim Syrian government and he's looking out for all Syrians and has the best interest of unity and a bright future and all this mumbo jumbo. But the reality is his actions show he has not reformed. He is still the very same al-Qaeda, formerly ISIS terrorist. And his goons, his terrorists, have been targeting not only Alawites, but primarily in the last few weeks, they've been massacring entire families, entire villages of Alawite along Syria's coasts, where it's not totally Alawite, there are also Sunnis and other denominations there, but the coastal areas are where they tend to be mostly living. And so the terrorists have gone, as I said, from village to village, slaughtering entire families. The media has run with the claims that this so-called reform government is merely eliminating quote-unquote "elements" of the quote "regime", of the former Assad government. But in reality, if you're following these channels that are putting out horrific video after horrific video after horrific photos and just so much information spilling out of Syria, you will see that the so-called regime remnants are, as I said, families from elderly to young unarmed men who did not serve in the Syrian military, to children to infants with bullets in their head or their neck slit. And Syrians are screaming for help. And I want to point out the massive hypocrisy of media which are ignoring this, or if they mention it, they're downplaying and saying a few hundred Syrians have been killed, when it's, as with Gaza during the genocide, it was hard to know the exact number of Palestinians slaughtered by Israel, but it was far, far, far more than the 40 or 50,000 that the government was saying. And we know this for a fact, and in Syria it's the same thing. So even well-intentioned media are saying 1,000 have been killed, but that's not true. It's credible to believe the numbers are upwards of 30,000 or even more Syrians slaughtered in the last few weeks alone. Again, most of these are Alawites, but also Sunnis and Christians and Shia have been slaughtered as well. In fact, there was notably, and I don't remember its name, but there was a Sunni sheik from Damascus who spoke out against the terrorism being committed by HTS or Hayat Tahrir al-Sham or al-Qaeda against primarily Alawites, and after he spoke out, they came to his house and they murdered him in front of his family. So basically the thing is also, I believe it was March 10th, so this started – well, I wanna make a point. This latest bout of slaughter started March 7th, and what the media is saying is, again, this is a response to Syrian resistance, which the media would call terrorist or regime remnants or something like that, who had waged some attacks on HTS, not on civilians, they were attacking the al-Qaeda in Syria. So the media's framing this as, what is happening now is a response to that. But I would like to make the point that all of this started

soon after al-Qaeda took power in Syria, which was in December, because we were seeing reports of minorities being persecuted from "as little", quote-unquote, as harassment, berating Syrians for their different faiths, driving Christians out of ancient places like Maaloula, which is an Aramaic-speaking Christian village, west and north of Damascus. In any case, this was in December. And then it wasn't only harassment, it wasn't only embarrassing Alawites and making them bark and calling them dogs and pigs and all the other ways that they have been insulting them but also the murders were starting back in December and January. So it's incorrect and dishonest to say this has only started since the 7th and it's just dishonest to say, the new government targeting regime remnants.

In fact the terrorists themselves are providing much of the video we're seeing now. They have filmed the slaughter very proudly and they boast about slaughtering civilians, then they boast they're going to slaughter more. So it's another aspect of the dishonesty of the media because it's out there in plain sight if they do a little bit of research. And now there are many Syrian channels dedicated to exposing the crimes against Syrians by the HTS terrorists. So it is not like this information is not accessible. It is accessible. In fact, a lot of these channels are putting it in English to make it all the easier to be disseminated because what they want is, they want intervention. If we go back to the war on Syria from 2011 on, how many times can we remember when because of some crime committed by the terrorists but attributed to the Syrian government, the whole world conspired for international intervention in Syria because "they cared", quote unquote, so much about Syrians, in reality, the real reason was because they to topple the government of Bashar al-Assad. Now, when we have it being live streamed by the terrorists themselves who are bragging to continue, the world is quiet. I mean, it's like with the genocide of Gaza, with brave Palestinians, whether journalists or civilians, live streaming their own genocide and the world being silent when it was glaringly obvious that Israel was committing genocide and has resumed to committing genocide in Gaza.

So basically, to come back to your question, Dimitri, one other point to be made is that, I believe it was March 10th, I could be wrong, but it was around that date that there were UN commissions or whatever, their war was coming to Syria to go to these coastal areas. And it's not only the coast, I should also mention, there's an area called Masyaf, it's in the Hama region, so it's on the coast but it also has a number, not only exclusively Alawites but does have Alawite communities. And I know someone in one of those communities and I'm obviously very concerned about his well being, because they have been slaughtering villages there as well. And it's very difficult for people in those communities to reach the coast and to potentially reach the Russian Hmeimim Air Base, which is now housing thousands and thousands of Syrians, thank goodness, who managed to reach that air base and their slaughter is being prevented. But for those who are unable to reach there, they're literally sitting there waiting for the terrorists to barge into their house and slaughter them, and it's just an unbearable fate. But around that time that the UN were going to visit these villages, Jolani said, what did he call it? Campaign or something like that. A very Israeli-like, Zionist-like terminology for slaughter and murder, and intent to ethnically cleanse. He said: "We've finished our campaign", and in reality, he redirected it to areas where UN viewers were not. And it's ongoing. We can't speak about it in the past tense because if I may just look at my

phone for a moment, I saw it now, I can't verify that this is true, but there's one report, somebody saying that they were a sister of what they're calling, these terrorists, public security, this is one update saying that on March 25th, they plan a new massacre of civilians, although they're still killing civilians every day. And then more recently on X, again, I can't verify a hundred percent this is true, anyway, I can't find it, but it was basically listing all the areas coastal and this Masyaf Hama region that I was talking about, and how the terrorists do plan to commit more massacres there. And that not only do they have control of the roads, but they're erecting, again, very much like Israel blockades on the roads to prevent the flow of Syrians from there. So we know now, Vanessa is in Lebanon, and I she went to one region where Syrians had fled from Syria into Lebanon, and I believe she was saying like at least 7,000 have successfully, thank God, left Syria for the safety of Lebanon. There's also, I've heard reports again, we can't say whether the number is accurate, but I've had reports of another 20,000 Syrians missing. So it's really a disaster right now. And when, again, referring to the course of the war on Syria, all the false-flag-pretext for intervention and now these aren't false flags. This is literally happening; ethnic cleansing, verging on genocide of the Alawites and also other minorities in Syria.

**DL:** And not only is the West not intervening, they're providing billions of dollars of funding to the terrorist regime in Damascus. I think it's very important, Eva, to emphasize, as you did, that this isn't just about Alawites. I think that, for obvious reasons, but I'll state them nonetheless, the Western corporate media want to make it about Alawites because the Alawites are associated in the minds of Westerners with Assad and therefore they can characterize these as some kind of revenge killings and there's some understandable anger on the part of the new regime and so forth. And of course it's just a reality that a lot of people in the West are going to be more concerned about Christians being persecuted than Alawites. So they want to bury the fact that it's not just about the Alawites and in fact there was an article in the the go-to newspaper for the political elite in Canada, I'm sure you're familiar with it, it's called the Hill Times. Their kind of, you know, geopolitical columnist, Gwynne Dyer, who's based in the UK, wrote this 15 paragraph article in which he made it all about the Alawites. He said absolutely nothing about Sunnis being persecuted, nothing about Christians being persecuted. He didn't mention the fact that Jolani had had a \$10 million bounty on his head by the CIA, and said nothing about HTS being a terrorist entity. Really disgraceful reporting. And at the end of the day, this is what allows our governments to get away with effectively enabling these massacres to take place.

**EB:** Absolutely. If I could touch on something you said, a couple of points. One, you said bury this in the median and you obviously triggered a thought in my mind. That's another aspect to this in terms of not knowing the numbers of how many have been slaughtered because the terrorists also have done things like throwing mass amounts of bodies into ravines, into the sea, and burying them in mass graves. And I want to also point out the irony of, if we refer to Donbas, and in 2022, the former mayor of Mariupol was the source of multiple claims throughout 2022 that Russia was bearing civilians that Russia presumably had killed, which was not the fact, in mass graves. And I went to each of the three sites that were alleged mass graves and they're normal functioning cemeteries with normal plots, no

mass graves. But here, again, we have evidence of actual mass graves, which is a crime if Russia's alleged of doing it, but it's not a crime if the terrorists are literally doing it now to cover up their crimes.

The other thing I wanted to touch on is the aspect, as you rightly said, that Sunnis and other faiths, not only Alawites, are being persecuted. I mean, again, it does need to be stressed, they have openly declared their intent to ethnically cleanse Alawites, but also it does need to be stressed that throughout the war on Syria, Sunnis also were persecuted by the terrorists. I remember in 2016 being in Aleppo, and Reverend Ibrahim Nasser introduced me to three or four, I think it was three Sunni sheikhs from Aleppo, who from the beginning did not support the so-called revolution in Syria. So as you're aware, and I'm sure your listeners and viewers are aware, from the very beginning in Syria, it was violent. It was not unarmed protesters calling for the overthrow of Assad. It was violent protesters. That said, there were people with peaceful intentions who got caught up in protest. And even people I came to know later, and years later when I went to Syria in 2014, who said: Yeah, we wanted reforms, we wanted political change. We weren't calling for the overthrow of Assad. Actually, we loved him. But anyway, let's put that aside. When they realized the protests were violent, they stopped going to them. And so fast forward to 2012, I believe it was when the terrorists took over parts of Aleppo, there where Sunni sheikhs that refused to have these protests emanating from their mosques, they refused to have the sectarian, vile, hateful language coming from Qatar and Saudi Arabia and Turkey thrust upon their worshippers in their mosques. And for that, they were put on a terrorist kill list. So these are these three sheik that I met, they said: We refused all of this and they were trying to kill us. So, these are Sunni men.

**DL:** Now, you mentioned the allegations against Russia. I understand that at this particular moment, a number of people fleeing this terror have sought refuge at a Russian military base. Is that correct?

**EB:** In Syria.

**DL:** In Syria, correct? Do you know anything about the harboring of these people fleeing this terror by the Russian military?

**EB:** I do. I don't know the exact number. I've seen conflicting numbers, if it's 4,000 or 7,000, but a large amount of people did reach the base. And it's been, I want to say, what is the date today, the 24th? They've probably been there for a good two weeks, if not more. Is that math correct? That would be about right. What I don't know is if they're still able to reach the base or not, because I don't know if they can along the roads reach the base because there are terrorists. Well, one other thing that's important to emphasize, Russia has been giving them shelter and food and I've seen tent encampments set up. So they're being given the basics, you know, so they can survive and they're being protected. But I have seen reports of terrorists trying to infiltrate the base to coerce people to go out. And actually, there were also reports, again, a week or so ago, of so-called representatives, Alawite sheiks, coming to the base to talk to the people and say: We will protect you, just go home and we'll protect you. And the

unfortunate people that actually believed them and left the base were slaughtered. So the terrorists are trying to get people to leave. Thank goodness they have the protection of Russia there, but there's still so many more people just, as I said earlier, waiting for terrorists to barge in and slaughter them and their families. And the other thing is, people are saying, why don't they protect themselves? Well, in good faith, people laid down their weapons when this government was foisted upon them. I don't know the numbers of Syrian resistance that are armed, but aside from them, my understanding, and I could be wrong, is that most people who could have formerly defended themselves in those regions can't, at least not with conventional weapons. So that's adding to the slaughter and the ability with the complicity of the Western media and politicians, who are looking away as Jolani's thugs mercilessly slaughter the people that can't defend themselves. And I'm sorry, I just want to make one more point. As we know, since 2011 on, first the media said, well, they're unarmed civilians, even though they were armed from the very beginning, then when it was clear they were armed, then media and Western politicians rationalized it by saying: Well, they need arms. They need to fight the quote unquote "regime", right? And so now we look at Palestinians, and of course, they have the legitimate, and you can speak to this about the legal basis of resistance, they had the legal right to resist. And we see media calling them, and Ansar Allah and Hezbollah terrorists, which I obviously do not agree with, and I know you probably don't as well, but they were fine to let literal al-Qaeda or ISIS or any of the other alphabet soup terrorist gangs in Syria use arms against civilians primarily for a decade, over a decade.

**DL:** There's absolutely no question, as a matter of international law, that the Palestinian people have a right to take up arms to defend themselves. If the Western governments were using their enormous leverage over the genocidal regime, by, for example, withholding weapons and economic aid, it would not be necessary for Palestinians to do that. But they have no other alternative. And to this very day, Eva, to this very day, I have not heard a Canadian or American politician, somebody who has elected office, ever say that the Palestinians have a right to defend themselves. And we hear this every day about Israel, even though Israel is the aggressor. Now, I want to return to this character, al-Jolani, who now goes by the name of al-Sharaa. Earlier this month, as I'm sure you know, he was at an Arab summit in Cairo, and the so-called interim president, Jolani, called on the international community to pressure Israel to withdraw its forces from southern Syria. As far as you know, Eva, has Jolani's regime done anything whatsoever other than calling for the international community to pressure Israel to resist the expansion of Israeli occupation in Syria?

**EB:** No, no, he hasn't. He has fully and seemingly happily enabled Israel's occupation of southern areas of Syria. And we saw how it played out, the complete destruction of Syria's defense mechanism, the defense abilities during and after the al-Qaeda takeover. And then, of course, Israel was a part of that with its bombings. And then just Israel literally waltzing into Syria and occupying areas. And it's ironic, of course, the other point that we could point out about Jolani is that there was some clip of his and other terrorists within al-Qaeda and other factions saying, you know, we will, I don't want to say wage jihad, but basically they were saying they would struggle for their Palestinian brothers and sisters, you now, when the time is right. But clearly they haven't, and they've never been a threat to Israel, and that's another

myth perhaps uninformed people think. Okay, these are terrorists that have been cultivated by the West and the Gulf allies and Turkey, for sure, and trained and weaponized and all that, but they're no threat to Israel whatsoever. And even during the war on Syria, there are so many reports of Israelis treating wounded terrorists in field hospitals in occupied Palestine and Israel, and then funneling them back into Syria. There's a Syrian journalist that, he was known as this the Syrian Mandela, gosh, I can't believe I'm blanking on his name. I'm sorry, it'll come to me in a moment. But anyway, he's a Druze and he was filming exactly this, the flow of weapons from Israel into Syria and the treating of terrorists and funneling them back into Syria.

**DL:** This is later acknowledged, even in the Israeli – I'm sorry, go ahead.

**EB:** Sorry, his name is [Inaudible] and he's imprisoned by the Israelis for showing this complicity.

**DL:]** I was just simply adding that, as I recall, this was actually acknowledged eventually in the Israeli press, that they were treating these jihadists who were wounded in combat and providing small arms to them, if not more. Now, while al-Jolani's forces have stood back and allowed Israel to ravage the country and confiscate more land, I understand they have clashed with Lebanese villagers on the Syria-Lebanon border. Last week, Lebanon's Ministry of Public Health reported that at least seven people have been killed and 52 wounded in clashes on the border with Syria. And the most recent violence came after skirmishes killed three persons, Syrians, who were described by some as Syrian soldiers – that's what the Syrian regime claims them to be. And apparently they were taken into Lebanon and killed. But Lebanon's information minister, Paul Morcos, said that the defense minister told a cabinet meeting that the three killed were smugglers and not soldiers. Do you know anything about this incident? But more broadly, Eva, what is going on on the border? Who's instigating these attacks and what is the purpose of these offensive actions?

**EB:** I have to say, quite honestly, I don't know anything more than what you've said. It's honestly, it's so hard to keep up with the flow of things, both the slaughter of civilians in Syria and also the ongoing genocide in Gaza. So unfortunately, I can't add a whole lot more than that. But I would definitely disagree that these were Syrian soldiers that were killed. I think, I mean, you can correct me, but I think, I saw somewhere that they were Lebanese defending their region from the entry of al-Qaeda into Lebanon, but I could have that wrong.

**DL:** Right. That's what Laith Marouf in Lebanon has been reporting amongst others. So let's switch now, Eva, to the Ukraine war. I wanted to talk to you about that in a big picture sense of the word. And I hope you'll bear with me for a second because I want to sort of present to you my interpretation of what's going on and see how you respond to that and what's your view about this so-called peace initiative? And how the Russians that you interact with in Moscow, where you are now, how they view all of this. So my perspective, Eva, is I don't believe that the Trump administration is serious about bringing an end to the Ukraine war on terms that Russia can accept. I think it would probably be happy to end the war on terms that

would allow it to claim victory in some sense. But the key demands of the Russian Federation, if accepted, will amount to a strategic defeat for NATO and that's going to be obvious to the whole world. So I don't think Trump has any real interest in going there and even if he does they don't seem to have the competence to do it. And you know, he keeps saying for example he's putting the emphasis on a ceasefire before Russia's fundamental demands are satisfied. Russia has made clear over and over and over again that there will be no cessation of hostilities until its key demands are satisfied two of which are of course recognition of its sovereignty over the four oblasts and Crimea and the other one the elimination of any you know entitlement of Ukraine to enter into NATO. Those are two of the key demands there are a couple others.

In any event, so the way I see this playing out, I think this is all just a charade and that at the end of the day – and I think it's important to in mind that Trump is continuing to provide weapons to the Ukrainians, he's continuing to provide military intelligence to the Ukrainian, and not only that, but the Europeans are making a big show of continuing to arm Ukraine, and Trump hasn't objected to that at all. So where this is ultimately going to end up is the war will continue for some time until the Ukrainian military collapses. And what I anticipate will then happen is there's going to be a regime change in Ukraine, either violently or peacefully. And somebody's going to come to power who is going to try to bring this war mercifully to an end on terms that Russia can accept. And at that point, the West will either have to accept that resolution or will have to continue to try and agitate and create problems in Ukraine the way it's continued to try, to create problems in Georgia, even though the Georgian people have no interest in having hostile relationships with Russia. So that's kind of where I see this all playing out. I don't take this all seriously. I think Trump is peace-incapable. And I think the way he's behaving in West Asia makes that painfully clear. Man doesn't have a piece of bone in his body. So that is my long-winded kind of presentation of my interpretation of this. How do you see things? Do you disagree? Do you think this is a serious peace initiative on the part of the Trump administration? And more importantly, how do Russian people that you speak to view this?

**EB:** So I had to get the laugh out of me first. I mean, it's not a laughing matter, but just the notion that this is a serious peace initiative is laughable, frankly. And I agree with what you said. Before I finish, I just wanna ask, when you said you think there will be a regime change in Ukraine, how would that come about?

**DL:** I think probably the most likely scenario is that Zelensky flees the country when the military collapses. He'll run for the hills to save his own hide, take his family and associates with him, but he may also be overthrown. He may actually be killed and imprisoned by people who are enraged by what he did. I mean, he had an opportunity, as you know, Eva, to resolve this early on without having to give up any of the 4 oblasts, and before, you know, when the number of casualties on the Ukrainian side were a tiny fraction of what they are now. So I can't imagine that the Ukrainian people are going to react kindly when the military inevitably collapses, as I think it will.



**EB:** I'm going to start with how Russians see this. Well, you've been here, Dimitri, and I don't know how many encounters you had, but I think it's fair to say most Russians are extremely skeptical. And so I don't mean in a cynical way, but like they ask a lot of questions. They don't take for granted what is said, including asking questions here about their own political system and. So I would have to imagine most Russians would be skeptical about Trump. I mean, when the whole election process or circus was ongoing, people here were laughing because it was just such a ridiculous process in the States. And so I haven't done a survey of how all Russians feel, but I have to mention that they're both highly skeptical of Trump's, as you say, Trump's intent for there to be any peaceful solution, and also because, well, look where I'm living, I'm not in the city of Moscow, I am right outside Moscow and our region has come under Ukraine drone attack attacks several times, intensely in September, October, November, and then just a week or two ago. And I can't remember now, if it was in November, October, I went to the site of one of the attacks. It was like a massive swarm of drones from early in the morning for several hours, and unfortunately, one woman in her 40s was killed. And this is like a half an hour walk from where I live. So I went over there and I talked with a young woman who lived in one of the buildings that was attacked. And thankfully she wasn't injured. She and her partner ran down out of the building, but she filmed one of the impacts on the building across from her, where the woman who was killed lived. Anyway, so I went there to film the damage and to speak with this young woman, and one point she made just when we were chatting is: You know, in Donbas, I think people are used to the bombings, they know what to do, but we don't know what to do because this is new to us. And it's true in the Donbas when the shelling occurs, people are so accustomed to it, they generally maybe won't shut their shop doors or get out of the streets unless it's right in their area. And then they go back in the streets and start cleaning up right away. And that's the way it is in Palestine as well in Gaza. But she was making the point: We don't know how to deal with it. So the point I'm trying to make is that whereas before, for some Russians, the conflict was over there in the Donbas, now it's become very personal because it's obviously not only in my region of Podmoskovye, but also in different areas along the border with Ukraine. They've been subject to Ukraine's drone and shelling terrorism; Belgorod, for example, for a very long time now. So, I think that the combination of it becoming personal and up close for Russians, and also obviously many families have a loved one serving on the front line, so they're obviously concerned about them, so I think for Russians and knowing full well what the Zelensky regime really encompasses and what the Ukrainian army encompasses and the values they hold or lack thereof of values, Russians, for the most part, I can't say every Russian, but I would say the majority see, and I think that the support for President Putin has grown since the beginning of what Russia calls the special military operation in 2022.

So to me, that speaks to that Russians understand what they are fighting for and fighting against. And as many people would say, they understand this is really existential for Russia. And so, the people, like the president, won't agree to something that is a compromise of the objectives of restoring peace, frankly, to the Donbas and to Russia and ensuring that this threat, NATO threat, can't happen again. So I think because most Russians are pretty well informed, I think I would wager that they would be skeptical of Trump's peace initiative. And

I agree with you fully and completely, he's not a man of peace. He is a businessman. He doesn't give a damn about the people who are dying. None of these Western politicians do. And I would actually say, I'd like to point out, again, not speaking for every Russian or every soldier, but having spent significant time in the Donbas throughout 2022, which is an extremely hard year for the people there, the shelling was so intense, the Ukrainian shelling, I did ask, I just started asking people, obviously I'd ask them, who's shelling you? Because the Western media would twist it and say it was Russia shelling them, which is ridiculous, just as they did with Syria. And then I would also start asking, you know, some version of, do you hate Ukrainians? Do you have any friends in Ukraine? And the answer was always: We don't hate Ukrainians. We hate the regime. We studied in Ukraine, traveled in Ukraine, we have relatives in Ukraine and stuff like that, you know. And that was in dark contrast to the hateful things we're hearing, at least on social media, about Russian orcs and the other pejorative terms they were using to completely vilify Russia. And I wasn't seeing that neither in the Donbas nor here. But when I would go to the Donbas, my neighbors would organize a bunch of humanitarian aid for me to take down. They were paying out of their pocket because they wanted to help people. And so I haven't seen the same hatred for Ukrainians, definitely hatred for the Ukrainian army. Actually, I should clarify, not even for the Ukraine army, for the Ukrainian regime, because people are also aware that the majority of people fighting in the Ukrainian army now have been ripped off the street, and in many cases aren't even capable of fighting. Certainly they don't get the training, so they're literally being sent to their death. So people have sympathy actually for them as well. Anyway, that's a very long-winded answer.

**DL:** And these attacks on outlying areas of Moscow, Moscow itself, Eva, these have happened, I think, repeatedly, have they not? While Trump has been pursuing his alleged peace initiative? Isn't that correct?

**EB:** That is very correct, yeah.

**DL:** And you mentioned the tragic case of the 40-year-old woman who was killed. Your area, what kind of damage has it sustained? Has it been minimal or has there been significant, other than the one casualty, the fatality, has there been serious damage to civilian infrastructure in your area?

**EB:** Um, not exactly in the area I'm living in, but as I said, so that attack, whether it was October, November, last year, I forget, um, three buildings sustained major damage; the building that the woman was killed in, you could see, I can't remember how many levels, maybe four or five levels, you could see varying degrees of damage in the space of four or five levels of that apartment. The apartment that the young woman I spoke with was living in, you could see significant damage on the upper floor of one of the apartments and a third building in the region as well. Where I live, you can hear the drones fly by, like you can hear the whining sound of a drone. You've heard them in Lebanon. I know them from Gaza, although in Gaza, obviously they're far bigger and more dangerous, but still you can hear them and you also hear the air defense, frankly, shooting them down. And then you have a combination of either the drones impacting, now the air defense is actually really good and

they do shoot down most of the drones, but some make it through. So the damage will be either direct hits from the drones like the last attack, again, a week or two ago, there were buildings in Moscow that were hit, residential buildings, like large apartment buildings. And in this region where I'm living, a house was set on fire. So I assume either the drone hit the house or debris from the drone, but it probably was a drone hitting the house for a fire to erupt. So there has been significant damage, yeah.

**DL:** I want to conclude my interview by asking you about Canada and your interactions – we are both Canadians, and I understand you've had some interactions with Canadian border authorities, which I'm going to ask about in a moment. Before I do that, there was within the last few days a diplomatic incident involving the Canadian ambassador to Russia, where apparently she went, I believe, to a war cemetery in St. Petersburg and effectively blamed, said that the Soviet Union and Germany were more or less equally responsible for World War II. And Maria Zakharova, the spokesperson of the Russian foreign ministry, was extremely animated about this. Do you know anything more about this Canadian ambassador who found new ways to insult the Russian people? Can you comment on this diplomatic crisis? Not that there was much in the way of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

**EB:** No, I'm afraid I missed that. I mean, I know I do love to hear Maria rip into someone because she's fiercely intelligent. But I missed that one. What's the name of that ambassador?

**DL:** The name of the ambassador, I believe, is Taylor, yes, Sarah Taylor. She visited the Motherland Monument in St. Petersburg and talked about the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and Yalta and insinuated that, you know, the Soviet Union was equally responsible as the Nazis for World War II, even though the Nazis killed 27 million Soviets. So, in any event, I think that the indications are that the new government of Mark Carney is not going to be any friendlier to Russia than his predecessor, Pierre Trudeau. Now, on that note, I'd like to talk to you in conclusion about your experiences with the Canadian border authority. This is a matter that's becoming personal to me, Eva, because I now have four friends and colleagues from the anti-imperialist and journalistic community who have been interrogated at the Canadian border. The first two were Professor Radhika Desai and Alan Freeman. You may know about that. They went to the Valdai Conference. I don't know if you were aware that Radhika was afforded the opportunity to ask President Putin about the disgraceful events in parliament last year where a Nazi received two standing ovations. So she asked him a question and, he in response, described the former speaker of Canada's parliament, who was blamed for this as a scoundrel. So when they returned from the Valdai conference, they were separated at the airport, I believe it was Pearson airport and were interrogated for hours. And then recently, peace activist Tamara Lorenz, friend of mine and somebody I've worked with on many occasions, went to Russia for a women's peace conference and when she came back, she was interrogated by CSIS, the Canadian spy agency. And then most recently, Yves Engler, a Canadian author and activist, outspoken defender of the Palestine cause, was actually tossed in jail for five days after being charged for harassing a fanatical Zionist by the name of Dahlia Kurtz, all he did was respond to all of her racist posts that were showing up in his Twitter feed. He didn't follow her. He wasn't sending her emails. He certainly didn't have any

face-to-face interaction with her, and the cops charged him with criminal harassment even though he was simply responding to her racist commentary. So now I understand you yourself have been having problems entering Canada. Could you give us some insight into what you've experienced?

**EB:** Yeah, I've just had it the one time. I'll just give a little context. So I was last living in Canada in February 2020. And I had left to participate in a panel in the UK on media freedom. I spoke about Ukraine's draconian brutality against journalists and civilians, etc. I gave the case of Kirill Vyshinsky, who was chief editor of RIA Novosti in Ukraine and who was held in a sham pre-trial detention for well over a year on trumped up charges, anyway, I spoke about that. And then I went to Syria. And then with all the COVID things, borders closed, as you know. And so I spent the rest, I spent six months in 2020 in Syria. And as I was there, I saw the way Canada was dealing with COVID. And so while I was there my brothers closed up my apartment because I couldn't afford to pay rent for a place I wasn't living. But then I saw how things were going in Canada, and I frankly thought that's not somewhere I want to go back right now. So when I did leave Syria, when the border opened, I went to Serbia and spent a few months there, and then I moved here. Because I saw elsewhere in the world, people were able to work and live their lives with certain precautions, but in Canada from what I was hearing from contacts there, it was not a healthy place to be. In any case, the point I'm going to make is that after that, I thought, okay, I do want to go back to Canada. I want to visit my mom and my brothers, but I couldn't because I didn't take a vaccine or whatever you want to call those. And I apparently had natural immunity from some medical work I had done here. But Canada wasn't allowing people who didn't have Pfizer or the other options to enter. So I couldn't actually enter Canada. And then 2022, the SMO here starts. And I had been to the Donbas in 2019, and then I started going back in 2022. And as I said earlier, I spent a lot of that year reporting on Ukraine's war crimes and seeing the civilians slaughtered in the streets, reporting on that. And let's just mention, briefly, Myrotvorets, the Ukrainian kill list. So I was put on that in 2019. Many of us are on that list. I'm not special. But the point being, seeing how repressive UK and European countries, Germany, especially, were being against journalists who had either reported a little bit from the Donbas or even just gone to Crimea or something, and these countries were being so repressive against journalists and then I had a lot of experience in the Donbas, I thought, well, I can't really go back to Canada now because I don't know what to expect and I've been arrested before by the Israelis, I could handle that, but I don't want to go back Canada and be arrested for a crime I haven't committed. So I chose not to go to Canada because I didn't know what would happen. But finally, last February, I thought, OK, it's been four years, I really want to see my mother, she's elderly, and I actually consulted with you – thank you for your help, by the way, for some advice, basically not knowing if I'm going to be arrested, I would like to have something lined up so someone will defend me. In any case, thankfully, that didn't happen. But I did get the same treatment as Tamara. And we've talked about it, actually, she and I. So I arrived at Pearson. I didn't bring much with me because I intended to bring things I had in storage back with me. So I only had a small suitcase. I did not bring my laptop because I anticipated being interrogated. So basically the small amount of things I did have, they went through every item in my suitcase, every item on my personal

belongings. Fine. They asked questions. They're polite enough. They feigned interest. They want to know every aspect of everything I was doing. And then after that process – by the way, I arrived on my US passport because my Canadian is expired. So I arrived at Pearson on my US, not knowing I could go in on my expired Canadian, so I'm flagged when I arrive. They take me aside. And so after the young man has started asking me these questions, I said to him: "By the way, why was I pulled aside?" And he said: "Oh, because you were out of the country so long". But the interesting thing is, when I first handed him my US passport, and he was asking me a few questions, and I said: "Yeah, I haven't been back since 2020". And he said: "Back?" I said: "Yeah." He said: "Did you live here?" I said: "Yes". So, you know, that's a contradiction. I've been out of the country for too long, but he initially didn't know I lived there. So my name was flagged for you know what I mean? It was for – we can assume. And so after...

**DL:** Were the questions related specifically to Russia or were they all over the place? I'm curious what they were.

**EB:** When the guy was going through my luggage, they were all over the place. And I had some euros on me because I don't have a working Western bank card. So I had to carry cash. The Russian bank card won't work there. So, of course, they were asking where I got the money, you know, stuff like that. I don't remember all the questions that the man had, but he also, the young man going through my stuff, he also feigned interest in what I do. Like he knew what I'd do and I told him straight up: "Yeah, and I have been reporting from here, from there..". And then after he finished going through my bag, he said: "Okay, well, you know, CSIS would like to speak with you. It's totally voluntary. And can you please give us some minutes of your time?" And I thought, well it may be totally voluntary, but I also don't want CSIS showing up at my family's home. So I'd rather get this over with now. So I think Tamara and I might've had the same little man questioning us. So I went into his office and it was only about 20 minutes, because after 20 minutes, I said, I'm done, I've gotta go. And he asked for a second date, but I said, no. But during the 20 minutes, he was asking the stupidest questions you can imagine. I can't remember verbatim, but he at one point asked what my relationship with Putin or the Kremlin was like. I was on good behavior because I wanted to see mom, and I still, not really knowing all my legal rights, didn't know if they would just hold me and prevent me. So I was not being mouthy. But in retrospect, there are certain funny jokes I could have made to that stupid question. But he also was asking about my reporting from the Donbas. And at one point he was like, he said something like, what motivates you? He's like, I feel like you're empathetic or something like that. And then he asked a question like, about am I receiving directives from the Kremlin for what I write? And I said: "You asked me what motivates me". And he said, yeah. And I said: "Have you ever seen injustice?" And he says, yes. And I say, "that's what motivates me." And so I did at least stand up for myself and say like, what I write is based on what I see or experience, and the government has nothing to do with it. And you know, I think you've written for RT, correct?

**DL:** I've never written for RT but appeared on them on dozens of occasions and they've never ever asked me to say anything forbidden me from saying, they've never vetted what I

was going to say. They just asked me questions and allowed me to see my mind, you know, so...

**EB:** And so, okay, I'm sorry to assume that you wrote for RT, but the point I want to make for people who don't know is, it's not RT saying: Here's your script, you just tidy this up in your own language, it is me saying: Hey, I think this is newsworthy, I want to write an opinion piece on it. And then as any news bureau works, if it is news worthy, then go ahead. And if it's, not for example, if I say: Hey I think pancakes are newsworthy, if it happens to be in February when Russians are celebrating Maslenitsa, then okay, let's write about pancakes. I know it's a stupid example. But the point being, I pitch and there are times when – it's very rarely, I have to admit – when maybe one or two times in the course of – I've been writing for RT since 2013 from Gaza – so there's maybe a couple of times in all those years where something I've pitched hasn't been newsworthy. So his question about me taking directives from the Kremlin was obviously really dumb. And I did let him know that in a polite way. So after about 20 minutes, I said: "I have to go". And he wanted to see me in the city where my brother lives. And I said: "No, I'm here for my family." And he asked again, I said: "No." Then fast forward, I have no idea if they followed me, I kind of assumed they did, but all they would have seen is me going from my brothers to my moms, to my brothers, to my mom, so. But after two weeks, I was back at Pearson and I had a late night flight and coming back on a very long route to here, and just as I was in line to board, he shows up. And it was late, I was tired.

**DL:** The same character?

**EB:** Same guy, yeah. I forget his name.

**DL:** Did he tell you, as he said to Tamara, that he had been following you for years, that he was closely monitoring your work or words to that effect?

**EB:** You know, he didn't. But he knew a lot about me. And at one point, early in the conversation, he said: "You and I have a lot of common experiences. We've lived in the same places. We're not so different, you know. Before I worked here, you and I were very similar." I said: "What do you mean? Where did you live?" He said: "I lived in Gaza." I said: "What year did you live in Gaza?" He said: "2005". Now, who was living in Gaza in 2005, Dimitri? The illegal colonists.

**DL:** Wasn't that when the settlers were there? There was a CSIS age, did he mention whether he was with CSIS at that time or was he Canadian military? Did he give you any insight?

**EB:** No, he said before I worked with CSIS, I lived in a different place. I forget what he said his job was. But when he said that, again, I was on my good behavior, because I want to see my family, but I wanted to say: You lived in Gaza when it was occupied, and you sure as hell were not living amongst the Palestinians. That's 100%. So we are not alike. We're not alike at all. So he at least knew...

**DL:** I just want to clarify one thing because you said occupied. As a legal matter, Gaza continues to be occupied. I think what you were referring to was the fact that there were illegal Israeli settlements there. Probably he wasn't living amongst the Palestinians. He was probably living amongst the illegal Israeli settlers, which is absolutely stupid that he would tell you this. I mean...

**EB:** So I came to conclude that he was probably, maybe I'm wrong, but he's probably trying to flip me or something, because he also said to me: "I want you to know that we're here to protect you". And I had to bite my tongue from laughing. Yeah. Like your response. Again, because I'm on good behavior wanting to see my family. But when he shows up roughly two weeks later, and it's late night, I'm ready to stand in line to board the plane. And I hear: "Hi Eva", and I look down – I'm exaggerating – he wasn't that short, but he's just disgusting. And I looked over and I said: "Oh, it's you, what do you want?" And he said: "I just want to remind you that we're here to protect you." And then I said: "I'm going home. Are you joking me? You literally armed Nazis in Ukraine and you think I'm gonna believe you're going to protect me?"

[crosstalk]

**EB:** I said it twice, very loudly, because I was hoping people around me might hear, but unfortunately how Canadians can be kind of: I didn't hear anything. But if I had a little bit more presence of mind, I would have also said: I want to let you know that in, I think it was 2010, when I was living in Gaza, some of the work we did was accompany farmers on their land, and then the Israeli army would come up to the fence and start shooting at all of us, and we would document it. And we didn't have body armor or anything like that, we just had fluorescent jackets and cameras. And so if I had the presence of mind, I would have said to him: Hey, are you aware that in 2010, I forget the month, February or something, on one of these incidents when we came under extensive Israeli fire with bullets, I'm not exaggerating, literally whizzing past our bodies and heads, this incident lasted for well over 40 minutes, and I was with ISM at the time. And so they had a media office in Ramallah and the media office were contacting the different internationals, respective embassies. So somebody from the Canadian embassy in Tel Aviv, Heather, I think her name was, calls me up and says: Where are you? We hear you're being fired at. And I explained to her, I'm on Palestinian farmland. She asked me what I see, la la la. And then she finally realizes that I'm not being fired at by Palestinians. And she says: Israelis? How do you know they're Israelis? I said: Because I saw them get out of their jeep and start firing at us. They're wearing their uniforms. They're on the other side of the fence. And then she said, basically, there's nothing we can do to help you. And then a few minutes later, her superior, Geordi, called me and he basically said: We just need you to know that Israel, something like Israel's security is its own prerogative. So, you should know, you shouldn't be there. And I said, first of all, Israel, you can correct me, Dimitri, but Israel doesn't have a right to impose what they call a buffer zone on the Gaza side of the fence and it was initially 50 meters and then it was 300 meters, but in reality they would shoot over a kilometer. We were on land like 600 meters from the fence. That land is

completely razed by routine Israeli bulldozing or armored bulldozer accompanied by tanks and so they can see with the naked eye that they're firing at unarmed usually elderly or women, entire families, Palestinians. And so I said to him like: That's such a bogus response. You're enabling the slaughter or maiming of civilians here. So if I'd had the presence of mind, I would have said that to this ceaseless man.

**DL:** Yes, that's how the Canadian government protects you. Wow. It's been a great pleasure talking to you, and I hope we can continue the conversation in the future, and stay safe there in Moscow, and try to avoid those drones.

**EB:** Thank you so much, Dimitri.

**DL:** Okay, and this is Dimitri Lascaris coming to you from Kalamata, Greece, on March 24th, 2025.

**END**

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