

## GAZA CEASEFIRE & Germany's Obsession with Israel | Antony Loewenstein

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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 we begin this interview, I would like to remind you to join our alternative channels on Rumble and Telegram. Even though we have 163,000 subscribers on YouTube, only a few thousand have joined these alternative channels. We are not asking you to leave YouTube and just follow these channels. All we are asking you is to join these channels as a precautionary measure, as YouTube is owned by Google and Google is an American corporation that can shadowban and censor us at any time. If that day ever comes, we won't be able to reach you even with an announcement. To find out how you can join these alternative channels, click on the description of this video below.

Today I'll be talking to Antony Loewenstein, who is a German Australian, independent, award-winning investigative journalist and a best-selling author and filmmaker. Antony, welcome to the show.

**Antony Loewenstein (AL):** Thanks so much for having me.

**ZR:** Let me begin first with some breaking news. A ceasefire was announced just a few hours ago between Hamas and Israel, with US President Donald Trump posting on Truth Social, quote, "I'm very proud to announce that Israel and Hamas have both signed off on the first phase of our peace plan", unquote. This comes after several days of indirect talks in Sharm el Sheikh, Egypt, mediated by Qatar, the United States, and Egypt itself, where both sides agreed to the first phase of Donald Trump's 20-point Gaza peace plan. The agreement entails a ceasefire, a phase Israeli group withdrawal, and exchanges between Israeli hostages and Palestinian prisoners; although some independent analysts argue that many of those labeled Palestinian prisoners are in fact hostages held without due process. But to move on, the deal announced by Trump on Wednesday was short on detail and left many unresolved questions, raising concern it could unravel like so many previous peace efforts that were made. Let me divide this question into three parts.

Firstly, can you comment and provide your initial thoughts on this ceasefire? Secondly, how do you think it will be received by the extreme right factions within Netanyahu's coalition, some of whom have threatened to break away if an agreement was reached? And thirdly, how do you evaluate Trump's broader 20 point peace plan? And do you think it can bring real potential to what Trump calls lasting peace?

**AL:** Thank you so much for having me. The first part of your question, my initial reaction is positive skepticism. I think anyone who follows this question who cares about humans, who cares about Palestinians, who cares about life, would want this genocide to end. I mean that's a no brainer. And I am skeptical for all the reasons that many viewers might be; Israel has a long history of breaking these agreements. Israel's far right coalition is mostly against it, which we'll get to in a minute. Certainly Palestinians in Gaza that I've seen – and I've friends who I've spoken to who are elated, who are excited, they're not stupid, they're not blind to the reality, but they are so exhausted after two years of this madness that it has to end. So I think the first phase will almost certainly happen, meaning the Israeli surviving hostages, around twenty or so, the ones who have been killed, we don't know the exact number, to be honest, that Hamas will hand back, the number of hostages – and I do call many of the prisoners that Israel has, not all, but many of them are hostages. It's important to note that one of the conditions that Hamas insisted on was that many Palestinians who were taken from Gaza since October 7th were never charged with a crime – I see those as hostages, basically, men and women – and they will be returned. Now there are some others, yes, who have been found guilty in Israeli jail, some of them for murder and other crimes to be sure. And who's going to be released, we don't know. They haven't named those people.

So look, phase one will almost certainly happen. After that, ties into your second question, which is what's the Israeli far right's likely response? Well, they've already said to an extent, Ben Gvir and Smotrich have put out messages on social media demanding that Netanyahu, once the Israeli hostages are out, continues the genocide. The obvious question is will that happen? And if Netanyahu does not do that, will they leave their coalition? And on one hand, you know, journalists hate to look into the future, so I don't know. But my sense is that there are other Israeli political parties that have come forward in previous ceasefires and said that we will support you, Netanyahu, in an agreement if your far right members leave. So there is certainly a desire by many – and frankly, not just on the Israeli right. You know, I think there's so much of an obsession in the West of Netanyahu, and he's obviously the Prime Minister, we can't ignore him. He should be in The Hague for war crimes, I'm not denying any of that. But the mission, so to speak, in Gaza for the last two years has had mainstream Israeli Jewish support. I mean, that's the reality. It's not just the crazy far right. It's a very mainstream, almost centrist Israeli Jewish position, which is, we support displacement of Palestinians, getting rid of Palestinians, starving Palestinians. Now, of course, there are some Israeli Jews who oppose that for sure, and I know some of them, and they're very brave Jewish people for standing up against it. But so, in a way, I'm skeptical of this long term, which ties into your third question about Trump's so-called vision.

Well, Trump's so-called vision was basically drafted by the Israelis. There were no Palestinians involved in that so-called peace plan. One of the proposals is having Tony Blair, and I'm sure most of you know who Tony Blair is, but just briefly, the former British Prime Minister should be in The Hague also for war crimes and the wars of illegality against Iraq in 2003 and a host of other issues. The idea that someone like him and Trump will lead some transitional institution is, I mean, baffling is polite in the extreme. You know, the concern that many people have, and I share this, is that Trump doesn't really have an interest in long-term Palestinian self-determination, whatever that might look like – Palestinian state, one state, which is my personal preference – whatever the arrangement will be, his desire, I would argue, is to say on social media, I solved this problem, no other president could do it, give me the Nobel Peace Prize, I'm moving on to my next issue. I mean, that's Trump. Trump has no real understanding of the conflict. He likes a headline.

And yes, it's fair to say that Trump has put more pressure on Israel than Biden ever did, and that's not something to be ignored. The vast bulk of the genocide happened during Joe Biden's presidency, not Trump. Trump obviously has supported Israel for the last nine, ten months, to be sure, since he took office. But so the broader picture of a new form of colonialism in Gaza and the West Bank that I fear is likely to emerge should worry us. What things will look like in three, five, six, ten years, when what's happening in the West Bank very briefly, which gets far less attention, is in some ways the increasing Gazification of the West Bank. Huge numbers of Palestinians and Bedouins have been displaced. There's been a growing collusion between Israeli soldiers and settlers, massive, crazy, extreme violence. So there's no real indication the US opposes any of that, frankly. So I'm skeptical. But in the short, short term, let's end the madness in Gaza, and then tomorrow we deal with the next issue, right?

**ZR:** And do you think Israel can be trusted?

**AL:** No.

**ZR:** I mean, the only political leverage that Hamas has, after all, is these hostages, right? And there are many sticking points, for example, as far as I've read that Hamas is willing to give up authority with the Gaza Strip. But their sticking point is disarmament, not just for Hamas but across the spectrum for all armed resistance. And as you and I know, that is enshrined into national law when there's an occupying force. So do you think this peace can hold or do you think Israel is just waiting to get the hostages out so it can quell the political domestic dissent that's been taking place for years I would say, and then just move on to what Benjamin Netanyahu himself has stated a vision of Greater Israel?

**AL:** I mean this really depends on what pressure other countries will put on Israel if they state or choose to do so. And I say other countries, of course, the US is key here, as are the Arab countries that have been involved in this, Qatar, Egypt, Jordan, etc., Saudi Arabia. Now, my sense is that Trump will not necessarily want to have the war restarted next week. The Israeli hostages will be released, we think early next week. And I read a statement that was given by Hamas to Drop Site News, the US outlet, which basically said, and I'm

paraphrasing, we've put our trust in Trump. Now if Trump screws us, namely we're relying on Trump's promise that we will not allow Israel to restart the war once the hostages are released, then we're gonna look like fools. Now I mean they're right. At the same time, at this point, Hamas didn't have much option. Honestly, what was the alternative at this point? Could they have continued the war? I mean they could have. But toward the end? It's a guerrilla war now, it's an insurgency. And it's a war that Israel will never win, clearly. Western states rarely, if ever, beat insurgency from Vietnam to Iraq to Afghanistan. And I mean the ultimate question, of course, therefore, is what sort of – I mean, there are so many unknowns. I mean, you know, what happens to rebuilding, what happens to people's freedom of movement, what happens to the Israeli desire to still depopulate the territory to have settlements. I don't think you're gonna have settlements next week. But as I said before, what people in the West I think are wanting to ignore is the key fact that there is a sizable proportion of the Israeli Jewish population, arguably a majority, who actually don't want Palestinians there at all. Including in Israel.

And I think that genocidal intent is really something that is not fully understood in the West. That there is a real willful misunderstanding, and just to be clear, I'm not suggesting every Israeli Jew is genocidal, of course that's not true, but this is not an opinion. It's literally Israelis being polled for years, especially in the last six, twelve months, as I said, a majority support ethnic cleansing in Gaza. A majority support starvation. I mean, these facts speak for themselves. This is not a handful of crazy right-wingers. And that sentiment is very deep in Israel. October 7th was undeniably a trauma for the Israelis, and I understand that. But ultimately, it's pretty hard to see that sense of desire to remove Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza permanently in some way, without massive international pressure to intervene, is really one of the outlying issues here that is far from resolved. And I worry about that because I fear that the US under Trump doesn't really care if Palestinians are there. He will be told to care by his Egyptian, Qatari, Saudi friends.

But just finally, the broader question, of course, is what the Arab dictators want, their vision, frankly, should be unacceptable to anybody. When I say their vision, the vision for the region is basically dictatorships. US-backed dictatorships with no freedom of speech, no freedom of movement, and no democracy. Whatever that might look like. Now, Trump loves money and loves rich Arabs, apparently, and he is good friends with the Saudis and the Qatars and the Egyptians and the Jordanians. None of whom have any interest in true democracy because it threatens their interests, and Israel is of course very happy about that. So their broader so-called vision, and of course, this goes to the heart of why so many Arab states have spent years buying all this Israeli surveillance tech because they fear their own people – they fear their own people. They're fearful of Arab Spring 2.0. Now, Arab Spring clearly was an amazing event, which, if you look now 15 or so years on, didn't succeed. I mean, I don't think one can look at it any other way. I mean, the Egyptian regime is arguably more repressive now than it was during the Mubarak era. This is not to belittle the people, millions of Arabs who protested, not at all. But politically where we're at today in the countries where regimes were overthrown, Egypt, Tunisia, etc., is arguably no better than it was in 2011. And the sense that that is the so-called Israeli American vision for the region, indefinite permanent

autocracy, is not something I think that the majority of Arabs will accept in the long term, and nor should they.

**ZR:** I want to switch to discussion to Germany and Israel relations, but let me first recap some of the latest developments for our viewers. While several Western nations, including France, the UK and Canada recently recognized Palestine as a state, Germany refused to do so. Germany's foreign minister Johann Wadephul on the 22nd of September, during a press encounter in New York around the UN General Assembly, stated, and let me cite him here, quote, "The recognition of a Palestinian state comes more at the end of a process, but such a process must begin now", unquote. Berlin continues to withhold formal recognition, maintaining that Palestinian statehood should emerge through negotiations rather than what it calls the UN General Assembly recognition and all of that unilateral moves. At the same time, according to an October 1st Haaretz report, based on a parliamentary inquiry by the Linke, the left of Germany, Germany has approved arms exports to Israel worth at least €2.46 million, even though it imposed a partial export halt in August. The shipments involved, quote, "other military goods", unquote, according to the Ministry for Economic Affairs, and did not include weapons of war. Chancellor Friedrich Merz had ordered the partial suspension on August 8th in response to Israel's intensifying military operations in Gaza that have devastated civilian life. More recently, Germany also expressed support for what we discussed before, Donald Trump's new peace plan for Gaza, with the German Chancellor stating that it is welcoming the initiative and pledging Germany's readiness to contribute politically and financially to its implementation. You released a documentary in 2025 titled *Germany's Israel Obsession*, in which you critically examine this relationship. Could you begin by introducing your documentary, what drove you to make it, and then talk about what you were able to uncover that could help make our viewers understand Germany's position towards Israel better?

**AL:** So I am a German citizen. I'm an Australian citizen and I'm also Jewish. And I live in Australia at the moment, but I've certainly, as I said, I have a German passport, so I'm a citizen. And the reason I wanted to make this film, I made it with a team in the UK, which is on Al Jazeera, people can find it on YouTube easily, that Germany, because of its history, because of the Nazi era, because of the Holocaust, because of its hatred, at the time during the 1933-1945, of Jews, sees itself across much of the political spectrum and much of the mainstream media spectrum of having a particular responsibility to support what they claim is Jews and therefore Israel. And on the one hand, I have no issue with Germany learning from its own history. That to me is a thoroughly good thing. I have no problem with that, as any good nation should. However, and it's a very important however, how it manifests itself in the modern era, particularly since October 7th, although this was happening long before then, is a not just a blind support for Israeli actions, despite, as you say, the occasional sort of cutting or suspending of certain military exports to Israel. It is an unwillingness and inability to really seriously question what Israel is doing. Because they fear that they are the worst country to come out and say, Why are you occupying Palestinians? Why are you killing Palestinians in Gaza? Because Israel will come back as they have done in the past and say, No, no, no, no, sorry, Germany, you have no right to criticize us because of what you did

to our ancestors. And much of the German political and media elite have frankly accepted that rationale. Now what the film tries to do by speaking to a range of people from Palestinians in Germany, to more pro Israel types, to the AFD aligned people, which is of course, as viewers will be aware, is the largest opposition party now. It's polling is about 27%. If there was an election in Germany today, I think they'd have a pretty decent chance of winning, and there is not gonna be an election for many years now, probably. And I think that really goes to the heart of what this blind support for Israel is creating in Germany is the support and acceleration of that far right movement. And one of the things that we talk about in the film, and it's something I've discussed elsewhere as well, and this might make sense to people watching this interview, but so much of the global far right now, which traditionally has been anti-Semitic, racist, fascist, now says that they're pro-Israel. They love Israel. They love the Israeli government, they love Israeli actions in Gaza. And what we say in the film is, and there are various people who say this in various words, is Israel is like the washing machine for the global far right.

Now, what that means is that if you're the AFD with scandal after scandal in the last ten years of this member being anti-Semitic and this member praising the Nazis, and you have a bit of a PR problem, you might say. But how do you get around that? You say we love Israel. We love Israel. We go to Israel, we embrace Netanyahu, and you see this in country after country after country, because what the AFD in Germany and other far right parties are doing, they see Israel as a model. They don't want to be a Jewish state, they want to be a Christian, ethno-nationalist state where Christians are given far more benefits than anybody else. They hate Muslims, they hate Muslim migration, they hate diversity, they hate multiculturalism, they hate gay rights, the list goes on and on and on. And that's bad enough. But what is equally disturbing is that Israel in the last years is openly embracing that far right movement. So you have in the last years the Israeli government inviting far right leaders from across Europe to come to Israel for conferences.

You have, for example, the Israeli government inviting last week Tommy Robinson, one of the most notorious far right leaders in the UK, to visit Israel next week on a so-called solidarity mission. This is a man who loathes Islam. And that growing alliance between Israel and the global far right, including in Germany, should worry any of us who are saying supporter belief in multicultural society, whether we're Jewish, Christian, Muslim, atheist, whatever you may be. So the film is partly about my own history and story, although, I'm in the film, I mean I'm the investigative journalist, but the film is not principally about me, it mentions my story a little bit at the beginning, but I see the film as a warning.

And it's interesting, growing numbers of Germans, according to public opinion polls, are almost split. On the one hand, they don't want Germany to send weapons to Israel, according to polling, they want the war in Gaza to end, at the same time, there is a growing sense, and we have someone in the film, Deborah Feldman, who was born in the US as an Orthodox Jewish woman, comes to Germany, was featured in the book she wrote in the Netflix series *Unorthodox*, where she basically lets go of her ultraorthodox life and embraces a more I guess liberal existence, she says, and this was one of the most moving parts in the film, that

there is a real deep Islamophobic and anti-Semitic heart of many Germans. I am not saying all Germans, of course. I guess what basically we're saying is that the ugly ghosts of World War II have not been settled, is what that means. That the racism you see in Germany, principally against Muslims, of course, not against Jews, and we have in the film, for example, scenes that we filmed of the most extreme police violence at peaceful pro-Palestine protests in Berlin. I've been to lots of protests around the world, never seen in a so-called democracy, I should say, that kind of extreme violence against peaceful protesters. I mean, it's completely insane and counterproductive.

So I see Germany in 2025 as a deeply conflicted, morally confused country. Yes, economically in trouble too, but by its actions in relation to Israel and Muslim migration particularly, they are going down a not inevitable but likely path of a far right government. And the far right government means, as the AFD have openly said, they will forcibly remove a lot of Muslims who have come to Germany legally in the last years. And I suspect it won't end there. So there's a lot more to say about it, I'd encourage people to go and watch it. It's available for free on YouTube for Al Jazeera and yeah, the film is supposed to disturb you.

**ZR:** Your documentary which is on YouTube, how Germany's fight against anti-Semitism is empowering the far right, you've already told us this relationship that is developing and why it is developing. But I'm also interested in your past and history. I think our viewers would agree they would like to get to know you more because the description of the film says, as you've mentioned, that you were granted citizenship in 2011 and much of your family, ancestral family, was killed by Germany during the era of fascism. Could you share something about that with our viewers? And secondly, you already mentioned this, but could you give us some notable examples or about the tactics and methods that the German government has employed to discourage any dissent against Israel?

**AL:** So my family originally came on my father's side from Germany, they were from Dresden and they were part of German society. One of my ancestors fought on the German side in World War One, of course they were Jewish. 1933 happens, the Nazis come to power, and I think for many German Jews, they could not believe that after they had themselves embraced German society for so long, they weren't denying anti-Semitism existed in Germany, of course it did. The idea that a German government and German people would turn against them so much was seen as inconceivable. Now, of course, when many German Jews realized this, where it was going, likely to go, it was too late to get out. So most of my family were trapped and they were killed by the Nazis, sometimes in concentration camps, including Auschwitz. My grandparents escaped in 1939, and the short version is that when these German Jews left, Germany said they were non-citizens, they were no longer German, which of course was nonsense, but the German government did not recognize them as German citizens. The war ends. Germany is trying to make amends to atone essentially for its crimes. And in the 1950s, they said, if you're a relation of these Jews who we said were non-citizens, you can have your citizenship reinstated.

Basically, for roughly 50 years, Jews around the world said, thank you, but no thank you. We have no interest; including my family felt this way. Why would we want to be Germans? I

didn't feel this way, by the way, but my father and grandfather did. Why do we want to be German citizens after what you did to us? Which makes sense, I understood that. But in the last 25 years or so, there's been a real sea change in that thinking. Not because I or anyone else have suddenly embraced Germany or embraced the German government, not at all. But the idea of saying, well, this was taken away from my family, citizenship, I have the right to be a citizen. I don't want to live in Germany right now. I don't feel particularly German per se. But I think as a German and a Jew, it's one way that Germany can atone for its past. So that's part of it. The second part of your question really is what has the German state been doing? Well, where to begin? I mean people who go to a protest and say: from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free, can be charged in a court of law in Germany. People who make a comparison between the Nazi Holocaust and the genocide in Gaza can be put on trial in Germany. Why? Because how dare you compare the two?

Now, I can't speak for the Germans who made those comparisons. To me, they're not exactly the same. Of course, no two genocides ever are. The German genocide is different to the Israeli genocide. But there are parallels. I think that to me is undeniable. There have been lots of activists, mostly Palestinian and Arabs, who've had their houses raided for tweets, not tweets calling for violence, by the way, not tweets calling for anyone to be hurt, simply saying free Palestine or end the war in Gaza. You have lots of Jews who hold signs saying end the genocide. We have a character in the film who goes to protests. She's an Israeli-born now German citizen, anti-Zionist, who says that Israel should stop the genocide in Gaza and that Germany should not support Israel. And for that, she has been arrested multiple times. Now, there are a lot of countries in the last two years since October 7th that have tried to crack down massively on legitimate democratic free speech around Israel and Palestine. That's true. But the idea somehow that a German state to me has learnt very little from its own past in the deluded belief that by cracking down on people who are peacefully protesting, and let's be clear, what they're mostly protesting about, yes, is German actions to be sure, but it's Israel. It's not Germany, it's another country. I mean, I think a lot of people in the wider society, I hear this all the time, say, why are all these countries, the US, the UK, Germany, Australia, spending so much political and police capital in trying to crush legitimate criticism of another country, Israel?

And I often get the question why? Why is this happening? Well, if there's a war going on in, as there is, Sudan, a genocide in fact in Sudan, Myanmar, Ethiopia, you don't have the British police going after protesters who are against the genocide in Sudan. There are protests in London, they happen, the end. It's particularly Israel. Particularly about Israel. And I think a lot of that is to do with the fact that Israel has occupied this very unique space in the Western colonial imagination. Yes, since 1948 when Israel was founded, but particularly in the modern age, that in some ways I see it as, and this is mostly settler colonial countries themselves: Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the US, and some nations in Europe as well, I mean, obviously Germany was a horrible colonial power not that long ago historically, as was Belgium, as was Holland, that they almost see themselves weirdly reflected in Israel. That they almost somehow, and I might say they, I'm not talking about all the people in those countries, but often the political elites, the media elites, see themselves somehow as I think I

see it as admiration, actually. I see it as a real deluded admiration for Israeli actions, and of course, as finally it comes down to profound racism against Arabs and Muslims. I mean, there's no other way to view that. I mean, as I often say, if any country or political movement or terrorist group had killed 60,000 Jews, 70,000 Jews in the last two years, which God forbid that ever happens, of course, it wouldn't have ever happened. It just would not happen. Because if there was an attempt to do so by Hamas or God knows who, there would have been Western military intervention. It just wouldn't have happened, right?

So, and yet it's somehow seen as an acceptable price of war, to kill 70, 80, 90, God knows how many thousand Palestinians in Gaza, because as I often say, and I say this as a Jew myself, Jewish life is seen as more precious. I mean, this is the heart of the Western crisis. That one in the many in the West do not see Arab, Palestinian, Muslim, Brown or Black bodies as equal to white. They just don't. And that's been the case in Palestine and Iraq and Afghanistan and Syria and Libya. The list goes on. And that's something that sane people in the West should oppose as strongly as possible. It's utterly outrageous. And that problem is getting worse, not better.

**ZR:** Antony Loewenstein, award-winning author and journalist. Thank you so much for your time. I look forward to having you back on and discussing your other documentaries, for example, *The Palestine Laboratory*, as well as a lot of issues surrounding this. So thank you for your time today.

**AL:** I really appreciate it. Thank you.

**ZR:** Thank you for tuning in today. If you like the journalism that we undertook in this video and would like us to continue going forward, then make sure to donate today. We're an independent and non-profit media organization that does not take any money from corporations or governments, all with the goal of providing you with information that is free from external influence. Hence, we only depend on your donation to continue with our journalism. I thank you for your support and for tuning in today. I'm your host, Zain Raza. See you next time.

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