

Civil Death: How a Journalist Is Being Shut Down in Germany

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Chris Hedges (CH): The German journalist, Hüseyin Dođru, because of his reporting on the genocide in Gaza, has been hit with draconian sanctions. Since May 2025, he has been banned from leaving Germany or re-entering if he somehow managed to leave. He has been forced to surrender his identity card. His bank account has been frozen. He is prohibited from working, although he is allowed 506 euros per month to survive. The German Bundestag passed legislation targeting anyone, directly or indirectly, who provides money or other resources to a person on sanctions list. Offenses are punishable with up to five years imprisonment. And because these sanctions are defined as an administrative measure within the EU's bureaucracy, he cannot appeal to a German court. This imposition of civil death is a familiar tactic used to cripple and silence dissidents – it was used against Paul Robeson and Julian Assange. It has been used against Francesca Albanese, the UN Special Rapporteur in Palestine, and the two international criminal court judges who issued arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, also locked out of the global financial system.

Dođru founded Red. Media in early 2023, the left-wing English language video portal focused on the genocide in Gaza, and the Palestinian Solidarity Movement in Germany. In perhaps one of the most bizarre twists to this story, the European Union charges that his reporting supports quote, "actions by the government of the Russian Federation which undermine or threaten stability and security in the Union". Think about this: reporting on the genocide in Gaza undermines the war effort against Russia. Dođru's name was included in the EU's 17 package of sanctions against Russia. No mainstream newspaper or broadcaster in Germany has reported on his case. Dođru believes this silence is due to journalists and news organizations fearing they may too be sanctioned. Sanctions have also been applied to Thomas Röper and Alina Lipp, who are German journalists but based in Russia, and Nathalie Yamb, a Cameroonian-Swiss activist noted for her opposition to French influence in West Africa, along with Jacques Baud, a former Swiss Army colonel whose reports on the debacle in Ukraine have angered NATO and European states. Joining me to talk about his civil death

and what this means for journalism, especially those journalists who report on the genocide, is Hüseyin Dođru. Let's go all the way back to the inception of the genocide shortly after October 7th, and if you can describe the kinds of things you were reporting and putting out in your portal.

Hüseyin Dođru (HD): Hello, Chris, thank you for having me here. So yeah, as you mentioned, we founded 2023, Red Media. I was its founder. And we have an understanding of an anti-imperialist, socialist news outlet that is trying to highlight people's struggle around the world, especially from the global South against Western imperialism and exploitation. So until October 7th, we focused internationally about struggles in Latin America, in Asia, in Europe but also from the African continent and the Middle East. And with October 7th our focus was not only but mainly on the Middle East and Palestine and the slowly unfolding, at the beginning, war crimes which turned into a genocide later. So we focused heavily on that and about pro-Palestinian anti-genocide protests across the world in Europe or in the US, as well as in the Middle East. That was our primary focus.

At the same time, we also managed to do a couple of documentaries from Palestine as well, as well as from the African continent, which focus and highlight exploitation, which highlight war crimes, which also highlight human stories of people, as I mentioned at the beginning, fighting these injustices in their way. With time, we also tried to talk with the political actors in the Middle East who are part of this war, especially with the axis of resistance groups – such as the Palestinian resistance groups, with the Houthis, Ansarallah and Hezbollah as well – to give a different perspective on the events that are unfolding and also trying to break that one-sided news coverage on the genocide which is still dominating here in Europe primarily from the perspective of the Zionist entity in the Middle East. And we wanted to break that a little bit because we thought and we understood that these people who are opposing it, opposing the resistance in Palestine, partially do oppose it because they are not exposed to their version of the events and not the historical context of it. And that was our aim.

CH: And when was the first indication that you were running into serious problems? Didn't you interview Nasrallah, the head of Hezbollah and a few other figures? Do you think it was that? I mean, when did you first sense that you were in pretty serious trouble?

HD: So that was pre-sanctions. So what happened is with October 7th in our unique coverage that we had internationally, we gained a lot of followers, we gained a lot of viewers – I think in January of 2024 until mid-September 2024, we had almost half a billion views, which was enormous. And I think that triggered something because we managed to break that image and the view on the Western countries in terms of their complicity in the genocide, but also the repression against pro-Palestine activism. Because especially in Germany, we saw that – I mean, maybe you could follow that as well, and most of the people forget that – that after October 7th, how the repressions looked like on the streets here in Germany. People were battered, bones were broken. Speaking Arabic was even forbidden in Berlin for a while, even, I think, Hebrew for anti-Zionist Jews, it was obviously forbidden to talk even Hebrew or Irish. So the repression was heavy.

And with our coverage, that unique coverage that we're trying to give here, also from the Middle East with these interviews and insights, we got the attention of the mainstream media in Germany, who started directly writing articles about like who is "spreading these Jew hate videos", who is supporting these "terrorist supporters" here in Germany and Europe as well. And they started to look into us and found at some point that I, the founder of Red Media, worked in the past for Redfish, which was funded by Ruptly, connected to RT back then. And they started that propaganda of, oh, "Hüseyin Doğru worked at Redfish, now he's doing Red Media, it must be the same". And specific right-wing pro-Zionist journalists started to create a theory of a communist Kremlin Jew-hater triangle conspiracy – that we are behind all these demonstrations, that we're provoking these things.

And this disinformation and campaign against us from the German mainstream media ended up in – I think it was 14th or 16th of September, 2024, when Anthony Blinken back then, the second most powerful person in the world, so to speak, was giving us a press conference in the UK, I think, and he then mentioned us for the first time. And he said Red Media is a covert operation of Russian disinformation, according to the German newspapers. But the German newspaper has never said it is like that, they always said it could be like that. So it was an assumption at the beginning. And then Blinken talked about it. The question is also how the German newspapers' coverage ended up on his desk because the German newspapers are internationally not really relevant.

And then what the German newspapers did: first, there was an allegation from their side. Blinken talked and out of that allegation, they made a fact. They said Red Media is Russian – because Blinken said so. But what they never said is "Blinken is referring to our articles where we never say it is like that, there is just a suspicion it might be". So after Blinken talked about us publicly – I think there was also another outlet – we understood things were getting quite serious, that the entire campaign against Red Media from the German mainstream ended up on his desk and he's publicly speaking. And we anticipated that something will come, repression will come – maybe raiding the apartments or blocking the social media accounts which did not happen. But at some point, the next year, 2025, May 20th, we were sanctioned by the European Union.

CH: The whole media organization was sanctioned?

HD: Me and my media organization, Red Media, both. I mean me, as a founder, I was sanctioned because I was accused of spreading false information, disinformation and terrorist propaganda through my media outlet, Red Media. And that was the reason why they put us on the sanction list.

CH: So did that shut down your media operation in essence?

HD: No, what happened before – and I think that's the irony there, not the irony, but the scary part technically – because we understood there is something coming from the German

government, European governments, and we saw what happened when the war in Ukraine started, that everything was banned in Germany, people lost their jobs also after October 7th, a lot of academics, journalists, they got publicly attacked by newspapers. Even German journalists called their employees and told them: do you know they're participating in pro-Palestinian demonstrations? Because of that, people lost their jobs here. And we're not just talking about social workers here, we're talking about professors, journalists, doctors, lawyers – everyone. We understood it was going into a dark direction. So one or two weeks before the sanctions, we decided to shut down Red Media. And that was before the sanctions, without us even knowing that there would be something like sanctions, because we also got threats, threats against our colleagues, they were threatened, there was a social media campaign against people. And then we decided it is not worth the risk, especially being me personally, partially being in Germany, but other people being in Europe in other countries, and that was the reason why we shut down Red Media. We announced it publicly. And then the European Union, I think one or two weeks later, sanctioned me and Red Media, even though there was no Red Media anymore. So that's the funny or scary part even – that they come after you even if you don't do what they allege you to do. Yeah, that happened then on the 20th of May.

CH: Before we get into your sanctions and what they've done to your personal and professional life, just explain why Germany is such a fervent supporter of the Zionist state, of an apartheid regime, of the genocide. From a distance – certainly not because anti-racism runs through German blood.

HD: No, clearly not, because if you look at statistics, if you look at what the German Chancellor has said since one or two years, it's quite racist remarks publicly against migrants. So there is this rumor, and that's what the German politicians constantly repeat, that they have a historical responsibility towards the Jewish people and the state of Israel because of what they did. And they have this nice slogan: "Never again is now". But I don't believe that Germany is supporting the Zionist entity because of the historical responsibility towards Jewish people – because if they really would have that historical responsibility against the crimes that they committed, they would show the same historical responsibility and support for the people of Namibia, which they slaughtered back in the days, and still until today refuse to pay compensations to. They would have the same support against the people of Crete which fascist Germany invaded and massacred. And until today they refuse to pay compensation or even support them. The funny thing about that is that in Crete, the German government is still funding up today a memorial or an area where former Nazi soldiers are buried and they're paying until today with German taxes, the tombs of fascist people, the area where they are buried. I mean, this is not historical responsibility.

I think what we need to understand is, in general, in which political-economical context the support for Israel or the support for genocide is happening: Germany's economy is declining. That is a fact. Germany missed the technological update of their economy, of their industry. They missed the entire AI developments. The heart of their industry, which is car manufacturing, is crashing down. They're losing against the US. They're losing against the

Chinese. I think in that context, Germany is trying to find their own place in a changing world, in the multi-polar world that we have. And German imperialism is trying to be the leading force in Europe as well. I think that's also why they're pushing quite hard when it comes to Ukraine. And that's why they are pushing also in the Middle East, because if you look at who is benefiting in Germany from the genocide in Palestine, is the German military-industrial complex, is Rheinmetall. Germany is still selling weapons there. Germany sold weapons to Saudi Arabia. Germany sold the weapons to Turkey, which was used against the Kurds in the Middle East, in Syria. And now this is the same happening also with Palestine.

And the other thing is, I think, that Germany is trying to survive politically and economically. I mean, you heard as well what Von der Leyen said a couple of months ago, I think, where she said that the car manufacturing should be reorganized so they can be part of producing tanks or weapons. And this is exactly what they want here as well. I think it was Volkswagen who's now thinking as well to produce for the military-industrial complex. And Germany is playing a crucial role there, to redesign Europe militarily, to spend more money for militarization. Now they want to invest 500 billion euros in the next couple of years. There is also militarization of the society happening. And I think this is all part of that. And even for them and for their technology, Gaza and the genocide is also a good opportunity to test their weapons and then later go on – I hope not – against Russia or other places in the world, because German imperialism is waking up again and they want to be the dominant power in Europe and I think they're trying to find their place in the world. And we know how it ended the last time when German imperialism got militarized and expanded in the world.

CH: So you're sanctioned. When did you find out that you were sanctioned? How did you find out you were sanctioned and I assume you were immediately cut off? You couldn't go down to your ATM and get money or anything?

HD: So I was sanctioned on 20th of May 2025. This is very important: when you're sanctioned, you are not informed. No one is informing you. No one informs you beforehand or the day when you're sanctioned. It is up to you to find out that you are sanctioned. So that's the first problematic part. Because once you're sanctioned, and until you find out that you are sanctioned, you could circumvent sanctions. That's a criminal offense. So you can get in Germany, I think, now up to five or ten years of prison time and 50,000 euros. Don't nail me on the number. So how did we find out? The day when I was sanctioned, me and my wife, my wife was pregnant back then, we went to the pharmacy to buy some medicine for her and her cards did not work. No credit cards, nothing. And then we said maybe there is a glitch and then I tried my card. It did not work either. And then we called the bank and the bank said, we can't tell you. Yeah, they said: we can tell you, please write us an email and a letter.

And later the day when we were at home, obviously, we're journalists, so we're looking at the news, the new Russian sanction package, and then I found my name on that list. But the weird thing was – because I'm a German citizen, only a German citizen, no dual nationality – there was my name, my birthday, but it also said I was a Turkish citizen born in Turkey, with

a different address, which is not my address. So then we were curious, looked into it, read it, and it said Hüseyin Dođru, AFA Medya, Red Media, and we said, yeah, it must be me. But why is there such a mistake? Then we called our lawyer. The lawyers asked the EU council what is happening and why is it happening? Because when we found out that I'm sanctioned, we read the sanction reasoning.

And that is also a thing that I think is quite dangerous and shows where Europe in general is heading: it said I was sanctioned under the 17 Russian sanctions because of very deep financial and personal ties to the Russian state's propaganda apparatus. And then they tried to explain why that is so. And they gave, and it's still online that paper, three reasons: First one was that I interviewed Palestinian resistance groups which are, for them, spreading terrorist propaganda. The second reason was that I reported from a university occupation. The university here in Berlin, Humboldt University – it was Karl Marx's university by the way – was occupied by pro-Palestinian activists. And I was there, they invited me, they gave us information beforehand and I reported from there. And they said that I gave Jew-haters a platform to spread terrorist symbols. I think they mean the triangle, the red triangle, which is now forbidden in Germany. I think even the symbol of the watermelon in Germany is not allowed anymore. And the third reason was that I covered protests, demonstrations and violent demonstrations in Germany and in Europe. Therefore, I am apparently trying to create discord and destabilize Europe and therefore, only Russia can benefit from that. Which is a very hard thing to believe to have that formula and reason.

So this is how I found out that once you're sanctioned, your accounts are frozen immediately, but not only yours, also from your family. My wife's accounts were immediately frozen as well. Her savings are seized until today. They don't give back her savings. And since one week, almost two weeks, my mother's accounts have been frozen. So they start to target your family also, because there was a time, I think it was almost 10 days, two weeks where me, my wife, my two newborns and seven-year-old child, we had for 10 days or two weeks only 104 euros to survive. 104 euros. In a city like Berlin. So they really want to hurt you then and they really want to make you feel that they're coming for you and they also show you that it is not only the person who is sanctioned who is targeted the entire family is sanctioned. Because since then, I think it was this January, the German government created a new law: the sanctions implementation law, which is more repressive than the sanctions itself. The sanctions do allow support to my family. Or let's say they do not criminalize the support to my babies, to my children or to my wife. But the new German law criminalizes even in theory – they left that door open, because it's so vaguely written – that the support to my babies is criminalized. If you were to come now and say you have some nappies for my children, you could technically be charged with five years prison or a fine up to 50 000 euros. So they criminalize everything to isolate you.

And these are also sanctions, it is not only an asset freeze. And because I'm sanctioned, I'm not allowed to leave or enter Europe, that's what the sanctions say. But the problem lies that sanctions are designed for people outside of Europe. So they don't really know how that should function with me because I'm a European citizen and I'm living in Europe. So recently,

the German government said I am allowed to leave. But when the journalists asked the question if I would be allowed to enter again, they said that's "not our responsibility". And the journalists said "but he's a German citizen" and they replied "that's not our responsibility". So sanctions have a big effect, not only on the person but also the entire family.

CH: And of course you're not allowed to work.

HD: That's also something they don't know if I'm allowed to work or not. We applied for permission because I need to apply for everything for permission from the federal bank, the Bundesbank or BAFA, which is the customs – for everything. So I have 506 euros that I can use monthly for humanitarian reasons, which is not enough at all. For everything else I need to ask, even if I want to pay my rent, pay my lawyer, pay my bills, I need to ask them and they need to give me permission for that. And with work it's the same thing. There was a leftist anti-imperialist news outlet called Junge Welt, Young World – it's quite an old leftist newspaper in Germany – who wanted to employ me. They said, hey Hüseyin, we want to show solidarity, but we also want to employ you. And the German government couldn't tell us until today if I am allowed to work there or not. So everything is vague, they don't have the answers either because the sanctions violate European law. The sanctions violate European member states law because they're designed against people outside of Europe. So that is the limbo I am in right now.

CH: And your legal recourse, you don't have one inside Germany, as I understand it, but you technically can go to the European Union Court, is that correct?

HD: Yes, so first of all, I think people need to understand that sanctions are extra-judicial measures. They're extra-judicial. There's no court. There is no hearing. There is no evidence. There was no sentence by the court. Nothing. Just 27 foreign ministers of Europe come together and they just decide that they want to sanction these people. So that's the main problem. I need to fight something that is decided extra-judicially with judicial measures, which does not really work. So in Germany, I can't go to the courts because Germany says we are not responsible for that, you need to go to the European Union to the courts, which we are doing. We are at the European court, which is in Luxembourg right now, the one right before the European Court of Justice. And we are expecting a decision I think next month, in July or August.

But the problem is that I don't really have all the ways to properly defend myself because I technically can't or I'm not allowed to pay my lawyer. So everyone says you can have a lawyer, you can fight and challenge that in front of the courts, but I need to ask the German government if I can pay my lawyers. So they technically control how much access I have for my defense. Which makes it very hard for me to fight that. So they control the means and they say "we have nothing to do here in Germany with that". So right now we're waiting on them, we think it's going to be a negative decision by the European courts because it is a political decision. Sanctions are political. It has nothing to do with judicial process. And even the European Council's website says when they describe what sanctions are – and that's the

most frightening thing, I think that shows us European imperialism, maybe German imperialism because German imperialism is European imperialism, the dominant power here – and they say that sanctions are "not punitive". Sanctions are designed "to change the non-illegal behavior of the person to promote the foreign and security policy of the European Union". That's very important: "Non-illegal behavior" is sanctioned. So that means: if you do not think like us, if you do not promote our foreign policy or security policy, then we can sanction you. That's censorship by design. That's censorship. The Europeans love to say: look at the authoritarian system in Russia, look at the authoritarian system in Venezuela, in Cuba, in China, but as McNamara, I think it was, the Irish MEP said: By fighting disinformation, we're becoming that what we are supposedly fighting against. And that's the problem that I have. So yeah, let's see. I think the court decision will be in one to two months. And if it's negative, we are going to the European Court of Justice. Until then I'm sanctioned and that can still take a couple of years.

CH: How has this played out in your daily life?

HD: The daily life – technically, you live day by day because you can't plan further. We don't know if the next day the accounts are frozen again of my wife or the 506 euros that I have personally for humanitarian reasons are frozen again. We are facing a situation right now where the accounts of my wife could be frozen again at any time. And then it takes one or two weeks, maybe three weeks until we have access to more money – more than the 506 euros. And then you have problems. Why? You can't pay your rent, you can't pay for food. You can't pay for basic needs, not only for me but also for my family. And asking for someone else to do that is also not allowed. So that is the hardest part.

And what is also happening – if you don't have the means to survive or live, it isolates you as well, because people get scared. A lot of people in Germany, also journalists, who are writing me, neighbors, friends or whatsoever – they are in full solidarity with me on Whatsapp or Signal or private conversations, but they won't write something because they also don't know what these sanctions mean for them if they write something positively about me or write at all about me. But that is changing a little bit right now because the German mainstream is slowly looking into my case – but the more momentum I get, the more repression I face, also from the German newspapers.

What does it mean personally for me as well is that, for example, my trade union is attacking me. They made a comment and said, we do share the assessment of the foreign ministry; as long as the foreign ministry's assessment regarding Hüseyin Dođru does not change, our position will not change. That also shows how aligned the trade union, the newspapers are with the government line. So again, I'm going back to the example that I gave, that Germany is always pointing fingers to others but when it comes to press freedom and how everything is separated from each other, that the government does not control it – it feels like they do. Or at least they're all on the state line. And last but not least, what is also very hard for us is the fact that your children, even though they're little, they're being attacked. Their survival is being attacked and that scares you. You are on constant – I mean, we are not paranoid, but we are

like having the fear of being put in a situation where we can't feed our children at some point, because we lived through that 10 days, almost two weeks, and that is the most brutal thing right now that they did to us. And that scares you a lot because you're stuck here and you can't get out.

CH: What effect has this had on other independent media organizations that do the kind of work that Red Media did?

HD: I think what is happening – I don't know about media organizations, but journalists. Journalists in Europe, let's talk about Germany, with October 7th, a lot of journalists lost their jobs. Why? Because they criticized the Zionist entity, they criticized genocide, or they talked about the genocide. A lot of journalists lost their jobs. A lot of journalist organizations like Reporters Without Borders Germany made a report, I think in 2025, where they highlight how the news outlets pressure the journalists to report directly or not directly but on behalf of the Zionist entity and not to use certain words or certain phrases. And that is affecting their jobs. And journalists in Germany do have, maybe not everyone, but a big part of the journalists that I know, they just avoid talking about certain topics. And I think that is like sanctions as well. By going so hard after me here in Europe – because what separates me from Lipp, Röper, Jacques Baud, as well as Nathalie Yamb, is that they're outside of Europe. They can be sanctioned and they are sanctioned but they can still exist. They can't still earn money, they can still buy things. It was the same with Francesca Albanese as well – I don't say it is good, it is still a bad situation, but with me, I'm stuck in Europe as a European citizen. I'm technically in a prison right now. And what is happening to me and to my family, scares the people and journalists so much that they self-censor themselves. And I think that's also the aim. Now Europe does not have to sanction journalists anymore because they're scared.

And with the new laws coming in Germany especially, I mean, they're proposing a law where you can get up to five years of prison when you deny the right of existence of the Israeli state. So it is escalating. And I think what is happening right now is with the sanctions as well, they're testing. It is a test field right now: how far can they go? How far can they cut the rights of people, of press freedom, of freedom of speech? And they're adjusting and testing everything. But in certain countries, it's not at an EU level anymore. The countries themselves sanction people. In France, there is the unfortunately unknown case of an Iranian-French, I think he's a French citizen with an Iranian background, a journalist, Shahin Hazamy, who was sanctioned by the French government. His house was raided by anti-terror units because he was in Lebanon and reported from there. And the videos are even online, he published them, where his pregnant wife was smashed against the wall by anti-terror units, I think it was, and he publicized everything. So it is escalating and people get scared.

And that is the problem that sanctions do have, the problem that we have with the sanctions. I mean, yeah, I can be attacked, it is fine, but the entire society is being threatened as well. I mean, even the German foreign ministry spokesperson threatened journalists during the German press conference. He said, everyone who's threatening our information space will

face repression with sanctions. And he mentioned something very important – "information space". And I think that's the aim as well, the militarization of information. They want to control the information because sanctions do not say that you do or say something wrong, for them its important who says it, who is giving the information, who has the monopoly of information. And that scares.

CH: Great. Thanks, Hüseyin. I want to thank Max, Thomas, and Noel, who produced the show. You can find me at chrisedges.substack.com.

END

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