



Israel Is Turning Against Itself | Dr. Shir Hever

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Zain Raza (ZR): Thank you for tuning in today and welcome back to another episode of The Source. I'm your host Zain Raza. Today I'll be talking to independent economic researcher, author and journalist Dr. Shir Hever and provide you with a unique assessment on Israeli society and politics. But before I begin, I would like to remind you to subscribe to our YouTube channel by clicking on the subscription button below as well as like, share and comment on this video so you can boost the YouTube algorithm and help us reach a wider audience. Also, we wanted to inform you, since the start of the year, we have reached over two million people and won over 8,000 subscribers. However, our donations have not followed the same trend. Over the last few months, our donations have dropped dramatically. So if you're watching our content and have not donated recently, please make sure to do so. You will now see a PayPal QR-code appear on the screen. I would kindly ask you to click pause, scan it with the camera of your phone, and you will be able to donate to us without any hassle. I thank you for your support and generosity. Dr. Shir Hever, welcome back to the show.

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

ZR: Shir, I want to begin this interview with an analysis of Israeli society before we turn to the recent political developments. During the Israeli-Gaza hostage exchange, the last demonstrations inside Israel were often interpreted as evidence of a broader anti-war movement and opposition to the war in Gaza. But since the hostage issue ended, it appears that much of the opposition may have been directly, primarily, against Netanyahu's handling of the hostage crisis, rather than against the destruction and genocide taking place in Gaza. A survey commissioned by Penn State University sociologist Tamir Sorek and conducted by the Israeli polling company Geocartography in March 2025, among a representative sample of 1,500 Jewish Israelis, found that 82 % supported the forced expulsion of Gaza's population to other countries. 47 % even agreed that the Israeli army should act as the biblical Israelites were described as acting when they conquered Jericho and killed all its inhabitants. The survey was designed to estimate attitudes among the broader Jewish-Israeli population, but it does not represent Israeli society as a whole, as well as Jews across the globe.

[00:02:20] Separately, a survey conducted between the 17th and 22nd February, 2026 by Israel's Institute for National Security Studies among 951 Israeli adults, found that only 28 % supported a peace agreement with Saudi Arabia involving the establishment of a Palestinian state, while 47 % opposed it. This response was rated to reflect Israel's broader adult population. As someone who closely follows Israeli politics, society and the media, how would you describe the public sentiment today regarding the genocide in Gaza and how is this likely to influence the upcoming election?

SH: Well, if you'll allow me to start with a little bit of more technical scientific perspective – because you mentioned two specific polls, it's very important for the viewers to know that we are distinguishing between one poll that was done in the middle of the genocide before the ceasefire, a hostage exchange agreement, which turns out not to be a ceasefire at all or a one-sided ceasefire. The second one from this February is already in a different period of time. And if you look at other polls, especially related to the elections, then you see that these polls are getting a lot of attention in Israel because they seem to indicate that the Netanyahu government is coming to an end and the upcoming election will be his downfall.

Now, first of all, we have to say just from a sociological point of view, all of these polls that we're talking about are conducted only among the Jewish population of Israel. 22 % of the citizens of Israel are excluded from these polls because they are not Jews. So I mean, this is something that in Israel goes without saying, but in any other country is proof of Israel's apartheid society. So this is something that we need to bear in mind. And I also think that it's very interesting that you mentioned that in the poll that was from this February, most Israelis oppose the establishment of a Palestinian state, even if it means a normalization with Saudi Arabia, something that all Israelis want very much. But the ones who do want to have the Palestinian state or are willing to pay the price, plus the ones that are against it, are still not 100 %, which means there's a lot of people who didn't answer or who didn't decide. And I think this is a very important aspect that we have to understand about Israeli society, that opinions change very quickly and are very fickle.

If we're talking about the genocide itself, the atrocities committed in Gaza, the opinions about that did not change. The only thing that changed is that there is a very strong delusion where the vast majority of the Israeli public believe that the war has ended. They don't realize – or they do realize but they strongly try to convince themselves that they don't know these facts – that the number of Palestinian civilians who were murdered by Israeli forces after the so-called ceasefire from October last year is actually more than the number of Israelis who were murdered on October 7th. So I don't think anyone in Israel would call the October 7th attack on Israel an act of ceasefire. So let's put things in perspective.

So now we're talking about a society which is in a deep delusional state. And in this situation, let's talk about the opposition. Who are they and what do they actually want? So the leaders of the opposition are mostly generals – generals who have consistently supported the war in Gaza. They didn't say that they're supporting genocide. But very interestingly, the only Zionist Left party, the party that defines itself as Zionist Left, is headed by Yair Golan, a man

who I also met personally and I think is an interesting character if you want, we can get into more information about him in person. But he has actually commented at some point that the Israeli army is killing children as a hobby. And it was a critical comment – he said to criticize how many children Israel is killing in Gaza, and yet he didn't say that they should stop. This is, I think, the key.

You mentioned that the protests against the government were about how the Netanyahu government handled the issue of the hostages, which is true, but there's also another aspect, which is that this is a very illiberal government which is undermining the separation of powers between the judicial and the legislative and executive. And because of this, Israel is also experiencing a major economic crisis and a major diplomatic crisis with the West because it doesn't even offer a facade, a mask of liberalism and democracy anymore. And because of this, the liberal Zionists – here I'm making a distinction between the left Zionists and the liberal Zionists – the liberal Zionist are panicking that Israel will no longer be considered a Western society at all. And so that's their main reason to protest. But again, this is not about Palestinians. And Palestinians are usually excluded completely from these protests. They're not allowed to participate. If somebody tries to bring a Palestinian flag, they would be physically attacked. So these are where the protesters are coming from.

And I've been following the trial against Netanyahu very closely, which I think a lot of people in the opposition hang very high hopes that Netanyahu will be convicted and then they will win. I think this is complete science fiction. It's not going to happen. But it is very interesting that in all of those forces in Israel that are hoping to get rid of Netanyahu by getting him convicted in a corruption case – so they're not saying, we don't want to have a corrupt prime minister. Of course they don't, but there were other corrupt prime ministers in Israel and even one of them was in prison. They're saying through the corruption case, we have hope that we can get rid of Netanyahu because he is such a populist and he's so dangerous and he is undermining society and creating divisions and so on, so we're using this opportunity of the corruption trial against him.

But I have a question: why are you not using an even more powerful opportunity that you have, an option to get rid of Netanyahu, if you're really serious about it, which is to extradite him to the International Court of Justice? There is an arrest warrant. And Netanyahu was a fugitive from justice. Now, this is something that you don't even see in the Israeli newspapers. Maybe in Haaretz, which is this liberal newspaper, you can sometimes see somebody mentioning offhand that there is an arrest warrant against Netanyahu. It was again in the headlines a little bit because Mamdani in New York wanted to find some way to arrest Netanyahu and it didn't work out. But this is something that they don't do.

And it really reminds me of a conversation I once had with the ambassador of Sudan. And I'm not going to say which ambassador to not expose his identity. But it was shortly after the revolution in Sudan when Omar al-Bashir was taken down from power and he was in house arrest at the moment, and the new interim government was trying to create some kind of democratic process in Sudan. Unfortunately, this tragically failed miserably, and Sudan is in

civil war and genocide. But this ambassador, at the time, when there was still a lot of hope, we had a conversation and I asked him, why are you not extraditing Omar al-Bashir to the International Criminal Court? There's an arrest warrant and you could get rid of him. And he said, I actually think we should, but it's not going to happen because he didn't commit the genocide on his own. He didn't commit all these crimes on his own. All of these generals that work with him are still very powerful men. And they know that if he gets arrested, he will start talking. And I think this is the real big elephant in the room, what Israelis are really afraid of. They cannot extradite Netanyahu and because they then the truth will come out.

And for exactly this reason that they cannot extradite Netanyahu – I'm going to tell you something more – they are going to vote for Netanyahu because they need him as an alibi. Even those who are protesting against them and saying Netanyahu is destroying the country. Many of them will think a little bit what it would mean if Netanyahu is replaced by one of those generals. And this general – what will they do? Allow journalists into Gaza and then the whole world will know what Israel did? What will they do? Will they allow Hamas to be in power or go to another war to prevent it? And then it's exactly the same? So it's actually better to have somebody like Netanyahu because he constantly lies. And then everyone can just pretend as if they believe his lies and then just close their eyes and not look at reality.

ZR: Let's continue with some more polling to gain an even more deeper understanding of Israeli society, especially towards its regional war, in particular Iran. Two weeks into the 2026 war against Iran, a survey published by Israel's Institute for National Security Studies on 19th March found that 78.5 % of the Israeli public supported the Israeli-US attack. However, a later survey conducted by the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in collaboration with the Agam Institute between the 17th and 20th of June, 2026, asked respondents two separate questions: one on the outcome of the war – 92 % said Iran had emerged as the winner, and in a separate question about Israel's security, 82.9 % said the war had weakened Israel's long-term security. The survey questioned around 3,644 Israelis aged 17 and over. The responses were weighted to reflect the broader population, and the researchers reported a maximum sampling error of 2.2 % at a 99 % confidence level. Do these findings suggest that Israeli public opinion about the war against Iran changed significantly over time and they kind of realized their mistake? And how are these wars, the aftermath with Iran and Lebanon, affecting people's everyday life in terms of economic security, employment, cost of living, etc.?

SH: Well, just to clarify at the beginning, I'm not an expert on Iran. I don't agree with the assessment that Iran won, because I think the living conditions of people in Iran are very bad, and my friends from Iran are really concerned – this doesn't feel like victory to them, of course. But from the point of view of the Israelis, absolutely, the geopolitics of the situation do seem to indicate that Israel has lost a lot of its influence and a lot of its freedom to act in the region and that Trump is no longer doing Netanyahu's bidding so easily as before. There's already a clearer indication that the US political system is shifting away from the idea of sending weapons to Israel as they have in the past, and the new budget that was just approved in the United States is a budget that actually redefines the military relations with Israel, not so

much sending weapons to support Israel, but more incorporating Israel as part of the US empire in a way that actually undermines Israeli sovereignty. So, that's at least from the Israeli perspective, just to look at it from that point.

But when you say there is a discrepancy between how Israelis respond when the war is still being fought and the missiles are falling and how they speak afterwards, and this you can say about every war in Israel's history. This is always like this. And there is this moment of mobilization. There's also fear, but there's a deep psychological need by people to justify the war. And they say there was no choice – if we didn't do it, then Iran would throw a nuclear bomb on us and kill all of us. So they have to do it, because the alternative is to just give up on all of your upbringing, in all your education, how you grew up to believe in the values of Zionism and so on, like, what does it mean that the government is sending our children to fight pointless wars just to win the next election? The consequences are monstrous when you think about them. So it's much easier to say, well, the government knows something and they have a plan and surely the Air Force will defeat Iran and it will all be wonderful. And then the consequences are never so rosy. The consequences are always something different and there's always disappointment. And this is the rhythm that always repeats itself. There is no way, of course, for the Israelis to truly come to grips with this disappointment and say, actually, the government lied to us, so we are not going to the army anymore. We're going to change the regime. They cannot say that because then the whole settler colony will no longer be a settler's colony. So they have to find some new excuse. Netanyahu knows this. So in the attack on Iran in June last year, he said this is going to pacify Iran for generations to come. Eight months later, there's an urgent need to attack Iran again. So these generations to come lasted eight months. And some Israelis joked about it, but it didn't change their political opinions. So this is how these people have to think. It's not a feature of the Israeli psyche. It's a feature of the colonial psyche that people have no other choice because they live in an unsustainable situation. They know that they are a colony with a Jewish minority which pretends to be a Jewish majority and tries to ignore the fact that it's an apartheid state that is committing genocide. There's no other way to come to grips with all of these contradictions.

You also asked me about how the war affected the Israeli standard of living. And actually, this is a very complex issue and I'm trying to get information also from my contacts in Israel. It's getting harder and harder because my contacts and Israel are running out. This is another indication – people are leaving Israel in very large numbers and the rate hasn't slowed down, it's actually picking up and accelerating all the time. There is also a major crisis in Israeli academia, especially because of the growing academic boycott, and also I think it has a lot to do with the fact that young Israelis don't really think so much into the future. But they don't plan ahead. So you see fewer and fewer people enrolling into university. Actually, the rate of new students enrolling into university is lower than the population growth. So the population becomes less and less educated every year.

And in addition to this, there are multiple reports. And if you have international comparative testing in schools, for example, but also in universities, they show that the level of education is just off a cliff. Israel used to have this reputation of being a very highly educated country

which also has a lot to do with the fact that many people don't get to participate in those tests to begin with because it's an apartheid state. So we're only talking about Israeli citizens who have access to these schools who can actually participate in international math tests, reading comprehension tests, language tests and they used to score very, very high and now it's on the bottom of the OECD. And Israel is dropping very, very fast in all of these international scorings. So this is something that we also see as a direct result of this war.

There's also an energy crisis in Israel because the biggest coal exporter to Israel, Colombia, stopped exporting in order to deal with the immediate collapse of Israeli exports, which causes a crisis on many different levels. The government decided to just sell its natural gas reserves to Egypt in unsustainable numbers. So Egypt, they should not have accepted this deal, of course, because they are financing the genocide. But I can also understand why it was very tempting, and they wanted to get this gas for very cheap, which means again, very short-term thinking from the Israeli side, they want the money right now, and they don't care that Israel in a couple of years will have to start importing natural gas instead of exporting it, because they'll run out.

And there was a direct hit on the Israeli main oil refining facility in Haifa during the war with Iran, which turned out to be much more severe than initially reported. And of course, they were trying to hide it as long as they could. But it turns out that Trump, when he kidnapped Maduro and took over the Venezuelan oil company, he diverted an oil tanker to send oil to Israel to try to help Israel cope with this energy crisis. But this is, again, something that isn't really a long-term solution. I mean, the US can always give Israel a few more weeks or a few months but.... So these things are are and very severe and I can go on and talk a little bit about about the housing market and real estate market and also the financial markets, the value of currency and the stock exchange – in all of these you see again and again this bubble reality where people are panicking and thinking short-term and want high profits right now but taking enormous risks and keeping it secret.

There were some signs now in the last couple of weeks that the rate of soaring prices in the stock market and so on were slowing down and even starting to come down a little bit in some parts, which caused a lot of panic. But those Israeli economists or journalists were saying, look, this is very dangerous and the bubble could burst and it could lead to a major collapse. Those people are usually older, like in their 40s, 50s or older. So they remember that there were financial crises in the past, but actually the people who are investing their money in Israel, a lot of them don't even have clear memories of the 2008 crisis. Which I imagine you and I remember. They just don't think about it because it happened when they were children. Because these are very, very young Israelis. Sometimes they have a lot of cash because they fought in Gaza and received massive cash bonuses as reservists and they just play in the stock exchange, bring up the stock prices without really thinking that they could also lose everything.

Maybe I can also say something, a very big piece of news that is extremely recent, it was only published yesterday, that Israel finances itself by debt. That's the only way they can keep

going. And the debt keeps growing, but a country can only raise debt by selling its bonds. And the bonds in Europe have to be regulated through the Bank of Ireland. And the Bank of Ireland was a bit concerned that they are actually complicit with Israeli crimes, and it might be illegal for them to do this. Unfortunately, they were not brave enough and not committed enough to international law to simply say to Israel, we are not going to handle your bonds anymore. Instead, they transferred it to Luxembourg. And yesterday, the Minister of the Economy of Luxembourg, after a lot of pressure by civil society organizations and by BDS groups, said that Luxembourg will not renew the contract with Israel for the issue of bonds. So Luxembourg will not facilitate the bonds, it goes back to Ireland. And if Ireland doesn't go back on their basic commitments to international law, they would have to also not allow Israel to continue to sell the bonds and Israel will not be able to sell one more bond in Europe, which means probably financial default. And so if anyone who's watching this and has any money invested in Israel, I think that is a very foolish thing to do right now.

ZR: All right, let's look at Israeli politics a bit closer. Netanyahu, as you know, returned to power in 2022 by forming a coalition that included ultra-Orthodox parties. These parties generally had sort of a deal: we support your genocide, broaden the reach of war, settlement expansion of the West Bank, while they demanded that their members be protected from compulsory military service. On July 14th, the 120 Knesset members passed a coalition-backed by 58 votes to 54, temporarily suspending arrests, investigations, enforcements and military service for all of these ultra-Orthodox parties. The Times of Israel reported that the measure would protect tens of thousands of draft evaders and effectively halt most ultra-Orthodox enlistment for several months. However, on July 15th, the High Court temporarily froze the law's implementation and ordered the government and Knesset to explain why it should be struck down. How is Netanyahu managing this contradiction? On the one hand, the Israeli military says it urgently needs approximately 12,000 additional recruits after years of a multi-front war. On the other hand, Netanyahu needs the political support of the ultra-Orthodox parties to preserve his governing alliance and potentially form another government for the upcoming election.

SH: Yeah, well, this is, I think, one of the major internal contradictions of the State of Israel because the ultra-Orthodox are anti-Zionist. And let's not make the mistake of thinking that if they're anti-Zionist, it means they're pro-Palestinian. They're anti-Zionist for religious reasons. They don't particularly like Palestinians, but they don't accept the idea of a Jewish state that is established before the coming of the Messiah. And so Ben-Gurion, when Israel was founded, thought that he needs the kind of status quo agreement because he needs a ultra-Orthodox in order to create a Jewish majority in Palestine. And a settler colony requires a large number of settlers to take over the land and with their presence, displace the indigenous population. And so he needed the ultra-Orthodox. And in exchange, he offered them exemption from military service and various other agreements. For example, that Israel doesn't have a constitution. That's because of this agreement, because the ultra-Orthodox said, if there's a constitution, it's the Bible. And Ben-Gurion said, no way. So this is, for many years, was accepted in Israel as the so-called status quo.

I think that the liberal Zionists who saw how the number of ultra-Orthodox is growing, and because they still harbor deep resentment and hatred to this group, which in any other country in the world we would call pure anti-Semitism – the way that they consider them, they're calling them parasites, using caricatures and symbols that reminds me when I look at them of *Der Stürmer* in Germany in the 30s, presenting them as beasts who are sucking the money out of the poor working man. This is a horrible kind of politics that only in Israel is somehow accepted. And this is among the liberal Zionists. And so they used the court system to challenge this agreement. And the courts shot it down, because the courts are by definition liberal and represent this part of the population, they shot down this agreement, which said that what the ultra-Orthodox do in their prayer, in their studies of the Torah, counts to the state as much as military service. This is how they serve the state. This was the agreement and this was canceled.

Now, this new law that you describe, is allegedly bringing back this agreement, but on a very temporary basis. So already, before this law was passed, there had been some sanctions against the ultra-Orthodox. Some of the state institutions were forced by the courts to cut down money to schools and to kid centers and things like that, kindergartens, for the ultra-Orthodox, as a way to punish them for not serving in the military. And of course there are arrest warrants, not many, but this is something that causes a lot of concern among the ultra-Orthodox, they don't want to serve in the army. And this caused a rift between the leaders of these parties and the population itself. So the ultra-Orthodox people in Israel, who said, well, we're not Zionists, but the government decided that we're going to live in a city in the West Bank, in a settlement, because that's where they will give us the facilities we need, a mikveh, a synagogue, and subsidized housing – so we agree to this. But this is an alliance, well, a deal with the devil, really, because they accept all these atrocities and violations of international law in exchange for having their autonomy. And now it's breaking down. The deal is breaking down because they have to go to the army anyway and they're losing their subsidies. So they're very angry at their leaders. They said you joined Netanyahu and he didn't deliver. Now our situation is worse than it was before.

And at this moment, I think Netanyahu has the most power because what can the ultra-Orthodox leaders do? They can do nothing. If they say we're breaking the deal with Netanyahu, we're going to join the other parties, the other parties won't take them. The other parties, if it's, you know, Eizenkot and Lapid and Bennett, all these so-called oppositioners, they say, we are going to recruit all the ultra-Orthodox to the military tomorrow if we take power. So this pushes the ultra-Orthodox to decide on Netanyahu. They have no other choice. So all of these new laws that are being passed at the last minute, they're not really cementing the status of the ultra-Orthodox. It's only a temporary solution to tie them over until the election, so they can tell their voters, look, there's hope, we're going to get those laws, vote for us once again so that we can join Netanyahu. And of course, once they are elected, they will not be able to pass those laws because Netanyahu won't let them. He doesn't want to lose this stranglehold he has on them.

And clearly the ultra-Orthodox made a horrible mistake. It's a tactical or strategic political mistake, which I can explain mostly because in their society, it's traditional to send to politics, the ones who they send to represent them in the Knesset are the stupidest people in the community. They take the wisest ones, the best educated ones, and make them the religious leaders, the spiritual leaders, the ones who study the Torah, the big rabbis. And the ones who are failing in their studies, they send them to the Knesset. So this explains why they really blundered in their strategic thinking. But one rabbi, Rabbi Lando, actually started to see the problem. He's not a member of the Knesset. He's one of the smart ones who is studying the Torah, and he's very respectable. And he said, "Well, actually, according to Judaism, what Israel is doing is an act of murder because they're fighting wars which are not defensive. So in our understanding, this is murder. We should not be part of this, and we should stop supporting the war with our prayers and so on. And we're not going to be to play the role of those whose Torah studies contribute to the state anymore. I think this is a first crack that we see in the ultra-Orthodox commitment to the colonization of Palestine. I hope it will grow. Politically they don't have a lot of options right now, but at least the discourse is changing. And I think it's critical to think about this because one day this genocide will end. One day, the apartheid will end. And there will be some kind of conversation between Palestinians and the Jewish settlers in Palestine about what kind of future they're going to have together. And the only group among the Jewish groups in Israel who is not actively participating in genocide, who is daily killing people, they are the ultra-Orthodox. So regardless of what they think or what their ideology, they don't have the blood on their hands in the same way the secular Jews do.

ZR: Another notable development that I read yesterday in The Times of Israel was that Netanyahu's government had asked Israel's high court not to order the establishment of a state commission of inquiry into the failures surrounding the 7th of October 2023 Hamas attacks before the upcoming election. The government argued basically that this form of investigation had become a quite politically sensitive election issue and said if they return to power after the election, it would establish an inquiry and it's not a good time to do so now. Could you explain the politics surrounding this and also why Netanyahu failed to establish an independent inquiry and all this time he was in power after October 7th?

SH: Traditionally, when there is some kind of catastrophe in Israel, there's an independent inquiry which is headed by a judge, and the team is also made of legal experts or professionals. Netanyahu changed this. So for example, the War of '73, which in Israel was considered to be a major blunder and oversight, was completely taken by surprise. It was on October 6th, 1973, 50 years and one day before the October 7th attack. And then 50 years later, and one day later, Israel was taken by surprise again, completely. So Netanyahu changed the regulations to say, okay, well, it's fine that there will be so many judges on the committee, but for each judge, we're also going to put a politician. So making it more like a half-half. Which, of course, means that the judges will not have a majority and of course it means that this is going to be a very politicized inquiry.

And so now the question is who will select those politicians and now this is the fight. So if it's going to those liberal Zionists somehow taking power in the election, which is not going to happen, but let's entertain the idea, they would populate those seats on the committee with their people. And we know what they're going to say. They're going to say that the far-right government has diverted attention from Gaza, has divided the Israeli public to the point where Hamas believed that they have an opportunity to strike a killing blow against Israel, and so it's the fault of the far-right. And the right wing, we also know what they're going to say. They're going to say there was a betrayal from within and the leftist generals like Palestinians too much and didn't use a heavy hand against them, and this is the reason that Hamas was able to attack.

This conversation becomes a major political issue, but actually the conversation is already being decided now, because these two points of view are already promoted on social media by both of these sides very aggressively, except that the far right has a tremendous advantage on social media. They are using armies of fake avatars, they are using technological tools, I hope we'll have a few minutes to talk about these tools as well because this is very important, where they can engineer public opinion and spread fake videos and fake information and a lot of Israelis strongly believe in the conspiracy theories, for example, that actually there were some traitors in the Israeli army who opened the gates of the fence around Gaza in order to allow Hamas to attack or who ordered the soldiers to step down just hours before the attack – things which are clearly proven false, but it doesn't matter, people believe it.

And this causes this division and this hateful discourse that plays right into the hands of the far-right. And this is why the whole demand to have an independent commission has completely backfired. Instead of threatening Netanyahu's government, it's giving him more fuel to pour on the fire. The most recent video that is now making a lot of headlines is the video in which Gadi Eizenkot, who is now considered to be the leading candidate to be in prime minister instead of Netanyahu – and he's a general commander of the Israeli army. He developed the Dahiya Doctrine for destroying civilian infrastructure and killing civilians disproportionately. So if somebody thinks he's left-wing, then please divest yourself from these illusions. His son was killed in December 2023 in Gaza. His son was a soldier and fell in battle in Gaza.

And in this video that was just released, you can see Eizenkot running through a field to hug his son under the premise that if the right wing was in power, then his son wouldn't die and we would live in a beautiful paradise. Of course, if you see this video, it might occur to you that actually the right wing was in power. So where is the paradise, you know? The right wing was in power, it makes no sense, and also a lot of people commented that such a video could backfire because it's so disrespectful to attack Eizenkot by using his dead son in such a disrespectful way, such a crude way. But the thing is that this is exactly how this kind of fake social media influence works. It amplifies those dark emotions and evokes these responses. And then people start sharing the video even more – like, "did you see did you see this horrible video" – and actually it ends up supporting Netanyahu even more and nobody can

even prove that it comes from the Likud party or from Netanyahu because it's all distributed through fake avatars.

ZR: Alright, let's switch gears here and turn to another issue that you told me you were following, which gets very little attention in the German mainstream media – Pegasus, the Israeli spyware developed by the NSO Group. So, before we discuss the latest revelations concerning Morocco, could you first explain what Pegasus is, how it works, when it was revealed, and what kind of scandals came to light? If I remember correctly, in 2021, the US government placed the NSO Group on a blacklist.

SH: Okay, this is a very, very complex story. Basically, we're talking about spyware. Pegasus is not the only kind of spyware, but it's the most famous one, because in 2021, Amnesty International, together with Forbidden Stories and together with Citizen Lab, published an investigative report about how this company, NSO Group, received phone numbers of 50,000 potential targets around the world. And at the time they were asking for quite a lot of money to hack each particular phone. Because if you want to make a deal with this company to hack a phone, you pay them per hacking attempt. But Edward Snowden commented at the time that this is an economy of scale. Which means that 50,000 numbers now would be 50 million in a couple of years.

And I think we are now in this time, where Edward Snowden's dire prediction is coming true. Spyware has become extremely widespread and it's a very, very dangerous tool. I don't want to say that it's a technology, it's not exactly a technology. It doesn't make your phone better, it subverts your own phone against you. You become a spy against yourself and against your friends without wanting to do it, just because somebody remotely can activate your microphone and listen to everything that's happening around you, activate your camera, look at your face, go through all of the data that is saved on your phone. They can hack your phone in real time and listen to your conversations and see whatever you're doing. And they can also go back in time. And one of the most important points, they can create a clone of your phone. So they can write something on your own phone and it looks like you did it. So, if somebody would hack your phone with spyware and go on your social media accounts and place forbidden information, like forbidden pictures, child pornography, things like this, there is no technical way to be able to know if you did it or somebody else did it. The only thing that the organization Citizen Lab can do is they can find evidence that the phone was hacked, yes or no.

And just think about what it means if indeed the police want to use the phone as evidence against somebody who might be suspected of serious crimes, then if this phone has been hacked by spyware, then the evidence is contaminated and the police cannot use it in court. Unless of course, which I think is often the case, unless the court doesn't understand what is spyware. Because the technology is so complex, a lot of people think spyware is actually the same as wiretapping. But wiretapping cannot place fake information into your phone. It can only listen, but not write. This is a very important difference. This is spyware.

Now, Israel has sold spyware to more than 140 countries around the world, including countries like Belarus, Ethiopia, Uganda, Honduras, and El Salvador. It was used against lawyers, human rights activists, it was used for the murder of Jamal Khashoggi. Spyware is a weapon. The European Union only classifies it as a dual-use item, which I think is a wrong classification, it's a weapon. And a good indication that it's a weapon is that if you looked through all of these cases in which spyware was used to commit these crimes, it's all spyware that was bought from Israel. And that's not because Israel invented spyware. Actually, the US has it, Russia has it, China has it – but the difference is that countries, states like the US, Russia and China, don't sell it. They want to use it themselves. They don't consider it to be a product. They consider it to be a very, very powerful, dangerous weapon that they will only use for their own national interests in the hands of their intelligence agencies. And I don't think this is a good thing, but what Israel is doing is much, much worse because they are setting up a for-profit company. Shalev Hulio – his name Shalev, that's the S in NSO – he goes around the world and sells this to customers for money and then they can use it and commit terrible crimes with it.

So this is what spyware is and now there's a new revelation from Morocco where a member of the Moroccan secret service actually came forward and reported how Morocco used Israeli bot spyware. Shalev Hulio made a visit to Morocco under a false name, and sold them this very dangerous tool. They've used it against many officials in France, which is also a violation of French sovereignty. France so far took no action against Israel. And Morocco also used this against Spain. Spain is a different story because in Spain, the government used Israeli spyware Pegasus against the Catalan separatist movement, including against parliament members, which is a violation of Spanish law. Sánchez ordered opening an investigation against NSO Group to understand what was done when he came to power. He didn't come to this conclusion very quickly, it took him some time, after a lot of pressure by civil society groups, by BDS. So that's something that we need to remember. And this investigation is actually now a step further, and actually the court in Catalonia ordered charges being pressed against the management of NSO Group. So this is very important.

And as you said, NSO is also sanctioned in the US, but these sanctions are mainly to protect just American citizens and some of Trump's advisors are working to dismantle them and just allow this kind of technology to be used by American companies to attack US citizens and break the monopoly that currently is held by the CIA in the US, allowing basically just private companies to do it as well. So the one party in Spain actually called SUMAR, they've actually demanded some action against Morocco and against NSO Group for using this technology. Again I've called it technology but I think the word needs to be examined. But this official from Morocco said something that really stuck with me. He said: When we are surveilling people, we don't use this tool. It's a very heavy weapon that we only use for very extreme cases, because spyware is so dangerous. And I hope that now we can maybe bring this conversation a bit closer to Germany, because I think many of our German viewers don't realize that Germany bought Pegasus as well to use against German citizens.

ZR: Let me just pick up on that and then you can expand on this. So Germany's Federal Criminal Police Office reportedly purchased Pegasus in 2019. And in January, 2026 Interior Minister Alexander Dobrindt signed an agreement with Netanyahu to expand the German-Israeli cooperation on cybersecurity, describing Israel as a center partner. I mean, we've already seen the Bundesverfassungsschutz ban the watermelon – they put out a list which included symbols, slogans and a list of organizations. For example, the watermelon is supposed to be a sign of extremism, of pro-Hamas signaling, and the slogan, "From the River to the Sea, Palestine will be free", is banned in the public. And also organizations like Jewish Voice for Peace. And not just this, I mean, we can expand this to other progressive or critical organizations. What do you think will be the impact on this? You've already mentioned the part of civil liberties, but can you comment on this further?

SH: Yeah, it's interesting that you mentioned the Verfassungsschutz, which in English is the guardians of the Constitution, because I think this maybe explains the deep vulnerability of Germany to this issue, how unprofessional and naive the German security organizations are. The guardians of the Constitution in Germany are an organization that didn't read the Constitution. They don't know that it's their obligation, according to their own charter, to investigate german politicians who violated Article 25 of the german Constitution – which is stipulates clearly international law stands above german law when it comes to the matters such as sending weapons to Israel to commit genocide. And instead, the guardians of the Constitution are wasting their time on deciding that watermelons are anti-Semitic. So if this is the level of law enforcement in Germany, then one can maybe understand why they think they need to go and outsource their security to others. The choice to outsource it to Israel is critical here, because first of all, the agreement that you mentioned with the German criminal police, the BKA, was not with the Israeli government. It was with a private company. And this was reported by the PEGA Committee. The PEGA committee – PEGA for Pegasus – was established by the European Parliament to investigate the abuse of this technology with Pegasus, with spyware, in the European Union. I met with many members of the committee.

And yesterday I found there was a report that was published by the organization Citizen Lab which does the forensic analysis of phones that are being hacked. And they found evidence that a member of this committee, his name is Stelios Kouloglou, was repeatedly hacked by the NSO Group, by Pegasus, as they were investigating it. And I met Stelios, and I have to say, I met many politicians in my work, and he's one of the most friendly and honest and committed politicians. I was very much impressed by him. And he was very interested in really coming to the bottom of this and understanding what kind of risk it poses. And to think that actually as we were talking, somebody was recording our conversation. And my question as a European citizen is: what should I do about it? Should I file a lawsuit against Stelios Kouloglou because his phone may have recorded our conversation against my consent? Of course, that would be extremely unfair, because he's a victim in this story, he's not a perpetrator. Maybe I should go to the German authorities as a German citizen. But the German authorities have actually decided that it will be Israel that will be in charge of protecting the security of Germans. And I'll give you a little bit more detail on this point, because this is a big claim that I'm just saying, and I need to prove it. And I will. So I guess

the only thing I can do is talk to the press. And here I am talking to you and telling you about my meetings with Stelios Kouloglou and how he was hacked by Pegasus.

And now I'll say what the PEGA committee found. First of all, they announced that this is a technology that was tested on Palestinians, that Israel is the only country in the world that is selling this technology for money, and that they recommend implementing extremely strong regulations to prevent the use of this technology against European citizens or by European law enforcement. They also pointed out that because you can write on somebody else's phone and generate fake evidence, this is not something that you can use for law enforcement, this is really a tool of oppression, not a tool for law enforcement. So these were their recommendations. France and Germany vetoed those recommendations and said that for national security reasons, they still want to use this Pegasus. But there is a very interesting part of the report in which the PEGA committee explains how Germany obtained Pegasus, because the BKA, the German criminal police, spoke with the NSO Group and told them, your tool is too powerful. If a judge gives an order to surveil a certain person for a certain period of time, what you give us with Pegasus is too much because you're surveilling all of the time and you're surveilling other people. You're surveilling far beyond what the court order allows. So we cannot buy it from you. And then NSO Group really pressed and they went, no, you should really buy it from us, but this is how it works, we cannot change it.

And eventually, NSO Group offered to create a kind of firewall, basically to create a restriction within the tool of the spyware, so that if a German police officer is using spyware to obtain information from somebody by hacking their phone, then there will be a program that will cut this information into parts, and only part of it the police officer will be allowed to see, and the other part will be separate. But the firewall itself is manufactured by an Israeli company, by NSO Group. So this means that the German police are now under the regulation of an Israeli private company. And the Israeli private company, in a court case, which they were sued by Facebook, by Meta, over the fact that they hacked WhatsApp, they admitted in the court that actually they get all the information also to their servers in Israel. They have a copy of all the information. So they can see all the information and they can decide, well, the police in Germany will only get part of it, but we have everything. So this is the level of law enforcement.

And indeed, because Pegasus is so dangerous and so powerful, there were two journalists in Berlin, they were actually Russian journalists, opponents of Putin of the Russian regime, and they escaped to Berlin, and they were targeted with Pegasus. And so the German authorities, Dobrindt, the Minister of the Interior of Germany, thought that Germany needs better protection from cyber attacks, and he went to Israel to sign an agreement. So you can see the absurdity of the situation. Well, it's more than absurd. I think it's criminal. And I want to point out that Dobrindt went to Israel to sign the deal. Normally, he would have a meeting with his counterpart in Israel. Who is the minister in charge of the police in Israel? Itamar Ben-Gvir. Dobrindt wisely thought that it would be a very bad idea for him to have a photo opportunity with Itamar Ben-Gvir. So instead, he shook the hand of the war criminal, Benjamin Netanyahu, who is sought by an arrest warrant by the International Criminal Court. And as

the person in charge of the German police, he shook the hand of this criminal and fugitive and went back to Germany to announce that Germany now has a security cooperation with Israel. So I hope that now maybe our viewers can see in what way this is something that endangers all of us.

ZR: Dr. Shir Hever, author and journalist, thank you so much for your time today. I personally learned a lot of facts, even though I'm viewing the independent media, that I didn't know before, so I'm pretty sure that our viewers gained that same perspective. Thank you again for your help and I'll have you back soon.

SH: Thanks, goodbye.

ZR: And thank you for tuning in today. If you like the journalism that we undertook in this video and would like to follow us going forward, then make sure to click on the subscribe button below. And also, don't forget to donate to our independent and nonprofit media channel, as we don't take any money from corporations and governments and only depend on you to continue with our work. I thank you for tuning in and for your support. I'm Zain Raza, see you next time.

END

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