



Israel's Gaza Trap: Starve, Lure, Kill—Jeremy Scahill Exposes “Final Phase” of Genocide

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Abby Martin (AM): Thank you so much for joining me on The Empire Files. Jeremy Scahill, investigative journalist, co-founder of Drop Site News. Incredible to have you on.

Jeremy Scahill (JS): Thanks, Abby. It's really great to be with you.

AM: So Drop Site News has been doing absolutely crucial reporting day in and day out, the nuances of everything that's going on, the daily operations, the war crimes. It's really incredible work. Let's start by talking about Netanyahu's press conference and the launch of operation Gideon's Chariot and what that all entails.

JS: Well, you know, I mean, from the very beginning of the Gaza genocide, Netanyahu and other top Israeli officials, not to mention the second and third tier echelons of the Israeli national security state, have been very clear with their genocidal intent. From the very beginning, you had Yoav Gallant talking about how they were fighting human animals. And you fast forward to 19 months later, and Netanyahu hadn't given a public press conference in about five weeks. And he goes out and he gives one of the most genocidal speeches of the entire 19-month genocide. He begins by talking about the success, as he put it, of the pager bomb plot in Lebanon, which of course killed hundreds upon hundreds of people, maimed children, and caused massive civilian suffering, all in the name of Netanyahu's regional arson campaign, where he says he's going to burn any vestige of resistance against Israel and the Zionist project. So he begins by celebrating that, and then he goes full into his declaration that Israel is not going to engage in any long term ceasefire, that it's only going to engage in short term deals so that they can get more Israeli captives out. And that the bottom line is that Israel is going to continue to what they characterize as sort of the final stage of the genocide. Some of us have been calling it the final solution because it really is about annihilating the

Palestinian people and exterminating Gaza as a Palestinian territory. And so what Netanyahu said in his speech is if Hamas wants to engage in some limited short-term ceasefire so that we can get more of our captives out, we're going to do that but we will not stop until Israel conquers all of Gaza and that Israeli forces are in control of the entire Gaza Strip.

Abby, on the issue of so-called humanitarian aid, and we can talk about this in detail – not just Netanyahu, but also another member of the War Cabinet, Bezalel Smotrich, who has been a passionate advocate of starving and exterminating the Palestinians of Gaza and also the West Bank, the occupied West Bank, they came out earlier this week and said: Look, this whole thing is a ruse, we want to avoid getting in any further trouble with the Hague. We want to avoid having any issues at the UN Security Council. And some Republican senators have approached me, Netanyahu said, who are very passionate defenders of Israel and they said that the optics of Palestinians starving is a bad one for the ultimate goal of annihilating the Palestinians from Gaza. And so Netanyahu has officially agreed, although for the first two days of the so-called agreement to bring aid in, none of it actually reached Gaza. But basically what the Israelis are doing is saying: we're going to just hand out limited boxes of meals. We're not going to allow aid trucks to go in and be distributed in any way that they were when the United Nations or others were involved with it. And it's going to require Palestinians to go through not just biometric screening and surveillance, but actual political vetting of the individuals who want to pick up these meager supplies that Israel is going to allow in. And Netanyahu said that's the interim phase. And eventually, there's going to be a US-Israeli plan headed by a former US Marine sniper that registered what they're calling a non-governmental organization in Geneva, Switzerland, the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation is the name of it, backed by US mercenaries – there's been images out of Israel of some of them arriving in country and they look like Blackwater mercenaries that I've encountered in my other investigations. And so basically what they're saying is: We're going to give the facade of trying to address the starvation – which by the way Netanyahu said there is no starvation – but we're going to try to give a facade of this because it's going to enable our chief backers, primarily the United States, to continue arming us and supporting us as we continue on with this war of annihilation.

And the last thing I'll say about this, Abby, is – you've reported a lot on this, I've reported a lot on it – Israeli officials often compare Palestinians to animals. They depict them as rats hiding in tunnels. And if you really fly up to 30,000 feet and you look at what this so-called humanitarian aid scheme is about, it is about treating Palestinians as animals. They are setting bait inside of a killing cage in Rafah, which has been utterly destroyed in the south of Gaza near the Egyptian border. And they're saying to starving Palestinians, the only way you're going to get food is if you come into the cage where we've set the bait and then we're gonna shut the door behind you and trap you in this crate. And that crate then becomes a very small killing cage. And those people who manage to survive are trapped in a crate that Netanyahu says they're gonna ship off to other places. That's what we're looking at right now. That's the genocidal intent. And it's happening as children are being burned alive in tents. It's happening where people are being told to flee to Al Mawasi and other areas. And then they're being bombed with suicide drones, artillery shelling, Apache attack helicopters, gunfire, F-16

airstrikes. All of this is happening. It's an Armageddon that's being unleashed on the Palestinian people, and Netanyahu is saying that he is going to continue to receive the full backing of the US and other allies.

AM: I mean, there's so much to unpack. I mean first of all, the fact that this meager aid, I mean before the genocide started, 500 trucks a day were needed to meet the demand and need of the 2 million plus residents there. I mean what are we talking about? A couple trucks that they're gonna allow in for this scheme? This horrifying, monstrous scheme. I mean, on top of this aid scheme, they are talking about biometrics, this surveillance grid to then under the full control of the IDF with these tiny killing boxes to use aid as the bait, like you said. On top of that, Netanyahu and his cohorts are plainly stating, right, like they have been this whole time, plainly stating: This is not about the hostages. This is about Hamas. This is Hamas laying down its weapons and a complete and total surrender and conquest and occupation of the Gaza Strip. And then on a side note, he's talking about the Trump plan being revolutionary. I mean the sinister nature of just using Libya. I mean, another just kind of failed state, a victim of US atrocities, the NATO bombing campaign, and then to just say, here, take a million people. I mean it is seriously like we're reliving the dark ages except on top of that, the overlap of high technology that we can all just watch. But I guess just talk about that strategy. I mean the fact that they're saying their goal is Hamas to surrender. Why would Hamas surrender? Why would they surrender when Israel's already made it clear that this is an extermination campaign? Not just the military wing – civilians, the entire civilian infrastructure and groups like Hamas and Islamic Jihad and other resistance groups, they're the only groups standing in the way of the mass graves and the Israeli soldiers that are invading.

JS: I mean, let's start at the beginning with what you said, because I think this hasn't gotten enough attention and people sort of treated it like a joke. On February 4th, Benjamin Netanyahu was at the White House with Donald Trump. He was the first foreign leader to visit Trump in his second term. And Trump sort of shocked people by floating this idea that the United States wanted to seize Gaza and convert it into a Middle East Riviera. And you could sort of see Netanyahu and the grin that started to form on his face. Now there's a kind of inside baseball, tactical disagreement. Netanyahu, of course, probably would have preferred Trump to say that he's going to seize it and hand it over to Netanyahu. But Trump said, well, this is going to be a US territory that we seize. But what matters there is that Trump openly set the agenda that the Palestinians of Gaza need to be gone from Gaza. And Netanyahu has fully embraced that. He calls it the Trump Plan. When he announced Operation Gideon's Chariot, he and other officials said that the ultimate goal of it is the removal of Palestinians from Gaza. And so they're calling it Trump's plan. Trump backed away from talking about it for a while. And then at the end of his trip to these Gulf nations where he was in Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates, he then brought it up again and said that the US actually remains interested in seizing Gaza. And he said he wants to convert it into what he called the "Freedom Zone".

Well, Netanyahu has completely embraced this and is saying that it is actually an American plan. And if Hamas was to surrender in the way that Netanyahu is talking about, it's not about the Islamic resistance movement Hamas surrendering. It's not a Palestinian Islamic Jihad surrendering, this is all sort of you showing a cat a ball of yarn to get it to chase something in a corner. That's the whole public narrative here. What they really mean is that the Palestinian people have to surrender. They're saying not just Hamas needs to lay down its arms. They're saying they want a total demilitarization of the Gaza Strip. 77 years of history has shown that when the Palestinians do give up any rights about armed resistance to this genocidal occupation, this apartheid colonial regime, that they get massacred. So, you know, talking about Hamas and making Hamas the issue gives cover to Netanyahu because his war is not against Hamas. His war is against the Palestinian people and the idea of an independent, self-determined Palestinian state. When I talk to officials from Hamas – Islamic Jihad doesn't participate in any elections that are organized by what they consider to be a collaborationist regime of Mahmoud Abbas and the Palestinian Authority, but they still remain a very central part of the fabric of Palestinian politics. But Hamas made a decision to engage in electoral politics, and they won the elections in 2006. These were free democratic elections, and Hamas didn't just win them in Gaza. They won them throughout all of the Palestinian territories. Ismail Haniyeh was supposed to be the prime minister of Palestine. Of course, last summer Israel assassinated Haniyeh in Tehran. But the point that I'm getting at here is that Hamas is saying if the issue is our governance, we don't need to be in the government of Gaza. In fact, Abby, I've heard from Hamas officials say: it's an albatross around our neck to be, you know, in charge of the government of Gaza, we have to meet payroll, we have to pick up the trash. Prior to October 7th, Hamas's popularity as a governing authority was going down. And if you read public opinion polls, Palestinians have the same issues a lot of people across the world have about their government. The issue here is not Hamas being in charge. Hamas has said on record multiple times, we will relinquish control as the governing authority in Gaza, but what we won't do is surrender the Palestinian cause. And right now, the Al Qassam brigades, Hamas's armed wing and Sarāyā al-Quds, the armed wing of Palestinian Islamic Jihad, view themselves as fighting not for their agenda. These aren't people like ISIS or Al-Qaeda. These are people firmly rooted in the diverse fabric of Palestinian resistance politics, and they view it as Israel trying to exterminate the Palestinian cause and that they are on the front lines defending that. That's their perspective on this.

AM: You've interviewed several leaders of Hamas and Islamic Jihad. I mean, look, the Western media does do this on rare occasions. When they do, it's a complete parody. It's a cartoonish depiction of what these people think. It's either a relitigation of October 7th or the demand to condemn, right? But what you've done is very rare. I mean you just sit and you let them talk, you hear their perspective because that's necessary. It's necessary to hear what these people think instead of these out of context clips that I just see circulating around and used to generalize all of them. And especially when we know what the charter says, right? There is no conflation between Judaism and Zionism. It's very, very direct and laid bare. So it's disgusting to see the egregious lies be repeated ad nauseam. But let's talk about your meetings with them and what has been said. I mean, what is your takeaway at this point from

what they perceive as the state of the negotiations and not just the latest round, but the entirety of them, the duration of negotiations throughout the last year and a half, Jeremy?

JS: I mean, one thing I think is really fascinating, and I spoke recently with Osama Hamdan, who is one of the most senior people within the Hamas political operation, and Basem Naim. And those two officials from Hamas were the lead people meeting with American officials when direct talks happened in February with Adam Boehler, who was Donald Trump's special envoy on hostages, but he's also a former college roommate of Jared Kushner, a close friend of the Trump family. And we got a little taste of what happens when Hamas is allowed to speak for itself without Israel being in charge of the narrative. Adam Boehler came out of those discussions and took a lot of heat from the Israelis because he said, you know, they don't have horns growing out of their heads. And he implied that these are people that were very different from what he'd been led to believe. And the Hamas people told me that Boehler kept saying that to them. You're so different from what I had been led to believe you would be. This is why Hamas believes that Israel is constantly assassinating political leaders that would be capable of representing their view of history, their perspective of the issues. Hamas – and it gets very little attention, but it's a serious proposal on the table – Hamas told me that they have repeatedly offered what in Arabic is called a Hudna, which is a long-term truce of five to seven years, where Hamas would agree that it wouldn't engage in any armed action against Israel unless Israel attacked it first, and that they would be open to a comprehensive discussion about what happens after the genocide in Gaza, that they would want as soon as possible democratic elections to be organized, that they would be willing to release in one batch, in what Hamas calls an all-for-all deal, every single Israeli captive remaining in Gaza for thousands of Palestinians. There are 10,000 plus Palestinians who remain in Israeli gulags, dungeons, jails, indefinite detention with no access to lawyers. There are thousands of Palestinians from Gaza who were kidnapped that are being held hostage explicitly for the purpose of exchanging them. And so Hamas has not just floated ideas. They've put serious ideas on the table that when Trump's envoy actually had an opportunity to hear it, not through Netanyahu's propaganda or the Shin Bet propaganda, but directly from Hamas officials, then you started to see some progress. And what happened after that, Abby, we all know, is that Adam Boehler was subjected to a smear campaign.

At the end of the day, there is a real story that is not being told, and that is that Hamas and Islamic Jihad are not foreigners that came in to conquer Gaza. These are people that also have family members that are from Fatah, that are different political parties. All of these guys that get attacked in the media, they've all had family members killed. Basem Naim, who I met with, his mother was killed. His brother was killed, his sister-in-law was killed. Some of these guys have had their entire families wiped out. So when you talk to them, you're not talking to foreigners who are occupying a country. You're talking about people who are doctors, veterinarians, scientists. Osama Hamdan is a trained chemist. You're talking about highly educated people who have a very firm grasp of the 77 years of history and every single one of them comes from families who were directly targeted in the Nakba and forced to leave the homes that their families had lived in and farmed on for generations. So there's legitimate debates and they happen in Palestinian circles all the time about who should be the political

leaders of an independent and free Palestinian state. But what you can't say is that Hamas is not part of the fabric of Palestinian politics. So what I try to do when I talk to these officials is not engage in that cartoonization of the real history that we have unfolding before us, because I think it's journalistic malpractice not to understand their perspective. It's journalistic malpractices to just constantly be harping about, what about October 7th? What about October 7th? You know, I wish that The New York Times was doing these kinds of interviews. I wish that major media in the United States did more than just having a two-minute interview that's intended to just be confrontational and infotainment. I wish that we actually cared enough about our audiences, about the public interest, to say everyone is adult enough to hear this and make their own decisions and that's what I've tried to do in talking to them.

AM: People look at Hamas governance in Gaza and they see it as a monolith. They don't understand the intricacies, that rich mosaic of political diversity that you're explaining now. And just the fact that Hamas is saying, look, we don't want to necessarily be the government, we haven't been able to have elections. I mean, they have been under a brutal medieval siege ever since they did win, right? And it's because of these political factions and the reign of Mahmoud Abbas. I mean that's what they're saying, look, we would love to have a democratic practice here, but we simply cannot because of the conditions that we've been in for the last decade.

JS: You brought up the 2017 Hamas Charter – there was a recent filing with the Home Secretary in the United Kingdom. Hamas filed an application to have itself delisted as a terror organization in the UK. And Mousa Abu Marzook, a senior Hamas official, submitted a fascinating declaration to the British Home Secretary in which he addressed head on the issue that you're raising there, this issue of the conflation of Zionism with Judaism, of the State of Israel with Judaism. And Hamas has acknowledged parts of its history that have been weaponized against it, but in 2017 with the updated Hamas charter you had an official position that Hamas is at war not with the Jewish people but with a colonialist settler entity and also that Hamas does not oppose what Western governments call a so-called two-state solution. But the main force that has destroyed this notion, that is the fantasies in European capitals and in Washington of a two-state solution being the Panacea, was destroyed by Israel, was destroyed by the United States, was destroyed by lying and co-opting. And Mahmoud Abbas, as we're talking, has been in Lebanon. And his mission in Lebanon is to disarm the Palestinians in the refugee camps of Lebanon. Mahmoud Abbas is 89 years old, when we're witnessing the most sustained siege of the occupied West Bank since 1967. And it started when Abbas's US trained security forces went in and started targeting areas where Palestinians had armed themselves to defend themselves and to try to strip them of their arms, kidnap commanders and soften the environment so that the Israeli occupation forces could come in. Destroy the roads, destroy the homes, displace thousands upon thousands of people. The Palestinians right now in general are in a battle for the very existence of Palestine. And so, I listen to Palestinians when they debate. I listen to the Palestinians critique of various parties. But as we all watch this, we have to keep our eye on the central fact that matters, which is that a US and European backed genocidal regime is trying to exterminate the

Palestinian people. Palestinians commit a crime against Israel by breathing. When a child comes out into the world for the first time, they commit an act of resistance, which is breathing as a Palestinian. To be a Palestinian is to be a threat and a danger to the Zionist project. And so there's a reason why Palestinians use the word martyr for anyone who is killed, even if it's a child. It's because to breathe as a Palestinian is an act of resistance because of what the United States and its allies have allowed and facilitated Israel to do for 77 years.

AM: It's such a good point. I mean, the horrific chauvinism coming from people like Sam Harris to use that word and weaponize it against them by trying to say, you're a death cult, you worship death. They actually understand life more than anyone like Sam Harrison ever will because they're so close to losing it at any given moment. And I think it's really just crazy to look at the last year and a half. I mean Hamas has no other leverage other than the hostages, which Israel has made very clear that they have no problem killing. Hamas's biggest miscalculation was thinking Israel would value its own people's lives over its goals to recolonize Gaza. Perhaps the Gilad Shalit prisoner exchange back in 2011 that saw over a thousand Palestinian prisoners exchanged for one Israeli soldier, even though back then they did invoke the Hannibal directive, but it just wasn't used quickly enough.

JS: I mean, also on this front, I reported the story last week that Steve Witkoff, Trump's top envoy, made a direct commitment to Hamas in the negotiations over the release of Edan Alexander, who is an American citizen. Again, I know, Abby, that you know this and you've talked about it, let's remember here, Edan Alexander, perhaps the most valuable captive that Hamas was holding because he was a living American citizen joined the Israeli army – he's from New Jersey – he joined the Israeli army. He was taken by Palestinian fighters on October 7th at the military base just outside of Gaza where he was stationed and he was taken in his army uniform back to Gaza. Hamas considers him not a hostage but a POW. And Hamas has been saying for a couple of months that it was willing to release Edan Alexander as a gesture of goodwill toward Donald Trump if Trump would actually do something to end the genocide. And so on a technical level, what I was told by Hamas officials who were doing these negotiations was that Steve Witkoff promised Hamas that if they released Edan Alexander, that on the second day after he was freed, that the US would compel Israel to lift its full spectrum blockade that is now in its third month – no medicine, no food, no fuel, nothing has entered Gaza – and that Donald Trump would publicly call for an immediate ceasefire and a move towards serious negotiations for an actual end of the war. The second day came and went and nothing happened. The third day came and went and nothing happened. Then Donald Trump continues his tour of Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. He makes no mention of a ceasefire. He does mention something about how it's terrible that people are starving in Gaza.

AM: So was it just cover for him to parade in gallivant around the Middle East? I mean, was it just a diplomatic cover to just be like, yeah, yeah, we're we're about to get the deal for that moment. Or was it just total lies for the sake of just getting the American out?

Yeah, I have been trying to think of how to say this. With Donald Trump in power – and when you talk to Hamas officials about it, one Hamas official said it's not like dealing with insider Washington, it's like you're dealing with the stock market. In the morning, maybe it's going this way, in the afternoon it's going another way, and by the evening, you really have to watch it to make sure that you come away with something or you don't lose everything. And so they kind of said that that's what it's like dealing with Donald Trump. So I think part of it was Trump wanted to soften the environment as he then went to make all these business deals. And by the way, Trump wasn't just making business deals for America. Trump's also thinking about his personal business. I mean, what do you think Jared Kushner got?

AM: He's got that sweet jet, man.

He got his \$400 million plane – but it's for America, you know. So I think part of it, yes, was that there was this flurry of activity. There was this extraordinary moment when Trump signs a ceasefire deal with Ansar Allah in Yemen, the so-called Houthis as they're often referred to, signs a ceasefire deal with ansar Allah, says that we're engaged in negotiations with Iran, then makes a deal just as he's arriving in the Gulf that results in the freeing of the most well-known American being held in Gaza, Edan Alexander. And I think that the Qatari mediators who were involved with this, I think they actually believed that this was going to happen, certainly that the aid issue was going to be addressed. And Donald Trump also is a liar. Maybe they felt like, OK, well, we'll tell them this and then we'll do something about it. It's unclear if the US went into that intending to lie. Obviously, that's a possibility. I also think it's possible that we wouldn't even be seeing any push from the United States right now to lift the siege on Gaza had this deal not happened. But remember, at the end of the day, each captive that Hamas is holding in Gaza and other resistance factions are holding in Gaza – these are worth large numbers of Palestinians that can win freedom. For Hamas to release Edan Alexander without any commitment to free Palestinian captives was a major gamble. That was one of the primary objectives of Operation Al-Aqsa Flood, the October 7th attacks in 2023. It's also created a situation now where this was a deal directly with the United States, not involving the Israelis. If if if the goal of the United States is to, quote unquote, free all of the hostages from Gaza, and what you do is the first time you directly negotiate the release of a captive with Hamas, you then lie about it, or as Hamas said, throw the deal in the trash – that means then that the mediators are going to hear from Hamas, how can we trust anything? I've asked Hamas even if you make a deal that seems to be in line with your terms, that demilitarization is a red line, that surrender is not going to happen, that you're not going to allow Israel to remain an occupying force in Gaza – what's to stop Israel from just violating it again? Because Israel has a PhD in violating agreements that it has signed. Israel is currently violating its agreements in Lebanon. Israel is bombing Syria. Israel repeatedly violated the ceasefire deal certified by Joe Biden and Donald Trump that was signed in January. And what Hamas is saying is, yes, all of that is true, but we have no other option. And so what they're saying is they want Trump personally to announce any deal that happens next and they want Steve Witkoff to publicly shake hands with Khalil al-Hayya, the top negotiator from Hamas. It's symbolic. This isn't the official position of Hamas, this is what some people involved with the negotiations have suggested as ways of trying to ensure some level of accountability. But

everything is a gamble for the Palestinians when they're dealing with the Israelis because the Israelis lie and they violate every agreement.

AM: They kill the negotiators!

JS: They kill all of the negotiators.

AM: It's insane. Let's talk about Hossam Shabat, an incredible and trepid, brilliant young man and dedicated journalist who was working for Drop Site News as a contributor. I was following him day in and day out for over a year. And so to wake up and the surreal nature of seeing that he too had been hunted down and murdered by Israel after being threatened, right? I mean, this is what they do. And this is what we know that they were going to do. And I guess, we're no stranger to media lies, Jeremy, you've reported heavily on the Iraq War and all of the fallout from that. As a journalist who's been in and out of these mainstream institutions, are you shocked at the lack of condemnation after the systematic slaughter of so many journalists?

JS: Abby, it's the most shameful period in the history of journalism. We've had well over 200 of our Palestinian colleagues murdered by Israel. And it's not just that there's been overwhelming silence from major news organizations and famous journalists. It's that they've refused to work with Palestinian journalists. They refuse to respect our colleagues for the risks that they're taking. They all like to go to fancy dinners and pat themselves on the back. Jake Tapper from CNN was constantly tweeting "Free Evan Gershkovich", the Wall Street Journal reporter who was being held in Russia. I also wanted Evan Gershkovich to be freed. The difference between me and Jake Tapper is that I'm consistent in defending freedom of the press and the life of our colleagues, regardless of who they're reporting for, or who tells me that these are the bad guys. These are our colleagues. And it's shameful. This is complicity in the murder of our journalistic colleagues. And let me tell you something about Hossam Shabbat. He was a very young guy. And he was a correspondent for Al Jazeera Mubasher. And a lot of what he was doing was just going around to the most horrifying, dangerous places right after missiles had struck, right after ordnance had hit. And he was just recording and describing what he saw. It was classic in-the-field journalism. And he doing this while struggling to survive a genocide himself. And like you, I watched him for so long and another heroic journalist, Anas Al-Sharif, who also works for Al Jazeera. And eventually, when we started Drop Site, we got in touch with Hossam Shabat and he had never written in a print article before. So we didn't know what was going to happen. And he submitted his first piece to us. He would write in Arabic and then Sharif Abdel Quddus, my colleague, would translate it. Abby, he was lyrical in how he wrote. This was somebody who, if he wasn't assassinated by Israel, would have been a famous writer. And in fact, I had my own direct chats with him. He was so honored to work with us and he said he couldn't believe that we were putting his work out in written form in English. He wanted to be a writer. That's what he wanted to do. He was saying to us "I don't want to just be running around with my camera. I actually want to write". He was a brilliant writer. He had raw talent. People know who he is because we've all seen his videos, but he was such an incredible human being and such a beautiful writer.

And this is true of so many Palestinians that we've had the honor of publishing. The thing that I'm most proud of, of what we do, and we have new writers that are now publishing with us, is to try to give a platform to Palestinians whose voices must be heard, not deserve to be heard. Must be heard. This is such a fundamental reason why this genocide was allowed to persist. All news organizations should have been teaming up with our Palestinian colleagues, and it would have maybe not saved the lives of all of them, but it would've saved the lives of some of them because the stakes rise much higher when powerful news institutions stand up to authoritarians like Netanyahu. And they didn't do that. And one final thing I'll say on that is: Israel has mass murder journalists and their families and their family members. They also have put out hit lists of Palestinian journalists that they accused of being – they accused Hossam Shabat of being a sniper in the Beit Hanun battalion of the Qassam brigades. You know how sick it was? I actually pushed Hamas on this because Hossam worked for us. I knew it was a lie, but I pushed Hamas on it and they actually did an audit of the Qassam brigades. It's an entirely false assertion. They said on the record to me that the documents Israel produced are fabricated documents. And that's what they do to Palestinians. Hassan Aslih, one of the most famous, any and every single Palestinian knows who he is. He should have been known all throughout the Western media world. He was one of most remarkable journalists and they tried to assassinate him on April 7th and then eventually a few weeks later, they did assassinate in a hospital, in a burn unit where he had had two fingers amputated and was receiving treatment. And then they put out a statement saying they take out a Hamas terrorist.

AM: He told us it would happen, Jeremy.

JS: And he told us it would.

AM: He said, they are going to come for me even in this hospital bed. What can I do? That's what he said.

JS: Because Palestinians know what Israel's agenda is toward them. We owe a debt to Palestinian journalists that the world will never ever be able to repay. Because these are brave, incredible, principled people who documented the genocide happening to themselves and their families. And all of them lost family members. All of them witnessed their colleagues burning in tents and maybe they were gonna be the next ones. You know how Hossam was killed? He had stopped to interview – he was in the North of Gaza – he had stopped to interview people who were displaced persons and there was an Israeli, a small scale Israeli drone that was hovering and following him. And he would say that they would be following him all the time and he gets out to go and interview forcibly displaced people. And at the moment he goes to start the interview they drop the munition that exploded on him and it severed his body in half. That's how Hossam Shabat was assassinated by Israel. And he was assassinated for the crime of journalism and exposing war crimes around the clock, nonstop. It speaks to the power of witness that we have all seen from our Palestinian colleagues. And they get up every day and they continue to do it as their colleagues are murdered.

AM: Even though they know that jacket –

JS: And they know, like you said with Hassan, he knew they were gonna kill him. It's like Refaat Alareer. He knew they were going to kill him.

AM: They've used this genocide as a cover to kill all the dissidents and all the journalists and they knew every day waking up putting on that jacket that it was actually putting a target on their back. And the selfless nature of the journalists to continue to do that day in and day out – I don't think people can wrap their minds around that courage and bravery and resilience. You know, I knew you, 20 years ago. You were the Blackwater guy. You were investigating on the ground.

JS: I remember the first email you wrote me.

AM: Really?

JS: You were at Media Roots, I think, at the time. And you sent me an email when you were just starting to really take yourself seriously as a journalist, which I think that's how the best independent journalists start. They take themselves seriously enough and say, it doesn't matter if someone's paying me to do this, I believe in it. I remember it because I was inspired by your email.

AM: That's very cute and you're probably like what the hell is Media Roots? Why would I do an interview with them? You know, you were such a huge inspiration to me because of your foreign policy coverage obviously the passion and dedication that you put into your work um stood above so many other people in this world. And just the investigations into the Blackwater crimes, the atrocities of the Iraq war, the crime of the century – at least it was until now. And not to downplay Rock, obviously, but when you look back at the scale and scope of the horrors of the Iraq war – a million Iraqis dead, to some accounts. I mean, the Haditha massacre, the Blackwater-Nisour Square massacre, 17 civilians mowed down.

JS: Fallujah.

AM: Fallujah! All of these things symbolized the worst crime. It seems like the rapidity and succession of those types of massacres and war crimes are happening weekly, sometimes daily. Just the medics, the 15 medics being summary executions and then they're buried alongside their ambulances – is it just me, or is this uncharted? Is this unprecedented? And if so, what does that mean? What does it mean to set this precedent now for a state to be able to do this on camera, with impunity, and like you said, they are plainly stating what their goal and intent is. They are mocking the global institutions, they're making a mockery of international law. And at this point, I don't know what kind of world we are living in if this is allowed to go through, Jeremy. And it looks like it is.

JS: You know, there was a doctrine that Donald Rumsfeld and Dick Cheney promoted in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 and they said that we have to embrace an idea that the world is our battlefield. And what we have seen, and Israel has participated in this and the United States has participated in it and NATO certainly is a central component of it. But all of these countries believe that they can kill and occupy and murder in defense of their wars of conquest and their seizure of natural resources, but it's also a warning to all who dare to resist. And what we're seeing in front of us right now – Netanyahu did not come up with the tactics that are being used against the Palestinians of Gaza or the West Bank. This is decades and decades of imperial history that is now being unleashed on an industrial scale against a people who are fighting largely with weapons that they have domestically manufactured in secret in the terrain beneath Gaza. And it's taking 19 months and Netanyahu still cannot exterminate the Palestinians. And we need to learn a lesson from this, which is that when good people remain silent, when people mock those who make it a central component of their humanity to be out in the streets, to be investigating corruption and the abuse of power. When you think that it's okay to just go along with your daily life because it's someone else's problem, what you get is a terrorist like Benjamin Netanyahu serving as the arsonist-in-chief, not just burning fires throughout the Middle East, but altering the state of the world today. And if we as a people, whether we're journalists or activists or scholars, if we don't pour our hearts into confronting this right now, what comes next will be even worse. We always think we've seen the worst, but we haven't. Netanyahu used a phrase recently that I found so eerie. He said that we're going to unleash things you haven't seen yet against people in Gaza as part of Operation Gideon's Chariot. And I think that we can't let the United States off the hook. I see as a turning point also when Barack Obama was president, Mr. Constitutional Law Scholar, Obama normalized and for many liberals legitimized the notion that assassination is a central and necessary part of running the empire. And he said that he found a smarter way to wage wars with his drone wars. And he set all we need to look forward not backward in terms of holding CIA torturers accountable. When someone like Obama is in power and what they do is legitimize the agenda of people like Dick Cheney, then you get Benjamin Netanyahu's genocidal war in Gaza. We have to be better students of history. We have to be better analysts of what is actually happening in real time. And this is part of why it's so important to pay close attention to the Palestinian journalists on the ground. They are writing the first draft of history to keep it away from the so-called victors, to keep it away from those in power who are setting the agenda. That's a central part of why we must be supporting them.

JS: Thank you so much, Jeremy Scahill, best aid of journalists, co-founder of Drop Site News. I really appreciate your time and everything that you're doing. Thank you so much.

JS: Thank you, Abby, and thank you for all of your very vital work.

END

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