Israel's Genocide in Gaza and the Failure of Western Media – Chris Hedges

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Yipeng Ge (YG): Good afternoon, everyone. And it's so nice to see such a packed room. I'll just get right into it, because I think we have the hour. So *Requiem for Gaza* by Chris Hedges and Joe Sacco with Palestinian translator Ruba Abu Zannad Jafar. The book has six chapters, First Day, Exodus, Assassinations, Ceasefire, Exile, and Resistance. You travelled to Cairo where you interviewed 29 Palestinian families who had recently left Gaza in spring of 2025, and you dedicated this book to the Palestinian journalists. You write in this book that "no war I covered comes close to the numbers of journalists that have been killed in Gaza. Israel killed more journalists since October 7th, 2023, than the US Civil War, World Wars I and II the Korean War, the Vietnam War, including the conflicts in Cambodia and Laos, the wars in Yugoslavia in the 1990s and 2000s, and the post-9/11 war in Afghanistan combined". I am very keenly aware that we are both non-Palestinian, discussing a book centering the Palestinian experience of genocide. So with so many stories, narratives, and lived experiences shared by Palestinians in Occupied Palestine, I'm curious, Chris, what drove you to write this book and with his illustrations by Joe Sacco?

Chris Hedges (CH): So I spent seven years in the Middle East. I was the Middle Eastern Bureau Chief for the New York Times, and I'm an Arabic speaker. I was based in Cairo, and because of my Arabic, I was frequently sent by the New York Times to Gaza for weeks, sometimes months at a time. Gaza is a place I know very, very well. And the same is true for Joe. Joe wrote his great work *Palestine*, I think it was 92 or 93. And then he turned around and wrote what I think is one of the masterpieces of the Israel-Palestine conflict *Footnotes in Gaza*. Joe and I had done a magazine piece called The Gaza Diary for Harper's Magazine where over ten days we chronicled life in the Khan Yunis refugee camp in southern Gaza. And during that time, we interviewed elderly survivors of the Israeli occupation, 100-day

occupation of Gaza in 1956 during the Suez Crisis. And at that time, Israeli forces carried out massacres of men and boys in Rafah and Khan Yunis. We put that into the magazine piece, and the editor, Lewis Lapham, took it out because he said that's history.

Well, of course, for all of us who cover the Middle East context is key, and the Zionist project, from its inception, is predicated on the erasure of history, the denial of history. And Joe was incensed and went back and produced this masterpiece where he found those survivors still living, and that's why he calls it *Footnotes in Gaza*, because it's a footnote in the history of the 100-year war against the Palestinians which even many Palestinians are not aware of certainly with the kind of details that he documented. And he called me just a few weeks into the genocide and he said we have to do something. You know that's our job. Genocide is not simply about the physical annihilation of a place and the annihilation of a people. But it is also about the annihilational or erasure of their culture, of their stories, and of their history. And I think we naively thought at the inception that we might get into Gaza. That was the plan. It soon became apparent that we were not going to go. And journalists, by the way, are still not allowed by the Israelis into Gaza. There have been a few curated what we call dog and pony shows in journalism where they'll bring down journalists for an afternoon, the IDF, but everything is choreographed and everything is controlled. The only journalists doing the real job have been the Palestinian journalists, and Joe and I are very critical of the Western press, largely because of their amplification of Israeli lies, which includes the demonising of our colleagues in Palestine.

And so, we went to Cairo. Palestinians in Cairo lack all legal status. They cannot send their children to school. They cannot work. They live a very precarious existence, and for that reason, many of them don't want to speak. Every single interview was set up before we came, and it was all set up through friends and usually relatives by our marvellous translator and fixer, Ruba, and she's listed on the author's page. She was absolutely vital to this book. We could not have done it without her. And Cairo is a huge place for those of you who've been there, traffic rules do not apply. I have a friend of mine, Tarek, he was our driver, and Tarek's theory of driving is that as long as the car is pointed in the right direction, it doesn't really matter whether he goes backwards or forwards, including backing down ramps. At one point, Ruba said, I can't believe this guy's a friend of yours. Then we had to geographically – all this was done in advance – so we had the geographically group. If we were interviewing a family here in the morning, we couldn't go to the other side of Cairo. It would take us hours to get to the other side of Cairo in the afternoon. So the logistics were quite difficult and Ruba was so vital. I think the other thing that was so – and Ruba is just wonderful and so impressive – is that in every interview that we carried out, it was emotionally very fraught. People broke down and wept, and just in an Arab society, men cannot really go, especially with women, and Ruba was just so empathetic. And my favourite picture of Ruba is her walking down a hall with her arm around a woman whose family had been wiped out and she was comforting her. So we felt it was our tiny contribution to fight against the Zionist erasure, and in particular, the erasure of these stories. And that was really what drove us.

My publisher, Simon & Schuster, said, "Don't even send us a proposal. We don't wanna touch it." They don't want the blowback from the Zionists' lobby, which apparently is objected to my presence here. Well, not apparently. So, we went with Fantagraphics, which primarily does comic books, or comics, it's Joe's publisher. But one of the things, even though it's a small publisher, is that physically the book is gorgeous. And Joe, in the contract, is specific about the paperweight and the size of the book, so it's a beautiful book. I had written a book in the inception of the Iraq war where I interviewed 50 combat veterans with another journalist, Laila Al-Arian, who had been in Iraq all by name, none of it was anonymous, who had either witnessed or taken part in atrocities carried out against Iraqi civilians. And in Europe, Le Monde ran excerpts, The Independent in the UK, it was a huge book in Europ. In the United States, it was as if the book didn't exist. And that's what's going to happen to this book. They can't really counter it. There's no counter-argument, because everything is grounded with dates and names, and it's so specific. So it's not been reviewed. The New York Times told us we're not touching it. And normally, the New York Times reviews my books, which they hate, but they do review them. They once put me on the cover of the Sunday book review, and then trashed the book. Ralph Nader said, "Just be happy. They spelled your name right." Another professor of mine called and said: "Don't worry, no book's that bad." But here, they're just not going to touch it. And it's done well in Europe. We did an 11,000 print run in France. It was sold out in the first week. Italy, Spain will do well. But here, I know I'm in Canada, sorry, just flew in, but in the United States, they will just try and do what they're doing to the Palestinians, which is erase it.

YG: I want to read some of your words back to you. So, in the book you write, "The impunity with which Israel commits war crimes is one of the most frustrating aspects of covering Palestine. When Israeli civilians are killed, the perpetrators are evil. When Palestinian civilians are killed, it is a tragedy or a mistake. Nothing we report seems to be able to rectify the disequilibrium. During the seven years I reported in Gaza, there was one indisputable fact, Israel lies like it breathes. The barrage of Israeli lies amplified and given credibility by Western press violate a fundamental tenet of journalism, the duty to transmit the truth to the viewer or reader. These media organisations legitimise mass slaughter. They refuse to hold Israel to account. They betray Palestinian journalists, who's reporting and are being killed in Gaza. They expose the bankruptcy of Western journalists whose primary attributes are careerism and cowardice." So having worked previously as the Middle East bureau chief for the New York Times, an outlet that has previously peddled Israeli propaganda and lies to divert attention away from the atrocities against the Palestinian people and manufacture consent for genocide against the Palestinians people, what kind of organising or actions do you think are necessary to rectify this equilibrium you write about?

CH: It isn't going to be rectified because powerful media organisations like the New York Times prize access above truth. And all of the journalists, I was there, all of us understood that Israel was lying, that lies all the time. But if you don't repeat those lies, then you're cut off from that access. And the Zionist lobby or the Israel lobby is powerful enough that they can get you reassigned or even removed from your position. So there's a deep cynicism within the press and most of my colleagues are careerists. They know what's good for their

career. There are no rules written on the walls of the New York Times, but you know what it is that's going to advance your career and what isn't. And so, I don't see it as being rectified. I think there are always great independent journalists – I was just in Ireland and visited the grave of my good friend Robert Fisk, 44 years in the Middle East. If you have a chance, please read his book, The Great War for Civilisation. I think it's still vital for understanding the Middle Eastern. And Robert, who had a PhD from Trinity College, understood context, he understood history, and he's also a beautiful writer. We were very, very good friends. But he was so damn good that any time he showed up in a town I was in, I started to sweat, because I knew he was gonna produce something that was so brilliant and so beautifully written. So those journalists, there are journalists, but they're management headaches. Robert had to leave his paper and then eventually move to The Independent, and they're there, but they run, as I did, that you run a foul of the institution. In my case, I denounced Bush's call to invade Iraq for all the reasons that are now apparent. And you have to remember at the time, right after 9-/11, this was a very lonely stance. I would come into my office and the message bank would be filled with death threats. And I would get written death threats and bomb scares to speak out like this because we drank as Americans from that very dark elixir of nationalism and the flip side of nationalism is racism. So there are honest, Sey Hersh, also pushed out of the New York Times, there are honest journalists, but they, I think almost and inevitably clash with the institutions they work for.

YG: Although I do feel like the tide is shifting, one of the things that I was reading, although I'm not sure how accurate it is, is the pro-Israel lobby in the US, AIPAC, is, I think rethinking its ability to kind of directly sponsor and endorse candidates, seeing as though, you know, I think the popular political movement to support Palestine and the liberation of Palestinians has grown so strong to the extent of which those that are seen in support of Israel are not seen as favourably by the public, by voting constituents?

CH: That is very true, but that has not affected the political class. So Kamala Harris, who ran an issue-less, celebrity-driven, pro-genocide campaign, ignored the fact that 77% of registered Democrats wanted to halt weapons shipments to Israel. And the response has been not to take popular or mass opinion into account, but to repress speech. You've been a victim of this. They have shut down free speech on university campuses, usually with the collaboration of the administrators of these universities. I was in Ireland, I actually can't – I was Europe, forget what I just said, I was in Europe, somewhere in Europe with the heads of Palestine Action who had to leave the UK. It has been listed as a prescribed terrorist group as Donald Trump has also listed Palestine. So the fact is that you're right, as there is a growing consciousness of the reality of the apartheid settler colonial, genocidal state of Israel, the reaction by the political class has been repression, not reform.

YG: And there's an ebb and flow, I think, to when repression is heavier and it sometimes can lessen. Another author, Sally Rooney, has had her books pulled from being sold in the UK because of her support for Palestine.

CH: Well, she was going to give the proceeds to Palestine Action, right?

YG: In the book, you also write that "history is a mortal threat to the Zionist project. It exposes the violent imposition of a European colony in the Arab world. It reveals the ruthless campaign to de-Arabize an Arab country, it underscores the inherent racism towards Arabs, their culture, and traditions. It mocks the lie that Palestine is exclusively a Jewish homeland. It recalls centuries of Palestinian presence. And it highlights the alien culture of Zionism implanted on stolen land." And you later state that Israel is a genocidal state and a genocidal society, like you just stated. I was speaking to a member of parliament just last night and we reflected on the massive change in what seemingly is permissible or not to characterise Israel's actions against the Palestinian people; how there's this ebb and flow of what's acceptable and what's not. When I first spoke to this member of parliament back in 2024, he felt uncomfortable with my use of the word genocide. And last night he actually apologised to me and that he was resistant against this language being used back then. However, now we're also seeing pro-Israel lobby groups push back against the language of anti-Zionism, to equate this with anti-Semitism. So what do you make in terms of this false equating of language and ideology?

CH: Well, the Zionists and their supporters have nothing left but censorship. So I testified, I live in New Jersey, I testified with a wonderful Israeli scholar, Raz Segal, who teaches genocide studies, he and I testified against the IHRA, which is this bill that equates criticisms of Israel with anti-Semitism, and the room was filled with Zionists who were jeering and shouting at us. And the committee chairman muted Raz's mic, and then when I spoke, muted my mic. So there we were in real time saying this will curtail free speech while they were cutting off free speech. I think that it's clear that the bankruptcy of the Zionists and their supporters means they have nothing left but kind of the iron doors to shut us out, and that's what they're doing. I mean, if you look at Trump,I know you're all Canadians, so I must apologise for Donald Trump. And just as an aside, he is dead serious about if the midterms goes as the polls predict of invalidating the elections, it's not a joke. And at that point, there's no exit. I'm fortunate that my wife is Canadian, so I may see a lot more of you in the future, which is fine, I love Canada.

CH: So I think we're seeing a kind of turn globally. You know, look at what's happening in India. Modi invalidates 130 million registered voters, most of whom are probably Muslim, opponents of the BJP. Look at what is happening in France with Marine Le Pen. Look at Germany. I mean, this book is published all over Europe, except Germany. Where if you, like the UK, if you hold up a sign in support of Palestine action or say from the river to the sea, which by the way was a phrase invented by Netanyahu and Likud, you're arrested. And there's a very good book by Pankaj Mishra, brilliant scholar, and Joe and I, when we were in London, and have dinner with him called *The World After Gaza*, and I think that the genocide in Gaza is a seminal moment, not only because it eviscerates the rule of law and mocks any pretence that imperial powers like the United States care about human rights or justice, but it's a message in the time of a climate crisis. And the message is we will stop at nothing, including genocide, to protect what we have. I mean, we have everything. The message is, we have everything and if you try and take it away from us, we will kill you. And that has really

resonated in the Global South in particular and that's where the genocide in Gaza is meant to resonate.

YG: I also really wanna kind of dive into the testimonies that you captured through both writing up what you heard from the Palestinian families that you interviewed, but also the illustrations. In chapter one and chapter five, there are beautifully illustrated storytelling of narrative accounts provided by Palestinians who lived through the genocide. Osama, a clinical psychologist and Diana, his wife; these visual stories brought me to tears on multiple occasions, reading the narratives that you captured from your interviews with Palestinian families who had recently left Gaza. There are stories that many of us in this room likely have heard of, like the killing of Hind Rajab and her family, and many other stories that seem all too familiar. Certainly by Palestinians who have experienced violence at the hands of Israel. To hold onto these stories, I think like gifts, like they're provided to us, there's a responsibility to carry them forward, to resist and to commit to action in ways necessary to alter and change the way our society is structured, which you comment on in your last chapter, chapter six. So I'm curious what was left out of the book from the interactions that you had with the Palestinian people you interviewed, how did they come to share the stories that they did? What kind of hopes did they have in sharing these stories with you?

CH: So I think that one of the disconcerting things about all of these interviews is that everything is recorded on their phones, which is good for Joe's drawing, but I'm not talking about even the photos of the chalky faces of their children being dug out from the rubble, I think they all understood the importance of telling the story, but it was also incredibly painful. And when I reflected on it later, I thought in many ways we probably couldn't have done the book if we'd been in Gaza because the physical conditions are so dire that it just would not have been possible to do a six, seven, eight hour interview in those conditions. We were determined to do the book thematically. We weren't just going to interview a family and put it in a... And so, as you said, it's broken into six chapters, First Day, Ceasefire, Exodus, where we describe through their experiences the chronology of the genocide. Palestinians have been displaced multiple times, of course. And now are crammed into 30% of Gaza in tent cities. Israel is not abided by, not surprisingly, by the agreement of the ceasefire in terms of the humanitarian aid that it was supposed to allow in. Israel is still talking about expulsion, mass expulsion openly. People are hanging on by their fingertips. There are no real medical services, there's no infrastructure, there's no clean water, that's key. So illnesses arrive, winter is coming. And that's all by design. It's meant to pressure the Palestinians to leave. Israel just doesn't know where it's gonna send them. Egypt has moved its military forces up towards the border with Gaza and then adamant that the Palestinians will not be pushed into Egypt. Largely I think a lot of it is a security issue. They just don't want two million Palestinians camped on the edge of Gaza.

CH: The story is not over. Of course, close to 1,500 Palestinians have been killed. I forget the exact number since the quote unquote "ceasefire" began. And so yeah, it was to tell the story chronologically, but that is really difficult. We had 500 pages of transcripts. Logistically, the book was hard. We did the interviews in Arabic, and then we translated them. And then to

double check, we had Ruba and two other native Arabic speakers go through all the English and match it with the audio. So that it was correct. It was very, very time consuming. But I've done this in the past. When they come after you, they find the one mistake in the book. And then every time the book comes up... So this was so thoroughly fact checked. I'm not saying there isn't a mistake there. I haven't found one. It was so thorough fact checked as a way to bullet proof ourselves from when they came after us. So it was hard. It was hard. And I think the interviews illustrated, there wasn't any story that was extraordinary, they were all extraordinary in terms of the level of loss. And you don't want to repeat, you don't wanna repeat a point. So you're juggling, and it's not just 29 people here, I'm talking about 29 families, you're juggling a lot of material, but we kept the book tight in terms of my writing and also Joe really, as you pointed out, focused on this one particular narrative that as I cried too when I when I first went through his work. So every time we bring a family in or we bring a situation, it's consciously done to illustrate an aspect of the genocide that hasn't been exposed before within the book. But it was hard. And it was also emotionally hard. Because as you know, the stories are just so devastating. And it's always in the details, the small details, that just rip your heart out. And there were days, as Joe said, I can never do another book like this again. It's as if Osama and his family were camped in my room for a year. And we're both old. We've been through a lot. We did this book because it was a moral imperative. But there were days that Joe, Ruba, and I just had to stop, even though we'd done the interviews.

YG: There's like this concept of moral injury or moral distress when we think about frontline work or healthcare work, when we see conditions in which patients or community members experience oppression, suffering, illness, and disease, and we're bearing witness. And I think there's a collective bearing witness from afar when we're thinking about the ongoing genocide in Palestine being committed by the Israeli military. And what that does to ourselves. I think it is a very wicked kind of thing to have happened to the Palestinian people that they're not able to grieve, that they're not able to mourn, they're not even able to heal and care. And one of the first things that they think about is documentation. How do I document this and tell this story to the world so that they can stop doing this to us? Did that run through your mind with how you're telling this story in the English language to, you know, many citizens of the world who live in countries like Germany, I mean, the book is not available in Germany, but I mean like in places like the US, Canada, the UK, you know, where our governments are so directly complicit in Israel's crimes?

CH: I mean, that's what I did. I was a war correspondent for 20 years. My job was to document war crimes. And usually the roads would be cut. In Bosnia and Kosovo, El Salvador, we would walk in with our satellite phones, sometimes the snipers would shoot at us. And it doesn't mean we wouldn't wake up the next morning and have to document another atrocity. But it made it harder for those who carried out that atrocity to hide it. And it made it impossible for them to deny that it had happened. And that's our role. Joe is a comic, but he does comics journalism. He invented the genre of comics journalism. And we met in Bosnia 30 years ago. I know nothing about comics, but we went to Gorazde. He did a book called *Gorazde, Safe Area*. And I started doing interviews with him, and I realised this guy's a

brilliant, brilliant journalist. And he is. And that's what we see our role is. And that is why we did what we did. But documentation for the victims of these atrocities is very, very important. Because unless it's set down, it's forgotten.

CH: And as you know, in the book, I actually pay a visit to the Armenian historical centre in New York – it's very, very moving, nobody goes there – but there are all these boxes from the Armenian genocide where survivors, and they've even drawn maps of their villages which no longer exist like so many Palestinian villages. And I opened the box and picked out a handwritten manuscript. And it said, you know, this is so the whole world will know and never forget, and the curator said you're probably the first person ever to look at it. And on the issue of governments, and that's, as you know from the last chapter, it's up to us to stop the genocide, our governments will not stop the genocides. It's us, it up to us not, and I write about it at the end of the book, where I went to Genoa with Francesca Albanese, who's been sanctioned, not just the ICC judges, but you know, Trump has sanctioned the ICC court to make it financially impossible for it to exist. I went with Francesca, Greta Thunberg, Yanis Varoufakis, Thiago Ávila, who runs the flotillas, and we joined the dock workers who went on strike and refused to load weapons onto ships bound for Israel. That's our job. That's what we have to do, because it's very, very clear that our governments are not only complicit in genocide, they are complicit with genocide, but they will do nothing to halt it. And we don't want to live in a world like that. I covered the war in Bosnia. You don't wanna live in a world with no rules, where the strong prey upon the weak, where the vulnerable are crushed. That's not a world, and I think that it's incumbent upon us. That's why I was so moved by the student encampments. These students were our nation's conscience. And what happened to them? The encampments were shut down and universities like Columbia, they called in the police. Students were expelled, suspended, and there will be a price to pay, but we have to pay that price. We don't want to go forward into this new age of technological barbarism.

YG: You write, "Why are Palestinians who have a right under international law to armed struggle against an occupying power be expected to disarm while Israel, the illegal occupying force, is not?" When you're interviewing Osama, you write, "Hamas, Osama soon learns, has made an incursion into Israel. Incredible. Osama tells us he was a little bit proud and a little anxious and worried. Hamas, he says, represents an idea. Taking the role of resistance. For Palestinians, it is our right to resist under occupation with whatever means are available, including military tools, because we have been facing military tools all of our lives." You do not shy away from articulating Palestinians' right to armed resistance against their occupiers and oppressors. How do we do better as a collective in articulating this when the interests of the state or powerful institutions label people who defend human rights or indigenous peoples who defend the land and the water are labelled terrorists by the state?

CH: Well, Nelson Mandela was labelled a terrorist. All freedom fighters are labelled terrorists. I knew one of the co-founders of Hamas, Abd al-Aziz al-Rantisi, a paediatrician who founded Hamas with Sheikh Yassin. And he was very clear that this was a national liberation movement. And under international law, the Palestinians have a right to resist. Now does Hamas commit acts of terrorism? Yes, I would even consider the firing of these

relatively unsophisticated rockets, no match for the missiles and 2,000-pound bombs Israel drops on refugee camps, but I would consider that a war crime. But all resistance movements use terrorism, including the Zionist fighters pre-1948 and in 48. They bombed the King David hotel, the ANC, and that's because they don't have an air force, they don't have mechanised units, they don't have a navy, they don't have any of the weaponry and technological prowess of a modern army. But that doesn't make them terrorists. When I covered the war in El Salvador, one of the founders of Médecins du monde, Dr. Alina Margolis, would come for several weeks in the year and stayed in an extra room in my apartment, she was in the Warsaw Ghetto. She was married to Marek Edelman, the deputy commander of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising. And Marek Edelmann, became persona non grata in Israel because he said not only do the Palestinians have a right to resist, they have a to armed resistance in the same way that we had a right to armed against the Nazis. So yes, the Palestinians have a right to armed resistance and the Palestinian liberation movements, while I acknowledge they carry out acts that can be defined as terrorism are not terrorists.

YG: What does it say when health care institutions in the West, here in Canada, punish, repress, or discipline doctors and health care workers who speak up about our colleagues who are being assassinated, kidnapped by the Israeli military?

CH: They're no different from the doctors who formed the largest professional class of the SS. They have betrayed their oath. You have not, and you've paid for it. The American Medical Association, these large medical groups have refused to stand up against the obliteration of hospitals, clinics, ambulance drivers, doctors, and let me be clear, this was something we learned from all of these interviews, doctors, like journalists, are targeted by Israel. There were just too many stories we heard of a doctor who, as soon as he or she finished their shift, was assassinated by a drone, or on their way to the shift, or the medical workers in the van on the way to hospital were blown up by the drone. In fact, in one of the interviews, it's with a journalist, she said, people didn't want to come near us if we were doctors or journalists because we were the walking dead. And that was the pattern of Israel's insidious decision to destroy civil society and target doctors and nurses and medical staff and journalists. These people are unarmed. By the end of this book it's just undeniable. So the moral bankruptcy of these institutions and these medical figures who refuse to stand up for their own, as I said, are no different from the perpetrators of genocide.

YG: So I mentioned I briefly worked and volunteered as a medic in Gaza in a primary care clinic in central Rafah. I was actually supposed to go to Nasser Medical Complex in Khan Yunis, but I was unable to because it was surrounded by Israeli tanks at the time. It was later besieged by the Israeli military. Health care workers were detained, kidnapped. And later we found out that there were mass graves of patients, including healthcare workers, in the courtyard of Nasser Medical Complex. Even while I was there in Gaza, we knew of healthcare workers being shot at and including being shot while they were in the operating room of said hospital, Nasser Medical Complex. We also heard of stories of health care workers, who when they're informed that the Israeli military was going to besiege and enter these hospitals, they would change out of their scrubs, change out their white coats into

civilian clothing because what the Israeli military does is they come in and they identify who's the doctor, who's nurse, and they kill them or they detain them or they torture and kill them in detention. And so we have seen a decimation, as you know, of an entire generation of skilled Palestinian surgeons and specialists as a means to not only cripple the healthcare system, but to cripple that last line of defence against genocide.

YG: Now in the last chapter about resistance, you write about the Freedom Flotilla movement, solidarity by dock workers in Italy, and other forms of resistance and movement building towards a free and liberated Palestine. As you mentioned earlier, you interviewed Raz Segal, who said that the whole idea about prevention and never again is that we teach our students that there are red flags, and once we notice them, we're supposed to work in order to stop that process should that escalate to genocide. James Baldwin, as you write, also warned that there was a terrible probability that Western populations struggling to hold onto what they have stolen from their captives and unable to look into the mirror will precipitate a chaos throughout the world, which, if it does not bring life on this planet to an end, will bring about a racial war, such as the world has never seen, and for which generations yet unborn will curse our names forever. And so, my last question to you is, where do we go from here? In that last chapter, there is a lot of hope. I think the way in which the book is structured is that there are testimonies, and there's another way to look at these testimonies through these illustrations, which is extremely compelling, but there is massive forms of political organising that is extremely hopeful across this world, and in particular, in nations that are most complicit. And one thing that I don't think I really saw in that last chapter was a mention about the Boycott Divestment Sanctions Movement, which is a Palestinian-led movement by civil society to put pressure on the state of Israel to end its illegal occupation, to allow the Palestinians to simply breathe, right? While they're struggling to, under this colonial imperial boot that is supported by the West. And we've seen the success of said, Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions Movement in the case of South Africa, where we've seen apartheid fall in South Africa. I was just there a couple weeks ago. Although there are massive issues with inequality, I met people, they told me, I was born free, meaning they were born post-apartheid, after 94. And so, how can we draw upon these lessons so that never again truly means never again, but also we use the efforts of everyone here in this room so that we go in that collective direction towards a common horizon of a liberated Palestine for Palestine?

CH: Well, I'm a strong supporter of BDS and have been from its inception because it did work finally against South Africa, but it's incumbent upon us to carry out that boycott, that divestment and those sanctions, each and every one of us, including boycotting businesses like Starbucks that are complicit and make their money within Israel, and in particular within the occupied West Bank, which we haven't spoken about, but is rapidly beginning to resemble Gaza. So yes, I'm a strong, strong supporter of BDS.

YG: We have two minutes left, so I don't know if there's enough time for an audience question maybe...

CH: Maybe I'll just read the end of the book, the last paragraph, won't ruin the book. "I sit in a pew with Mona, the Palestinian ambassador after the service." She used to be the Palestinian representative in Canada before. "She was born in a refugee camp in Lebanon during the civil war and lived under Israeli occupation in Ramallah in the West Bank. She bears, like most Palestinians, the emotional scars of childhood trauma. Have you lost faith in the international community or did you never have faith in it, I asked? I don't think I had a lot of faith to begin with, Mona says, but humanity I lost faith in. We're not naive, she continues. We know that at the end of the day this world is led by the powerful. If that wasn't the case, we wouldn't be talking about a peace plan that was proposed by the US and endorsed by Israel. We know there's a long way to go for us. I have faith in our people, in their steadfastness and their commitment and in the roots to their land. Mona adopted a boy from Gaza four months ago. He was dug out from under the rubble. His arm was dislocated. He had trouble breathing. He was living in a hospital. He had no name. No one claimed him. No one was sure when he was born. The guess was that he was five months old. He's our sun and moon, Mona tells me. He's everything. I exist because of him. I was in a horrible place. I felt that I didn't have a purpose on this earth. I didn't know why I would bring kids to this horrific world fearing that I would leave them alone not knowing what could happen. I felt the pain consuming me. I felt I would not survive. But after I saw him, everything changed. I felt that no matter what, this was the reason I was brought into this world just to be his mother. The best way to heal is to look at his face."

END

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