



Is the Israeli Military on the brink of Collapse? Dr. Shir Hever

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Zain Raza (ZR): Thank you for tuning in today and welcome back to another episode of The Source. I'm your host Zain Raza. Before I start this interview, I would like to remind you to support our independent journalism with a donation and joining our alternative social media channels on Rumble and Telegram. We are an independent and non-profit media channel that does not take any money from corporations or governments or even allow advertisement, all with the goal of providing you with information that is free from external influence. Hence, we only depend on our viewers to continue, either from your support on social media or via donation. You can find the links to all of our social media channels, as well as how you can donate, in the description of this video below. Today, I'll be talking to economic researcher, journalist, and author, Dr. Shir Hever. Dr. Shir Hever is also the military embargo coordinator of the Boycott National Committee of the BDS Movement. Shir, welcome back to the show.

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

ZR: Israel's military operation in Gaza has recently taken a new and alarming turn. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced plans to significantly expand the offensive by calling tens of thousands of reservists and taking full control of the Gaza Strip, with the stated goal of eliminating Hamas and potentially ethnically cleansing large parts of the Palestinian population out of Gaza. Since the ceasefire collapsed on March 18th, Israel thus far has killed around 52,500 Palestinians, and according to the United Nations, at least 100 children are injured or killed per day since the ceasefire collapsed. Humanitarian conditions have reached devastating levels, with at least 57 people, mostly children, having died from starvation due to Israel's blockade. This comes at a time when Israeli independent and non-profit journalistic outlet +972 magazine reported in April that Israel is facing a massive shortage of soldiers with thousands failing to report for duty. Can you speak to the current state of the Israeli military? And then provide your assessment whether it's realistic that they can achieve the objectives that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has outlined so far?

SH: So, first of all, I need to correct you because the ceasefire did not collapse. The ceasefire was violated unilaterally by Israel. Israel bombed and killed 400 people in the Ramadan Massacre on the night between March 17th and March 18th. And since then has continued to

kill, just to be a little bit more accurate, the number that you mentioned, the 52,000, more than 52,000 Palestinians were killed in Gaza, this is the number since the beginning of the genocide in October 23'. And since the Israeli violation of the ceasefire, as you said, the killing rate is between 50 and 100 people every day, a lot of them are children, the vast majority are civilians, and indeed the weapons that are used are not just the artillery and the bombs, the airstrikes, but also starvation. Hunger is used as a weapon to, well, it is a weapon of genocide, this is something that needs to be acknowledged and said every time.

But now let's talk about the current operation. I want to start with talking about the name of this operation. The Israelis call it the Chariots of Gideon or Gideon's Chariots. And unfortunately we are now dealing with an Israeli government which is so messianic and fundamentalist in its perspective that in order to understand their intentions you have to open the Bible. Who was Gideon? A biblical figure, who was mentioned specifically in his story in the Book of Judges as the warlord that was told by God to bring less soldiers to battle than he had on hand. So there were thousands of volunteers who wanted to fight, and then he had a test where he asked his followers to drink water, and by the way that they drank the water, he divided them into groups and only took 300 soldiers into battle. So why is this significant? Because what Israel is now planning is a massive ground operation in Gaza, which is going to, well, as you said, the idea is to ethnically cleanse Gaza, to occupy Gaza permanently – I mean, it's already under military occupation, but also to have military control over the entire area of Gaza – and to destroy the remaining infrastructure in order to force the population to leave. But they are recalling the story of Gideon from the Bible because they want to reframe the massive shortage of soldiers that they're facing as if it's their own choice. And this is the news that I'm reading in the Israeli media. Israeli reservists announced that they were given a survey and in the survey they were asked questions about what their level of motivation and are they willing to go and serve again in Gaza and go and join the fighting again – of course the word genocide is not mentioned in the survey. And then after they filled the survey the military started to call them for reserve duty, and only those soldiers who said that they were willing to serve received a call for service. So then the Israeli military is pretending to have a 100% acceptance rate or mobilization rate because they're only calling the ones who agreed to serve. The problem is that, I mean the problem for the Israelis, is that there are a lot of soldiers who for a very large variety of reasons, and I think it is worthwhile to go through these reasons a little bit and to understand why it is so difficult for Israel to field a large ground force in Gaza, but the fact is they don't. They don't have the numbers. And those biblical ministers or fundamentalist ministers of Israel who believe that Gaza should be permanently colonized, are calling on the Israeli military command to do just that. And the Supreme Commander of the Israeli Military, Eyal Zamir, about three weeks ago, told the cabinet that they should divest themselves of those fantasies of conquering Gaza, because there are simply not enough soldiers. And this statement, of course, made the news, and of course portrayed this whole military operation in a different light. They don't have the ability to do it unless they plan to kill Palestinians and to fight them not with conventional weapons, but rather with weapons of mass destruction and with starvation. Because the actual conventional fighting of using soldiers on the ground is not an option.

ZR: So what are the underlying reasons? Is it the external pressure, the international community condemning Israel's action? Is it the international court of justice ruling that we might see in the future? Or the ICC arrest warrants? Or is the United States perhaps changing its opinion on Israel? What do you think are driving Israelis to join the military at such a low rate?

SH: Unfortunately, the international law is not respected in Israeli society, and Israeli media is failing in its very basic obligation to even report. Because of this failure to report, a lot of Israeli soldiers are not aware that the war crimes that they are committing in Gaza are discussed around the world, and international courts are issuing arrest warrants. If the Israeli media is not reporting it, of course Israelis, most of them can also read English and they could read the international media, but they choose not to. They choose to close their eyes. And as a result of this, thousands of soldiers actually posted their war crimes online, on social media, and then went on vacation in different countries that are signatories to the ICC, the International Criminal Court, or simply have rules against war crimes within their territory, even if they're not members of the ICC, and even if there's not an arrest warrant against those particular soldiers. And after some soldiers had to escape, through the Israeli embassy or with the help of the Israeli Ministry of Defense that rescued them from being arrested and held accountable for the atrocities that they committed, then a lot of Israeli soldiers started to realize that there is a gap between what is discussed within Israeli society and what's happening in the world and in that sense yes it is international pressure that is making a difference because they don't want to lose the ability to travel to Europe or anywhere else, they are aware that there might be a moment in which they will have no choice and many Israelis are indeed leaving the country. So this explains why their motivation to serve in the military is very low.

I should say from the beginning that although Israel is committing a genocide, it is a voluntary genocide in the sense that the soldiers are not forced to obey orders. Nobody can have the excuse to say later, I was just following orders, or if I would have refused to destroy that house or to kill those people, I would have been punished because nobody's punished. The Israeli military has no discipline, and the soldiers are volunteering to serve. And a recent study that was conducted by the Tel Aviv University Psychiatric Department found that 12 % of the soldiers who are currently serving are suffering from severe cases of trauma, PTSD, mostly because of being haunted by the atrocities that they commit, by the faces of the people that they kill, which makes them unfit for service, but they serve anyway. Some of them collapse in different mental or physical ways and then they don't serve. Many soldiers are also injured and the military is trying to hide it. The number of injured soldiers in Israeli hospitals is not published, only the ones who are dead, were killed are published and as a result we don't know how many soldiers are kept alive, just connected to life support machines in order not to join the statistics of the soldiers who were killed in action. And of course there are the ultra-orthodox who have never served in the Israeli military, have no intention of serving in the Israeli military. But the proportion of the population that is willing to serve is becoming smaller and smaller, because so many have left, because so many have collapsed, because and so many have also socioeconomic reasons because of the freefall of

the Israeli economy and the tens of thousands of businesses that have closed down. I can also add a recent update to this that the Israeli stock exchange has listed a 10% of the companies that are listed on the Israeli stock exchange have issued a going concern announcement. This is the last warning that a company is obligated to report when it's not able to pay its debts within the upcoming year before announcing bankruptcy – 10%. And if you go to the tech sector, which is Israel's economic engine, it's 49%, almost half of the company's are on the verge of bankruptcy. And so this is indeed a situation where Israelis have lost their jobs, and some of them actually serve in the military because it's a way to earn an income, because the military is finding various ways to give soldiers more money than they would normally receive as reservists in exchange for their willingness to serve because of the shortage of soldiers. Having said all this, this seems like a complete breakdown of the Israeli military system, which one would expect then to see a military defeat and a collapse of the Israel state. In the article that you mentioned on 972 magazine, there's an interview with sociologist Yael Berda, and she says there that for the Israelis, there is a common conception, and I agree with her, that the trust in the military is a condition for the trust in the ability of the state to survive. The trust not just in the military capabilities, but also the trust that the military is representing the interests of the nation and is not corrupt and the officers are professional and so on. And this trust is being broken.

So really the expectation is that Israel will fall apart. And it is not falling apart yet, I think mostly because of the quality of the weapons that they're able to use. These are dystopian weapons like the drones, assassination drones, suicide drones that allow the Israeli military to continue to fight and to continue to kill even with a handful of soldiers with poor training and poor mental state. And this is a very dangerous thing for all of us. If we are now living in a world in which a handful of people with advanced weapons can terrorize entire populations, what Israel is doing in Gaza, and massacre thousands, then it does jeopardize the democratic freedoms and the human rights all over the world. It won't stop just in Palestine. So I think this is what we're seeing now with the Israeli military. And I do see a glimmer of hope, because of all of the letters that are written by Israeli soldiers who are signed by thousands of soldiers whereby they don't actually say that they are going to refuse to serve and they're not condemning the genocide, but nevertheless, they do show a crack in the trust of the Israeli society and the military; this is a very key point. And the military responds to those letters by dismissing all the signatories from their units, effectively taking them out of the military, going back to the story of Gideon and the Chariots of Gideon, which they are naming their new operation in Gaza. So this is another indication that there is a growing crack in the mobilization within Israeli society. So at least this is a ray of hope.

ZR: You talked about the personnel side. How about the hardware side? In other words, Israel's military capabilities. Last time I talked to you, we discussed the growing military embargo worldwide. How does this tie in? Are Israel's capabilities being affected by a growing military embargo?

SH: They are, they are. Of course, the information is kept secret. So from the point of view of the Israeli society and the Israeli military, they're not admitting so much. But I do try to find

between the cracks what the Israeli media is reporting. One thing that they reported, for example, is the extreme shortage of detonators with the artillery. A clear result of the military embargo – there is only one company in Israel that is able to produce these detonators and this company's share price increased by 2000% because the government is willing to pay any price for those detonators they just don't have enough. And many of the bombs that they dropped on Gaza failed to explode because they don't have up-to-date detonators. The detonators are old and they buy them in the black market and they try to get them from anyone who will sell it to them. So that's one example.

But if we look, not from the side of Israel, but from the side of the world, then the picture actually is clear, because we saw that Spain canceled a larger ammunition deal with Israel. And this was clearly because of the obligation under international law. This is now causing a lot of discussion in other countries as well, that they must end arms shipments to Israel. You see growing voices in the UK, even in Germany, where three members of the Bundestag have appealed and made an appeal to stop the arm shipments to Israel. Although the German government tried to claim that they are not sending weapons that could be used in Gaza and not sending weapons of war to Israel and they stopped selling weapons to Israel and made all of these statements, there's a new report that was published by Shadow World Investigation that shows that this is not true. And this of course puts the German government in a very embarrassing position where they are violating international law and this information is then of course also reaching the lawyers that represent Nicaragua in the International Court of Justice case against Germany. So it has repercussions. So there is a growing military embargo and it has an impact. Dock workers in Belgium and in France are preventing ships by the shipping company Maersk from bringing components of F-35 planes to Israel. You may have seen that Israel has attacked the Freedom Flotilla, where they were trying to bring in food for Gaza. This is part of the starvation policies to prevent anyone from bringing food into Gaza, even by use of weapons. And in order to attack the ship, the Conscience, one of the ships of the Freedom Flotilla carrying food, they used a C-130 plane, which is called the Hercules. This is a plane that was designed and produced in 1968. It's an ancient plane. It's one of the oldest planes that are still in service all over the world. And the fact that Israel is using it is because they're really running out of planes and spare parts and jet fuel and they're resorting. And they're still using what they have to destroy Gaza, to kill people in Gaza, also to bomb Yemen, Lebanon and Syria. But when it comes to targets that they feel like they are not a high priority for them, then they resort to those cheaper and older weapons like the C-130. So I think this is another indication of the growing military embargo impact on the Israeli military system.

ZR: I just want to stick with Germany for a second as we know that Germany is one of the largest suppliers of military aid to Israel. However, the Israeli military plans have drawn some criticism from the German government. For example, the spokesman for Germany's foreign ministry, Sebastian Fischer, stated on May 5th, 2025, and let me quote him here, quote, "I just wanna remind you that the G7 already made a clear statement in 2023, rejecting the occupation, settlement and reduction of Gaza's territory, and also emphasizing that there can be no solution over the heads of the Palestinians. Gaza belongs to the Palestinians," unquote.

Alongside the German foreign ministry's position, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz also stated in a recent interview with ARD that while Israel has the right to self-defense, it must respect international law and ensure the delivery of humanitarian aid to civilians in Gaza. What do you hold of the new incoming government? Do you think that the aid to Israel will continue as it has been, or do you see some positive signs that perhaps a military embargo and the entire growing consciousness regarding what's happening in Gaza, especially given the fact that Israel's pretty blunt about its plans now of taking over Gaza, will change Germany's position towards Israel?

SH: First of all, I haven't seen any evidence of German aid to Israel. I saw a lot of evidence of selling weapons to Israel, and the German arms companies are making a large profit from the genocide, something that we should highlight. So this is another example that the policy of Germany is not motivated by any kind of moral considerations. And anyone who says that the German policy towards Israel is motivated by guilt feelings about the Holocaust, it's complete nonsense. They are profiting from genocide. They have no problem to support anti-Semitism if it means that they can sell more weapons like they do with the company Elbit Systems. Which has offices in Germany, and is an anti-Semitic company, but most importantly it's a company that is committing genocide with its weapons. It's good that there are some statements by the German officials where they say that there is such a thing as international law. I do think that the word self-defense has no room in the context of genocide. There is no such thing as a daily killing of children and starving civilians in any way that you could put it in the same sentence as self-defense. The fact that Merz is putting these things in the same sentence is something that every German should be worried about. Because it does mean that the German government is ready to disregard the right of human beings to live in order to facilitate their cynical policy agenda or objectives. So this is something that makes me very, very cautious about developing hope about the new government in Germany. I do expect that the German government will acknowledge that Israel is committing genocide in Gaza. It will acknowledge the massive violations of international law. It will even acknowledge that Germany itself has been on the wrong side of history and supported the genocide and illegally transferred weapons to Israel in full knowledge that these weapons will be used to kill civilians. But I do expect that Germany will make all of these acknowledgments when it's already too late, as it always does. And I don't think it matters if it's one government or the other, so I would say the same thing about the previous government.

ZR: Israel is facing increasing external pressures as we've talked about and is growing increasingly isolated from the world community. For example, the United States recently reached a ceasefire agreement with Yemen's Houthi movement mediated by Oman in which the Houthis agreed to stop targeting commercial ships in the Red Sea. However, the Houthis made it clear that this agreement does not include halting attacks on Israel, which they say will continue until Israel ends its military operation in Gaza and lifts the blockade. Additionally, U.S.-Iran negotiations have now reached a third round in Oman, aimed at de-escalating tensions and addressing Iran's nuclear program. This has further unsettled Israel, who has long pushed for a more aggressive US posture towards Tehran. And then we

talked about the growing boycott, military embargo movement around the world, especially in Latin America and in the Middle East. And of course then we have the International Court of Justice lawsuit going on and the arrest warrants from the International Criminal Court. These are some external developments and you've mentioned the fragile position the Israeli military apparatus is in. Are there any other political internal factors that you're seeing that could also contribute moving Israel to this negative trend?

SH: Well, I think that all of these things, whether they are external or internal, are seen by Israel as a kind of video game which is played by one man, which is Netanyahu. And because the Israelis have become so accustomed to the idea that Netanyahu is playing these strategic games, that they are saying, well, maybe the Houthi ceasefire is something that Netanyahu can ignore and it will not harm his political power, but the Iran negotiations are a bigger challenge. In the end, all of these things create one fact, which is that Israel is being reduced to one person, and that the Israelis see no other alternative. There are no politicians in Israel who are willing to speak up and say that the war has to stop because of the violations of international law. Some say it has to stop because of Israeli hostages or because it costs too much. But they will not use moral arguments. And because of this, Netanyahu is the only one who is able to convince the public that he can somehow juggle all of these different international challenges and come out winning. But it's just not realistic. I mean, as much as he's a very talented politician and a very gifted liar, that doesn't make him invincible. Sooner or later, one of those balls is going to fall.

So I think that the mounting pressure coming from the international community, from grassroots movement, from the BDS movement, which includes the military embargo campaign against Israel, and also the internal collapse of Israeli society, the loss of hope and the perspective of a future that is happening inside Israel is bringing this whole thing to an end, but the question of how soon is impossible to answer. It's really a question that depends on, well, it depends on one thing, on the ability of a small group of Israelis, especially those messianic biblical fanatics who think that God will intervene and save them, to hold the entire Israeli society under their control and to inspire some remnants of hope with a very small group of the population that is still fighting. The other thing is really the question of technology of how much a complicit tech giants like Google, Facebook, Amazon, are able to equip Israel with the tools of oppression, not just inside Israel and on Palestinians, but also worldwide against the critique, the outrage, the protest against Israel. All of this system is a very powerful system, but it is cracking. And it is cracking thanks to the work of activists. So I can just mention, for example, that the minister of foreign affairs of the Netherlands, the Netherlands is one of the countries that has been the most pro-Israeli within the EU, second only to Germany and maybe the Czech Republic, and the right-wing government of the Netherlands has even supported the illegal settlements of the Westbank and now the minister of foreign affairs says that Europe is obligated, according to article two of the Association Agreement, to end the trade benefits that it gives to Israel. This is a historical moment, which will really make it very difficult for the Merz government in Germany to continue to get the EU to enable the genocide and to be complicit in this.

ZR: Dr. Shir Hever, economic researcher and author, thank you so much for your time today.

SH: Thanks for having me.

ZR: And thank you for tuning in today. If you watched this video until the very end, please take a few more minutes to join our alternative channels on Rumble and Telegram. If YouTube, which is owned by Google, ever shadowbans and censors us, we won't be able to reach you with our information, let alone with an announcement. Also, please don't forget to donate to our channel as we don't take any money from corporations or governments. All with the goal of providing you with critical and independent information that you just won't hear in the corporate media. I thank you for your support and for tuning in. I'm your host Zain Raza. See you next time.

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