Netanyahu Lost — Is Israel Still Heading for Collapse?
Dr. Cassif

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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 interviewing Israeli politician Dr. Ofer Cassif. Before I begin this interview, I would like to briefly inform you that we are starting our crowdfunding campaign next month as we have only enough funds left to cover one month of salaries. In last year's campaign, we achieved 80,000 euros thanks to the incredible support of our viewers. And in this year's campaign, we aim to raise enough funds so that we can continue our independent journalism – journalism that doesn't take any money from corporations and governments and is only run by our viewers. We're sharing this information with you for the sake of transparency so that you can plan ahead. All the information regarding a crowdfunding campaign will be released on December 1st. Now returning to our guest – Dr. Ofer Cassif is a member of the Israeli Parliament representing the left-wing Arab-Jewish party known as Hadash. He is also a political philosopher and former lecturer at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He received his PhD in political philosophy from the London School of Economics. Dr. Ofer Cassif, welcome back to the show.

Ofer Cassif (OC): Thank you so much for having me.

ZR: Let's start this interview with the recent election in Israel and I'll briefly begin by summarizing the latest developments for our viewers. Following the elections at the end of October, Netanyahu's bloc secured 53 seats while Gadi Eisenkot's opposition bloc won 48 seats out of 120 seats in the Knesset. The Arab bloc achieved around a historic 19 seats, including 11 for the Joint List in an alliance compromising Ta'al, Balad and your own party, Hadash, and the remaining 8 seats for Ra'am. President Isaac Herzog has now tasked Eisenkot with forming a government after 67 lawmakers, including representatives of both Arab lists, recommended him. Eisenkot has until December 6th to form a government with a possible extension until December 20th. In the interim period, Netanyahu remains caretaker prime minister. On November 10th, the newly elected Knesset held its inaugural session with all 120 members who are in. Yet Eisenkot has imposed conditions on the participation of

Arab parties in his government, demanded that they recognize Israel as a Jewish state, accept national service, and recognize Hamas as a terrorist organization. He previously stated, and I quote: "I do not want the support of the Arab parties", unquote, and has maintained these conditions. On the other hand, Netanyahu has accused Arab representatives such as you of supporting terrorism, seeking Israel's destruction, while his Likud party has also alleged electoral fraud and foreign interference. Dr. Cassif, could you first introduce the political spectrum to our viewers by explaining these different blocks as well as your own? And how do you assess these results and hostility towards Arab political participation?

OC: First of all, I have to correct that the Joint List is definitely based on a majority of Arab members of the Knesset as well as voters, but we consider ourselves as a partnership between Arabs and Jews, and we've had, apart from me, more Jewish candidates. Unfortunately, we didn't get them in, as you said, only 11. And the second Jewish person or candidate in the list was number 13, if I remember correctly. This is one thing. As to your question, obviously the ex-government led by Netanyahu, Smotrich and Ben-Gvir was the most racist government ever in the state of Israel, and there were many, perhaps one may say even all of them to some extent. But this was definitely the most vicious, the most genocidal, for sure, the most violent and the most racist one. They lost even the shame that some governments and ministers and prime ministers had before. They were proud of the racism and the war mongering, including calling for the extermination of the Palestinian people very explicitly. Scums like Smotrich and his thugs and Ben-Gvir and also Netanyahu and most of the members of the Knesset with the Likud, in the last three years, ever since the massacre of October 7th – which we all condemn by the way – they have been calling explicitly to exterminate Gaza, to wipe out Gaza. They continuously said there are no innocents in Gaza, including children. So you can get the vision of this government which resembles one government that the Germans know perfectly well from its own history. And so, this government simply continues with this fascist and racist gist, and the lies and smears against the Palestinian citizens in general, and their representatives, that means us, in particular, is just part of the continuous racist discourse they created, pursued, and encouraged. So it shouldn't come as a surprise. All those talks about fraud, about cooperating or getting money from foreign countries, all those are sheer lies. And even the Israeli police and the secret police, the Shin Bet, which needless to say, are not very sympathetic to us – even they say that there was nothing like the government said. By the way, I have to emphasize at the same time that the chief of the Shin Bet, who was put in place by Netanyahu because he's devoted to him rather than to the citizens of the state, he actually claimed that there were frauds, that there was an issue of Arab politicians getting money from foreign countries – all of this just went down the drain. Everybody knows it's a lie. Even the police, the Shin Bet, apart from its chief says so. So this is part of the continuous smear and lies that the fascist, nationalistic criminal government of Netanyahu and his thugs continuously said. And it's very interesting to note, by the way, that before the elections of 2022, they said exactly the same, both regarding fraud and regarding foreign money, but they stopped this campaign once they realized they won. But now they continue because they were defeated, luckily. So they continue. And even two days ago Netanyahu in one of his worst addresses to the Israelis on the day of when we all take the oath in the plenum, he not only continued with those lies and

smears, but even moved forward and used even more racist and fascist incitement and language against the Palestinian citizens and especially against us as representatives of the Palestinian citizens. Both lists were smeared as terrorist sympathizers, etc.

So one thing about the foreign money, as I said, is a sheer lie, but it is also a sheer lie that we've ever supported one or another kind of terrorism. We've always, always, been very clear in our position to violence in general and to harming innocent civilians, which is the definition of terrorism, according to Netanyahu himself in his book, by the way. We've always been against it. But it's very easy for him and his gang to continue with those smears and incitements to delegitimize not only the next government that may be based on our support even if from the opposition, but to delegitimize, not to say dehumanize, all Palestinian citizens in Israel who took to the ballots and voted like never before. And they did it – the percentage was the highest ever, almost 80 percent of the Arab-Palestinian citizens in Israel went to vote – and they did it for two main reasons: one, because they realized this is a battle of to be or not to be. It's very clear that if, perish the thought, the fascist government won again, then they will move forward with Smotrich's decisive plan, which was published or released in 2017, which says very clearly that the Palestinians should be either subjected to a apartheid regime or be killed and expelled. And the Palestinian citizens in Israel, as well as thousands of democratic Jews realized and understood the danger. And because of that went to vote in masses. The other reason being the reformation of the Joint List which the majority of the Palestinian citizens expected us to do. So this combination led them to vote. And again, now there's a delegitimization by the fascists of the vote by using different smears like you mentioned before and I repeated regarding terrorists, sympathizers as it were, or fraud. Unfortunately, Mr. Eisenkot and the majority of those who are supposed to be used as an alternative to Netanyahu's government are mainly an alternative to Netanyahu, the person, but less alternative to his way. Too many of them endorse the racist language. I do not say that all of them. But to one or another extent many of them do. And because of that they also delegitimize us as representatives to be based on, even if we are not part of the government. We are the Joint List, we don't want and have no intention to be part of the government. But we already said, as we recommended to the president, Mr. Eisenkot, to be the next prime minister. And we also said that we are going to vote for Mr. Eisenkot and the opposition candidate for the Speaker of the House. We are committed also to not to oppose the next government of Eisenkot. And this is because we understand, like our voters, and we are committed to our voters, that the most important thing is to oust the fascist government, even if it means to vote for a government that we don't like and we won't like the next government. That's for sure. It's not our cup of tea. But we have to stop fascism.

ZR: Don't you think there's a contradiction in all of this? Because Eisenkot, as you probably know, was the former chief of staff of the Israeli military, served in the war campaign during the destruction of Gaza, and is one of the principal architects of the so-called Dahiya Doctrine, named after the certain suburbs of Beirut, which Israel extensively bombed during the 2006 Lebanon War. The doctrine advocates disproportionate military force and widespread destruction against areas from which armed groups operate. How do you see this re-conciling with the Arab bloc position – on the one side you have Netanyahu, who you are

calling a fascist, but on the other side you somebody that we could conclude to be a war criminal or allegedly conclude to be a war criminal. How do you compromise with that? And the second question is that an argument is being made that see, Israel is a democracy after all, the Arabs could vote, so all of this apartheid was just not existing. Could you address these two questions, please?

OC: Well, as to the first question, it's obvious, as I said before, that we are not going to decide, and the voters didn't vote between – or we in the parliament, we know that we're not going to vote to support, or at least not to oppose. But basically we are not going to choose between the good and the best or between even the bad and the good. We have to vote and to choose unfortunately between the bad and the worst. And under such circumstances we have to choose the bad. We know it's bad. That's one of the main reasons we are not going to be part of the next government. But those are the circumstances, you know. We do not live in an abstract vacuum. We have to choose between the bad and the worst. We have to choose between fascism and let's call it, I cannot call it democratic or liberal, but not a fascist government. Not a fascist right-wing government, okay? So unfortunately we have to choose the second. It's not because we like it, but because this is what is inflicted upon us. It is not our choice. This is one thing. Secondly, I want everybody to remember that in 2019, the candidate was then thought to be – afterwards it was discovered that it was false – but then he was thought to have been the alternative to Netanyahu, Benny Gantz. He led a campaign before the election in 2019, a terrible campaign in which he expressed his pride over how many people he killed in Gaza. Yet again after terrible and very, very difficult discussions and debates, we decided to nevertheless recommend Gantz because we understood that the main danger was Netanyahu. 35 years ago, Rabin was prime minister. Let's not forget, he was the chief of staff in 1967. He was the chief of staff of the occupation. He was a prime minister in '76 during not only the occupation, but the spreading, or at least the beginning of some of the settlements. At the end of the 80s, he was the defense minister under Yitzhak Shamir from the Likud as prime minister. And when the first Palestinian uprising, the Intifada, began, he was the defense minister who ordered the soldiers to break the bones of those who resisted the occupation. And in 1992, we did recommend him. And also, because we knew already the risk of the alternative, but also, even more importantly, we allowed his government to exist in order to move forward with the Oslo Accords. And then we supported him from the outside, too. So more often than not, not only in Israel, everywhere, you have to cooperate with the politicians whose ideas you do not like and sometimes even themselves as persons. I'm sure that Nelson Mandela didn't like too much de Klerk. But once it was clear that both together can overturn and can eliminate the racial apartheid criminal regime, they did it together. There are so many examples, you know. And so, unfortunately, this is the decision we have to make. And I don't say it's an easy one, I don't say it is a nice one, but the alternative is the continuation of the crimes against the Palestinian people as well as against the Israeli people, because let's not forget that alongside the genocidal policies and the ethnic cleansing that the current government pursues in the Gaza Strip in the West Bank, this government also turned the Israeli society and the regime themselves into fascist ones and we have to overturn it. That's the most important thing and unfortunately we have to make this decision.

ZR: So then let's move forward with the ongoing controversy surrounding an independent investigation into the October 7, 2023 Hamas attacks. In July, a proposal to establish an independent state commission of inquiry was rejected under Netanyahu's parliamentary majority. On November 10th, Eisenkot's political alliance introduced a new proposal. A day later, his bloc secured an important parliamentary victory by 63 votes to 50, gaining influence over key parliamentary committees, which could improve the chances of advancing this investigation. Meanwhile numerous theories and allegations have been circling on the internet ranging from catastrophic intelligence and military failures and complete negligence from Netanyahu's government to allowing the attacks to deliberately take place so that the greater Zionist project of Greater Israel can be pursued. Why in your view has Netanyahu resisted an independent investigation and do you believe Eisenkot is genuinely committed to uncovering the truth? Or is this merely for political gain?

OC: Well, I begin with the second question, because it's very easy. I think that Mr. Eisenkot – I have my disagreements with him, obviously, ideologically speaking, politically speaking, obviously we are very far from each other as far as ideology and politics are concerned – but I dare say that he's an honest man as opposed to Netanyahu, who in addition to his crimes against humanity and war crimes is also a psychopathic bastard. I cannot say those things about Eisenkot whatsoever. So I do trust him to really and genuinely pursue a state investigation, a commission, which we supported. And we voted a few times in favor of such a commission. For me, it is very clear that Netanyahu's gang opposes such a commission because they know they are guilty. They know they're fully responsible for the catastrophic massacre and crimes committed on October 7th. And he tries to hide it. He has a lot to be afraid of. That's in a nutshell the answer. They are terrified, especially Netanyahu, who is also corrupt. He is terrified that the truth will be revealed. Once the truth is revealed, it's done. And he knows that. And his thugs know that. That's the reason they've been trying up til now to prevent such an inquiry commission. But I believe that one of the first things that the next government will do, and perhaps even the Knesset next week already, because we need not have a new government in order to vote for such an inquiry commission, and I believe perhaps next week or the week after we will see a vote in the plenum in favor of such a commission. And I hope so. I truly hope so. Those bastards should be punished!

ZR: I'm also particularly interested in your perspective on the Iran war. In February, the United States and Israel launched a war of aggression against Iran, even though Iran posed no imminent threat and was actually in the midst of negotiations with Washington on its nuclear program. Yet as the war progressed, Israel largely and silently withdrew while the United States continued its attacks and naval blockade. This is particularly striking given that an investigation by The New York Times revealed that Netanyahu and a high-level Israeli delegation, including senior intelligence and military officials, played an important role in convincing Trump to attack Iran, saying that Iran's military capabilities can be destroyed and within weeks the government would collapse. Interestingly, much of the German media has paid little attention to Israel's withdrawal and providing an adequate explanation. How do you explain Israel's withdrawal from the Iranian war theater?

OC: It goes back to what I said before: the only thing that drives Netanyahu himself is his own self well-being and interest. He wants to stay in power because he's terrified of prison. You know that he's been charged with three different corruption charges. He knows he's going to be convicted. He's a coward. All this baritone pompous way of speaking is, forgive me for the language, chicken shit. And he's been doing whatever possible in order to stay in power and stay out of prison. That's the only thing that drives him. Those who are surrounding him as ministers, as advisors, as the members of the Knesset with the Likud and the other fascist factions, some of them are messianic bigots who truly believe that war is the way to bring the Messiah and build the so-called Third Temple, and others are simply full of hatred and want to see literally as much blood as possible. This combination of those three different interests come together, they overlap. And because of that, the current government looks like it does. Now, the Iranian issue is part of it. Everybody knows that Iran didn't pose any imminent risk to Israel or any other country in the region. I don't like the regime of Iran, I oppose it. It is a vicious, fanatic and dictatorial regime which I hate. And I hope that the Iranian people will be freed. But it cannot be done by imperialist tools. Imperialism was never interested in the well-being of any people. It was always interested in its own profit and power. And Israel, unfortunately, has been used for years, for decades, not only under Netanyahu, many years before, as a proxy of American imperialism. This is another part of it, you know. I don't accept this theory of the tail that wags the dog, if you know what I mean. I still think that the dog wags its tail. That is to say that the United States actually wanted, or the administration or some in the administration of the United States wanted to launch a war or an aggression against Iran and find a common language with Netanyahu. I don't think it's true or accurate, at least, to say that Netanyahu is the tail that wagged the dog, namely Trump. I think it was much more of a, let's call it, mutual influence led by American imperialism. But basically, in the end of the day, the main interest of Netanyahu and his thugs, the so-called government, was to launch a war either against Iran, or Syria, or Lebanon, or to inflame the West Bank, and more in Gaza, or some of those together, mainly if not solely in order to stay in power and nothing else. That's the main issue here.

ZR: You told me on the onset that you have very limited time and we've gone over that. So thank you so much, political philosopher and member of the Israeli Parliament, Dr. Ofer Cassif, I hope to have you back in a couple of days again. Thank you.

OC: Me too, thank you so much, have a nice day.

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 don't forget to like, comment, and share this video with your network so that we can boost the algorithm of YouTube together and reach a wider audience. I thank you for your support and for tuning in. I'm your host, Zain Raza. See you next time.

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