

Transcript

Electronic Intifada's video podcast "Day 3 Roundtable: Gaza's Al-Aqsa Flood"

A 98-minute [roundtable](#) presented on October 9, 2023

Featuring: Nora Barrows-Friedman, Asa Winstanley, and Ali Abunimah from EI, with guests Jon Elmer, Refaat Al-Areer, Abdaljawad Omar, and Shahd Abusalama

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Nora Barrows-Friedman:

Hi everybody. Near and far. Thank you so much for joining us on this Monday as we inaugurate our our livestream capabilities here at the Electronic Intifada. Take it away Asa.

Asa Winstanley:

Hi. Yes, sorry. Technical difficulties. Well, this is our first ever livestream, actually, so this is going to be a bit of an experiment for the Electronic Intifada. So bear with us. We'll see how it goes. Obviously, you know, this is a new world we're in. This is an unprecedented era, and we thought it was a good time to go live. So we're going to be trying to reach people from Gaza later on in the stream. And we're joined here to kick things off with our executive director Ali Abunimah, and with a friend of the show, Jon Elmer, who's going to be giving some of his expert analysis as always. But Ali, do you want to kick things off for us with your assessment of the situation as you can see it in Palestine right now?

Ali Abunimah:

Yes. And first, let me say to everyone, welcome to the very first Electronic Intifada livestream. Thank you for joining us. Thank you, Jon, for giving us your time. I'm very excited to hear what you have to say about the military situation. Some of your observations that I've been reading have been really insightful and stunning, and I know that we're going to be trying to get some of our friends from Gaza live. So I hope people will really stick around. And thanks to the EI podcast team, you always do a brilliant job. But bringing us on live for the first time-- this is really great. So, I mean, we're all watching, I think history unfold and starting backwards from what the horrifying events unfolding today in Gaza, where we see Israel really going wild, not even pretending that there are any military objectives to what they're doing.

Ali Abunimah:

They are massacring entire entire families in their homes. Today there was the bombing of a marketplace in Jabaliyya killing more than 50 people. They have bombed civilian neighborhoods all over Gaza. They have bombed mosques. And the point is to kill people in revenge for Israel's

humiliation and defeat at the hands of the Palestinian resistance. What we have seen unfold in the last few days is something I think we thought could happen theoretically at some point in the future, but I don't think any of us thought it would unfold in real time, in the way it has. What has been utterly destroyed is the myth of the Israeli army, the invincible Israeli army, the courageous and skilled Israeli soldier, and the all knowing-Israeli intelligence apparatus. What we saw revealed was a paper army that dissolved. The entire Gaza Division melted away.

Ali Abunimah:

I read in the Israeli press over the past 48 hours, about how for five hours, the Israeli army didn't even know what was going on. They didn't know that hundreds, if not thousands of very highly trained Palestinian resistance fighters had crossed in, out of Gaza into the 1948 occupied territories by land, sea, and air. And the videos that have been coming from the Qassam brigades are just stunning: of resistance fighters taking over entire military bases, capturing soldiers in their underwear, killing soldiers. It seems that, if you hadn't seen them, you wouldn't believe them. And the scale of the catastrophe for Israel-- to its image, to its self-confidence, to the confidence of the settler colonists that the army and their state can protect them. I don't think it's sunk in, the scale of the disaster. I think this is bigger than Israel's shock in October 1973.

Ali Abunimah:

It's bigger than its defeat at the hands of the Hezbollah resistance in July and August of 2006. And the profound results of it have yet to unfold. Of course, what we're seeing now in terms of Israel's reaction is sadly pretty much what you'd expect, as I mentioned: going wild on the civilians because they can't fight. Because when Israeli soldiers are put face-to-face, hand-to-hand with the committed resistance fighters, they are unable to fight. They surrender or they're killed. Now, what we've seen in terms of the announcement this morning from Yoav Gallant, the Israeli defense minister, is really a declaration of a genocidal war against Palestinians in Gaza. Gallant announced a total siege on Gaza, cutting off food, water, electricity, any form of supplies to 2 million-plus civilians living in what is basically a giant refugee camp or open air prison.

Ali Abunimah:

Half of them are children. These are war crimes and crimes against humanity of the highest order. He said: we are fighting against human animals, and we must act accordingly. It's not hyperbole to say this is Nazi language. This is the language of Hitler. This is exterminationist language. This is the language that a Nazi-style regime uses against its victims in a concentration camp. And this is what Palestinians have every right to resist and fight against, and have been doing so for years. This is not the first time around. And what I want to say in terms of just kind of wrapping up these introductory comments, is the reaction from the so-called West the United States, the British, the Europeans: what Joseph Massad in a brilliant article that we published at the Electronic Intifada last night, accurately called The International Enemies of the Palestinian People.

Ali Abunimah:

Normally, they will pay lip service to-- you know, they'll say Israel has a right to defend itself, but civilians should be protected. They're not saying that now they are giving Israel a hundred green lights to commit these massacres. The question is, why? Why have they dropped even the

mere pretense and the mere lip service to human rights? It is because they understand that this settler colony in Palestine is not permanent. What they saw in the last few days shakes their confidence that it can and will continue to exist. And that's why they are telling the Israelis, you can do what you want. You can go wild on the Palestinians, and we will back you. But there is no military solution to the reality that Israel is a settler colony of a minority population, a minority population, the Jews are the minority in historic Palestine, ruling over an indigenous people that is a volcano erupting in its struggle for liberation. Israel can't bomb its way out of that situation. And whatever horror it commits in Gaza, at the end of the day, it's still going to be an illegitimate settler colony. And the Palestinians are still going to be fighting for their liberation. That's what I see. That's what I feel coming from our friends and comrades in Gaza and across Palestine, who we'll hear from later. But that's kind of the picture I see now.

Nora Barrows-Friedman:

Thank you so much, Ali. And I want to bring in Refaat Alareer. He is a contributor to the Electronic Intifada. He's in Gaza right now. Refaat, thank you so much for finding, you know, one bar of cell service and, you know, a little bit of battery to join us. Can you please update us on, on what the current situation is right now in Gaza?

Refaat Alareer:

Thank you, Nora, Ali, Jon, and Asa. Unspeakable. Brutalities [almost cries.]

Ali Abunimah:

What we're seeing is, is unbelievable. It's unbearable for us, watching it from the safety of where we are. And it's impossible to imagine--

Refaat Alareer:

There's a bomb every couple of minutes. Whole buildings are being destroyed. The roads to al-Shifa Hospital, I just tweeted that almost all the roads to al-Shifa Hospital were destroyed. So many families, no matter how many tweets you see, or how many livestreams you watch, the reality on the ground is a lot, a lot more terrible than it is on social media and on Twitter. [A large bomb explosion.] And if-- I'm not sure, this whole room is filled with gunpowder, cement or [unclear] cement. My hair is filled with dust and cement and the little kids behind me are terrified, in fear, the little ones. And we can see the pictures that follow quickly. Whole buildings, residential buildings, businesses, Palestinian infrastructure, schools, hospitals, ambulances, and medical centers. [Large bomb explosion.]

Refaat Alareer:

You, you don't, you don't know whether this is, this is it. [Almost crying.] It's-- We're not-- We, we are not-- We don't deserve this. We're not animals like the Israelis think. Our kids deserve better. Israel knows that they want to punish the kids, the civilians, like Ali suggested. And I have always said this, even before, even from the nineties when young Palestinians, Ali says, praised those valiant fighters. They are to be praised. But if you know them in real life, when you see the pictures of those fighters, they're very simple people. They're lightly armed, modestly trained, but they have a weapon that Israel does not have: the weapon of the belief, the faith, that

this is your land, that you are fighting a brutal European colonial enterprise that has been brutalizing Palestinians for over seven decades.

Refaat Alareer:

Palestinians are fighting those people, even from the nineties. And later on, in the second Intifada, they always, always came victorious when they came face-to-face with Israelis, always cost them loss in so many operations. And look at what happens. It's a miracle, actually, a hundred million miracles that took place. But it's all well planned, meticulously planned by people who have almost nothing except their faith. And those people believe that they're not only fighting for Palestine, they're fighting for the Ummah. They're fighting for a course that is just, a course that should not, and cannot be forsaken. We believe that if we give up, then everybody is going to say, look at the Palestinians. They give up. Why don't you behave like the Palestinians? Why don't you bow down?

Refaat Alareer:

And Israel knows this, and Israel is punishing not, by the way, the Palestinian fighters. They are inside. They're inside occupied land. And many of those people from Shujaiyya, from Jabaliyya, from Khan Younis and Rafah, from everywhere, they have their parents and grandparents who have land behind the Armistice line. My grandmother used to point over there saying that when Palestine is free, you will be rich, because we have a lot of land that we can use to farm, to sell. But it's not ours because of the Israeli brutal occupation. What I'm saying here briefly is that it's extremely horrible [what's happening to] the infrastructure. It's unprecedented. I'm not exaggerating again, if I'm saying that this is the Blitz again, all over, like what happened in London by the Nazis, unfortunately by the Israeli Zionists who claim to be the descendants of the victims of the Holocaust are inflicting yet a similar plight, a similar catastrophes against the Palestinians.

Refaat Alareer:

We know that it's very bleak. It's very dark. There's no way out. If, if there's no water, there is no way out of Gaza. What, what should we do? [Almost crying.] Like drown, like commit mass suicide? Is this what Israel wants? And we're not going to do that. And I was telling some friend the other day, that I'm an academic. I probably, the toughest thing I have at home is an Expo marker. But if the Israelis invade, if they target us, charge at us, door to door to massacre us, I'm going to use that markers, throw it at the Israeli soldiers, even if that is the last thing that I would be able to do. And this is the feeling of everybody. We are helpless. We have nothing to lose. [Large bomb explosion.]

Ali Abunimah:

Refaat, you are an academic and you are a teacher, and you have inspired and taught and mentored many of the writers [sound of large bomb explosion] who contribute to the Electronic Intifada. Are you in touch with some of your students and colleagues? Are you able to stay in touch with people around you and to--

Refaat Alareer:

I just ventured out to the pharmacy to bring some medicine. And I was-- my car was almost bombed five times. Just [big bomb explosion] just driving for five minutes to the pharmacy to bring medicine to the little ones, painkillers and stuff. And you can only imagine how horrible it is. I took some videos [big bomb explosion] and these are-- if you're counting, it's like every couple of minutes. These are just the ones around where I live in the Gaza City in Tel al-Hawa. And you can multiply this by a hundred times all across the Gaza Strip. It's not easy to call people. It's not easy to contact people, especially family members in Shujaiyya most of whom had to leave their homes. Israel has just destroyed the Palestinian telecommunications company. We've no internet, no electricity.

Refaat Alareer:

There will be barely any internet or access or signal to call people. Sometimes. I was just calling my daughter, and it took me like five tries just to get her to answer me. I'm in touch with with the people, with some of my friends, my students. I try, but I'm helpless. Like my students-- I'm teaching English poetry this term. I was teaching them your poem, Ali. And they always love it. And I always tell them how poetry can be your weapon [almost crying]. It's your strongest weapon. It's what you need to do, to carry, to do this. But I'm lying to them. I think I'm lying to them if I'm telling them that this is your strongest weapon and Israel is pouring tons and tons of dynamite, of US-made missiles upon our heads.

Refaat Alareer:

I posted-- I keep posting messages, trying to reassure them, sending prayers to my students and their families and loved ones, knowing pretty well that many of them will not be back and some of their family members, their homes. And I just, I'm getting a tweet just now on messages that the Islamic University was targeted. I'm praying that this is not true. If that's true, that's like almost 1,500 people without jobs and 20,000 students without classes, without benches, without a university degree. So, Israel's, it's an open-- it's a war against everything. There is nothing that Israel did not hit. And there's just one message. It's a message of hate, of death and destruction. That's it. There's no message because, and I, I don't like to, to, to, to say this because I don't want to be using the Israeli captives as a way to, to dissuade the Israeli, so to speak, from bombing.

Refaat Alareer:

But these bombs will definitely harm and hurt the Israeli civilians, so to speak, and soldiers captured in Gaza, in the Gaza Strip. But maybe Israel is bombing this hard so that they can kill those people, those Israelis before they killed the Palestinians, so they don't have to free the Palestinian political prisoners. They are-- We are dealing with people that are extremely horrible, like they are literally inciting genocide and taking words from the Nazi language and Nazi discourse. What else do you expect? The least you could expect? There was this, I think was it the Jewish Congress that tweeted something about the Holocaust, that the number of Jews killed by the attacks from Gaza exceed any number any day of Jews killed during the Holocaust. And this is categorically, mathematically, statistically, it's wrong. And it's a minimization, trivialization of the Holocaust. But look to what extent they're willing to go. This is Holocaust denial, not only revisionism, because statistically it's not even close, but they are willing to exonerate Hitler and the Nazis in order to demonize the Palestinians and justify-- [bomb explosion] justify the upcoming genocide. It's going to be ethnic cleansing. We don't know in a

week if we're going to be in the sea, buried under the rubble or buried in graveyards, if there is space, or in Sinai pushed out to die in the desert.

Nora Barrows-Friedman:

Refaat, we've you know, over the many years of these types of assaults on Gaza. You've regularly talked about how you discuss this with your children, with your young kids [some bombing sounds.] What, how, what are those conversations like right now? As you know, it's evening, they're getting ready for bed. And, you know, we all hear what's going on outside.

Refaat Alareer:

We're trying to huddle in the place, in the narrowest possible place that is less likely to, to be hit. That's, that was like in the past. And again, we don't talk a lot, sadly, I know that in the past I would spend time killing stories, but with the systematic attacks against Palestinian,s sleeping Palestinians in their homes, and the extermination of more than 20 families, so far. At least this was, I read this number 10 hours ago, maybe it's now double the number. We talk less. The kids don't have-- We, like, we eat less, we drink less. Everything is less because because of the, again, what Israel is putting us into the situation. I try to hug them. But again, it's, it's very conflicting, very difficult. You don't want to hug them, so they don't feel that this is, this could be the last one, and you want to hug them. So at least there is a hug out there.

Refaat Alareer:

And you want, you know, to pat on their heads. It's very, very difficult being a father here. Even the, you know, the, the expressions of intimacy and love are very difficult, because they could be interpreted in, in too many different ways. And the kids know. They feel all the lies we tell them, that it's going to be okay, that the bombing is far away. They're not, they're not working. Now, even the first day, the first 24 hours, there were screams and shrieks all over the area every time there's a bomb. But now everybody is calm. We, this is, the internal, this is the worst kind of trauma, the internal kind of fear and terror that the kids have to go to go through. I took a picture yesterday of my little Amal over here opening her little notebook and reading her lessons. Interestingly, ML developed the habit of not liking school, not wanting to do her homework recently, but all of a sudden change, change happens, happens. Yeah. And yeah she was reading stories for my, my wife. Nuseiba tells me that she's an excellent reader. She's a second grader, but she reads well from from books. Hopefully she grows despite Israeli death and destruction and genocide, and becomea an amazing storyteller.

Asa Winstanley:

Refaat, we've heard these genocidal threats from Israeli ministers to cut Gaza off completely from water, electricity and everything else. What are the current conditions like in Gaza, in terms of electricity holding up, and things like that?

Refaat Alareer:

Since Saturday, we had around three, four hours of electricity. Some places where Israel hits very hard they lose any access to electricity. And if there is no electricity, there's no water, because we have to use a water pump to bring the water because it, it comes like naturally. We have water every couple of days, sometimes more, sometimes once a week, twice a week. And

then we fill the tanks. We fill the tanks, you know, until the next time. So no electricity, it means there's no water. But where I live, we have a generator that could generate like up to three to five hours every day. But we are using it as backup. Mainly now, the instructions from the management of the, the building is conserve everything drink less, eat less, don't use water, don't take showers unless it's extremely necessary.

Refaat Alareer:

And yeah, this is if-- not sure if this is only a slow genocide Israel is doing. These are not empty threats. This is an Israeli prime minister, and they know this is going to cause uproar. But yes, the international community is complicit. They no longer care, not even paying lip service to us. It's going to cause a, a tiny little embarrassment to, to Israel, because again, also using this threat and likening Palestinians to animals, to to treat us like animals. It's what's going on on the ground. Many areas don't have water or electricity. Those who have, are extremely lucky, and they barely can-- I'm not sure how many ,how long this can be the same. And clearly, it's not going to stay the same. It's, it's aggravating, it's worsening on all levels. Even the intensity of the bombings. They don't, they don't stop. In 2021, it would only mostly be the days, but now it's around the clock. In this talk, probably less than 30 minutes, we have had the bombs around like 20, 30 times. And this is only in Gaza, in the city.

Ali Abunimah:

Refaat, one of the things that Israel and its supporters always say is that they're not at war with the Palestinian people in Gaza. They're war with Hamas, and the Palestinian people in Gaza are suffering because of Hamas and the resistance groups. And that one of their goals through these repeated massacres and bombing campaigns that we've seen now with accelerating frequency, 2008, 2012, 2014 and then accelerating now multiple times a year, the goal is to in their mind, to force the-- to turn the Palestinian people against the resistance groups by making them suffer so that people in Gaza will say to Hamas leadership, you did this to us, you brought these massacres upon us. From your perspective and from the perspective of people around you, is that Israeli strategy likely to work? Are people in Gaza going to blame the resistance for the horrifying situation that people are in?

Refaat Alareer:

There are two points here. Hamas is 30 years old, I think. And this started well before Hamas, decades before Hamas. And not only in the years leading to the Nakba, the disaster, 1948. But even when the British mandate enabled and empowered and opened the doors for the Jewish Zionists to immigrate to Palestine, empowered them, gave them weapons, weakened the Palestinians, destroyed the Palestinian resistance, so to speak. So it's a lie. It's a fabrication that this is only because of of Hamas. Hamas and other Palestine factions and groups are a reaction to the Israeli occupation and brutality. The framing that Hamas is bringing harm is also insulting to Palestinians, because it negates decades of Israeli terror.

Refaat Alareer:

And I always say that even look at the West Bank, look at the Palestinians in the 1948 areas. There is racism against them and apartheid. Look at the people in Jenin and Hebron and Nablus and Al-Quds, Jerusalem. They're being brutalized every day. The settlements are expanding, and

Hamas barely functions in the West Bank. So this is completely and utterly untrue. Israel is using Hamas as a lie to try to deflect some of, try to deflect some of the blame or all the blame-- that if Hamas stops, if Hamas is not in Gaza, we're not going to be to be doing this. And it's a lie. The second thing Palestinians have learned a hard lesson that Israel is going to kill them no matter what.

Refaat Alareer:

In 2014, when Israel wanted to eradicate Hamas, they killed people from the Islamic Jihad and from Fateh, and they killed 551 Palestinian kids, and like 200 women and 150 elderly people or so. So Israel does not differentiate. Israel kills all. The same thing happened again and again, in later Israeli attacks. And so many Palestinians realize that if Israel starts a war, it's going to kill anybody. And this is one. The second thing is that if you've seen the videos of people storming, it started by Hamas. The whole attack was planned, executed, started by Hamas. And in every Palestinian faction, even poorly armed factions with a couple of Klashnikovs participated in the attacks against the Israeli military posts. What these issues about putting and framing this as it is because of Hamas, the framing is completely unacceptable.

Refaat Alareer:

It's wrong. And the Palestinians find themselves cornered after being rejected. [They tried] every means of resistance. BDS? [Accusations of] antisemitism. Great Return March? [Met with] violence, and snipers are sent. By the way, there was a report that the very snipers who killed and injured Palestinians, like hundreds and thousands of them were either captured or killed in the [October 7] attacks. So the Palestinians find themselves in a corner where they can either submit, kneel, and even that is not going to be allowed in dignity. You've seen the pictures, I think, of Israel capturing some of the Palestinians, and mostly they are not fighters, because they could have shown us the weapons. There were no weapons. Many Palestinian civilians entered there because they wanted to see Palestine, their, their villages and their towns, and those people were arrested, and they were humiliated. So even if Palestinians choose to, to submit, to surrender, Israel is going to humiliate them. So for that, and for our belief in our right to defend ourselves, and the dignity of, of the free world, all Palestinians are in this together.

Nora Barrows-Friedman:

Refaat, thank you so much. We, we want to let you go so that you can conserve your, you know, your energy and, and be with your family. So but we will have have you back on. Of course, we will have updates. We will keep in, in contact. Yeah. And thank you. You know, it's, it's rare that we're left speechless, but we're with you. We're with you.

Asa Winstanley:

Thank so much, Refaat. We really appreciate it.

Ali Abunimah:

Allah yuhamiikum (God protect you.)

Nora Barrows-Friedman:

So Jon, we want to bring you on. We also have Abdaljawad Omar and, and we also have Shahed Abusalama who has family in Gaza waiting in the wings. Jon, briefly, before we bring on Abdel-Jawad what's your reaction to, you know, to what we just heard from Refaat and and what have you been watching the last few days?

Jon Elmer:

Yeah, I mean, I think it's important to note that we don't know the level of the humiliation of the Israeli army at this point. Israel operates a military censor on information, on critical information, and even non-critical information. And the level of that censor is very, very significant. So the amount of information that we have is just a very small amount of what's going on. But we know that now, near the end of the third day, that they still haven't that there's still Palestinian guerrillas fighting inside Israel, that those guerrillas are apparently being resupplied, and the fighters are being refreshed. They have tunnel access in and out. The Israelis have been, as Ali said at the beginning, have been chased off their bases. The key bases around the Gaza Strip including the base with the Gaza command were emptied.

Jon Elmer:

The Palestinian guerrillas were driving around in Israeli vehicles. They had total control of those bases. We don't hear until the military spokespeople are pressed by journalists in their morning briefings just what's going on. Are there still people fighting? And they let out little pieces of information that, that we know that there's fighting in at least seven or eight different places. We have witnessed testimonies that we've heard on the BBC from the situation at the rave where partiers at that rave were there for four hours, and they said that there was multiple resupplies by the Palestinians in that period, and no Israeli response to come and help them. The Israelis abandoned their people in the South and even their soldiers. There was reports of their soldiers being basically--like they always do, but in a state of emergency!--hitchhiking to their spots, because they have no way to get their people there.

Jon Elmer:

So that's an important thing. Just the military censor is keeping tabs on some of the most humiliating aspects. And I think just in general, it's it's a remarkable action. Instead of of having the fighting take place on Israeli terms, Palestinians-- this fight's happening on their terms. The number of captives that the Palestinians have, which I think should be at the forefront of what's happening here, is a historic amount. The possibility to empty Palestinian jails in a prisoner exchange is significant. It's incredibly significant. They have high ranking officers. Again, the military censor won't tell us how many, who's there, but we know that they're significant. We know they ran, overran those army bases, so there's at least the commanders of each of those bases in custody or dead.

Jon Elmer:

And so I think there is a lot more news to come out about the depth of the victory, of the defeat of these Israeli forces. And I think we're we're told about the, the intelligence community, right? This is-- Israel's supposed to be you know, the startup nation, with you know, underpinned by its tech. You know, where was unit 8200 that we've heard so much about? Where was the signals intelligence? Where was the human intelligence? How did it take them five hours to even know

what was going on? When they tell the world that they're the state-of-the-art military intelligence, the depth of the humiliation is, like I said, we're barely getting to the surface of what is happening here.

Ali Abunimah:

And is it not the case, Jon, that the Qassam brigades, the military wing of Hamas, said that they actually overran one of the unit 8200 bases. And it's also my understanding, at least from some of the reports I've read, that when the Qassam fighters overran the Erez crossing, they took computers and hard drives, which provide them with lists of collaborators, potentially, and other information that would be of strategic importance. So the failure is potentially on so many levels that even the Israelis, let alone we, don't yet fully understand and comprehend,

Jon Elmer:

And the fact that it's carried on for these days, because we're sort of used to a spectacular attack, and then it's over. But each day, Israel has to come to the mic and say, actually, nothing's changed. We're still fighting the same war that we were fighting four days ago. And, and they can't speak to any concrete results. And when you hear from their people, I mean, we even heard from the kibbutz, the people in the kibbutz, that the Palestinian fighters were going floor to floor and telling people to go into their bomb shelters, into their individual shelters, to stay away from what was happening in those circumstances, more than their army was; that their army left them abandoned in those situations. I mean, there's so many things looking forward. It's, it's hard to imagine people going back to those communities, how that is going to look in the future. And even there's-- we're just at the beginning of this, because the amount of of this story that is the freeing of the prisoners, the historic freeing of prisoners that's coming. If people remember the exchange for one tank gunner back in 2006, that in 2011 that prisoner exchange was more than a thousand Palestinians for one tank gunner. At this point, we're talking about dozens of captives, possibly hundreds of captives,

Nora Barrows-Friedman:

Abdaljawad, from your view in the occupied West Bank what do you make of that?

Abdaljawad Omar:

I think, I don't want to echo too much what Jon was saying. I mean, there was a massive failure, and the massive failure is deep, it's long, because I don't think this is an operation that was conceived in the moment. It was planned out for months-- diversion tactics, and a lot of trickery going into it to reach this point where Palestinian resistance decided to take things in their own hands and declare war and also invade Israel. So there's the intelligence failure that Jon says, and then there's also breaching the wall. This is a underground wall. It's a highly electrified wall. It's supposed to monitor every movement near the fence, across the whole of the Gaza Strip. Somehow Israel was blinded. We don't know how. It was totally blinded. It did not even see these fighters coming in.

Abdaljawad Omar:

All warning systems failed including intelligence, which should preconceive of this attack. But also in the moment, like in moment zero, they couldn't do anything about it. And they were

caught red-handed and with total surprise. So in fact, the Palestinian resistance was able to destroy the entire line of defense that surrounds the Gaza Strip, and it's military, let's say, backbone. So that's why we saw that the Israeli military took a long time to respond, because it lost its command and control centers in this area. It lost all information. It couldn't really act or react to what was happening. And this is a moment of off-balance for the Israelis. It's a moment where they're very highly insecure in a precarious position, and they're taking decisions under a lot of stress and duress, to try to retain some of their lost glory.

Abdaljawad Omar:

And therefore, it's a scary moment as well, because they are probably prone to make a lot of mistakes in their calculation as they move on. So as they move on and try to create havoc in the Gaza Strip, the terror we saw the bombs that we were hearing as Refaat was speaking preparing the ground for a ground assault. It's easy to start a war; it's not easy to end it. It's easy to enter the Gaza Strip and try to show bravado, but at the same time that might come costly on Israel and the Gaza Strip at the same time. So there's a lot of things happening, and as Jon says, the fighting within 1948 territories has not ended. But I think one of the worries, at least for me speaking, is to what extent Israel's leadership now is mass-miscalculating its steps and moves and pushing not only Gaza, but the entire region for a war that could change the face of the Middle East. I mean, we're at this point at least.

Nora Barrows-Friedman:

And how are people in the West Bank reacting to the prison break in Gaza on October 7th? And, you know, and of course, the bombing campaign that Israel is relentlessly engaging in now.

Abdaljawad Omar:

There's a lot of awe. There's a lot of excitement, hope, generated by what happened in the past couple of days in the West Bank, but also a lot of helplessness and also a lot of feelings of, you know horror and terror surrounding people because it's one of these moments where the future seems hanging and you don't know where it's going. And still, I think the past three days have still not been embedded too much in our consciousness yet. I mean, I think we had this moment where we couldn't believe what was happening. And I think people are still making it any out of this condition of that what happened actually really happened. And as Jon was saying, even what happened is still engulfed with a lot of, let's say, misinformation the slow spread of news of the killings.

Abdaljawad Omar:

What really happened and transpired is still not totally clear for most people in the West Bank. But there's a lot of anticipation, and I think it's creating this moment where there's a shift in consciousness that Israel is not what Israel was in terms of its fighting powers, in terms of its regular army, if it's in terms of its will to fight. We saw that in Jenin months ago. We're seeing it today as well with soldiers abandoning their bases and running away and not protecting the settlements that they were supposed to protect. We're seeing it in many arenas in many different ways. And Israel's response is like, always is to fight by remote control, is to fight through air power, is to fight through cowardly moves that I think, you know makes it a very bloodthirsty power, but one that is not willing to risk its own soldiers and its own military. So there's this shift

in consciousness, but I think it's still slow. And as things move on I don't know what's going to happen in the West Bank as well. I mean, things have, history has opened up today, I mean, in the past couple of days, and I think we don't really know. Nobody really knows what, what, what could go on in the West Bank.

Asa Winstanley:

Abdaljawad, a question for you about this, the ground invasion, and then maybe after you, Jon, you probably have thoughts on this too, but what do you make of all this talk of a ground invasion into Gaza by the Israelis, and on the western media at the moment, there's a lot of sort of live coverage of tanks being sent down to the south of 1948 Palestine. And there's, you know, lots of talk about a ground invasion, and so on and so forth. But, you know, during the last major escalation against Gaza, we saw similar talk. You know, there was a lot of talk about ground invasion of Gaza and that all came to nothing. That said, this is obviously an unprecedented situation but as, as you've both been saying, the battles inside '48 territories are still ongoing. So what do you make of this kind of talk?

Abdaljawad Omar:

I think, look, there's a context to what happened also from a military perspective in terms of, you know, Israel's dialogue-- if you want military dialogue-- with the resistance groups. So what happened in 2021 was a diversions tactic that was meant to take Hamas' fighters into the tunnels that Israel has figured out and then bomb these fighters while they're in the tunnels. And it didn't work because Hamas caught on the trick and actually did not place its fighters within these tunnels. But what's important about the last rounds, at least coming into this offensive, this Palestinian offensive that we saw, is that Israel's refusal to actually do a ground maneuver to exchange prisoners, with the four prisoners that Hamas already had captured, incentivizes this process for the Palestinian resistance to find a new way to engage the Israelis, to figure out how they could reach and actually have close to close combat.

Abdaljawad Omar:

So it's actually partially what happened today was you know, was produced by Israel's refusal to engage in any military maneuver. Now, it's one thing to do a military maneuver within the Gaza Strip. You can have a limited maneuver, you could have a deep maneuver. You could say, look, I want to go in and I want to destroy the entire resistance and its infrastructure and the long campaign. So there's multiple, multiple options for Israel for what it could do in terms of a ground maneuver. But they are all also tedious and risky in terms of you know, also finding out that its ground forces are not ready for such war, especially for an army that has evaded such types of actions, at least for the past decade or so, at least since the 2006 Lebanon War, has tried to move away from military maneuvers deep within enemy territory. For it to actually now decide on it without any concrete political objectives, without any concrete policy objective except to wreak havoc also could lead to a disaster in its own making.

Abdaljawad Omar:

I mean, in military science, we always say war: you can start a war, but you don't know how it ends. You can go in, but you don't know what actually will transpire. And it could only deepen Israel's crisis because also a grand maneuver could also incentivize other players in the region to

enter this war, and to make also this kind of maneuver more difficult as multiple fronts open up. And we can see a more broad form of warfare happening in terms of rocket fire, firepower coming from Lebanon or Syria or other places. I'm not sure, because I don't think also in terms of Hamas' alliances and Palestinian resistance alliances, that they will be left alone to withstand Israel's power without them interfering at some point, whatever that point is. It'll be a critical point also in the what transpires throughout the upcoming campaign that Israel is launching.

Abdaljawad Omar:

But right now, what Israel is doing is basically an airpower campaign that actually targets civilians not as, you know collateral damage, but it's targeting and trying to horrify civilians, and also doing some tactical objective by trying to open new spaces for tanks and other military vehicles to open up. And that's why we're seeing this heavy fire falling on Gaza. But it includes different nodes, institutions like universities you know, civil institutions. It's trying to destroy the entire Gaza Strip infrastructure exacting a heavy price, but also attempting, I think, at some point to open up the space in different ways for its ground maneuver within the Gaza Strip itself. So that's what's happening, at least if we read it from far away. I'm not sure if that's what actually will transpire, but at least these are my narrow predictions.

Nora Barrows-Friedman:

And Jon, you obviously spent a lot of time in the West Bank as well as well as Gaza. Can you talk a little bit about what you're seeing in terms of what Abdaljawad said across the West Bank, but also kind of, you know, what the strategic formation might look like in terms of whether or not Israel enacts a ground invasion?

Jon Elmer:

Yeah, I mean, it's hard to imagine a ground invasion at this point when they're still fighting inside their own territory. Like, do they mount the ground invasion and also have a back flank fight that's happening inside their territory? I mean, they're in a position that's that we've never been in before, and it's difficult to make predictions on it because things can change so fast. The posture of Hezbollah in the north doesn't make it seem like they're going to sit this one out. And you know, some of it might be posturing, some of it might just be solidarity actions to make it seem like that's the case. But Hezbollah has significant capabilities to turn the conflict in a very, very short amount of time by participating just a little bit. So if it does become a wider regional war there, that does not benefit Israel. You know, this talk that they have to punish Hamas, like anytime they switch their invasion talk to punishing Hamas in particular, you know that it's going to fail because there's no way to do that.

Jon Elmer:

It doesn't work that way. Hamas is the Palestinians that live in the Gaza Strip, and there's no way to eliminate that. And just in terms of like Israeli capability, I haven't seen that capability of an Israeli ground war. Now, you know, eight years after their first failed ground war, where they went in and basically went, okay, no, we're not going to do this, and basically turned on their heels and left. It's hard to see eight years later that the, the defenders of Gaza aren't eight years more developed in their defense. While the conscripted army of the Israelis who they talk about are school teachers during the week or what have you, are going to be lining up in order to you

know, to go down into the tunnels and fight underneath the Gaza Strip in the, you know, underground metro system that's been created.

Jon Elmer:

It just doesn't sound to me like a realistic option. And if it is their option, it sounds like an extremely deadly one, both for Palestinians, but for Israelis too, and on a level that the Israelis most likely can't tolerate as a country. I think at some point, how many days of rockets falling if Hezbollah decides to join even just the rocket war, how many days can Israelis live in bomb shelters of their own making where their own government said, we're going to do this, we're going to put you in these bomb shelters, and they're not winning, visibly not winning, the conflict. It's just really difficult to see on this third day when the most important element of the story today is that they still haven't been able to put down the incursion into their own state. That part, we don't know the numbers, but it's far less numbers of fighters than will meet them on the other side of the border, should they invade Gaza.

Jon Elmer:

It just doesn't look from here like something that Israel can escalate very easily. They now have hundreds of their captives are they going to carpet bomb Gaza with their captives? They're going to kill their captives. So there's so many different things that Israel has to now take into question that, you know, even 10 years ago when everybody just assumed that they were the Goliath that could do whatever they wanted, things have really changed. They changed in 2006 for Hezbollah. And of course, we've all seen Hezbollah hasn't looked back, that the ability to win that war is worth something that Israel maybe can never get back.

Nora Barrows-Friedman:

Yeah.

Jon Elmer:

And now they're attempting that in the Gaza Strip. It's hard to see that being successful from an Israeli point of view and from a Palestinian point of view of course, we hope it doesn't happen. But if it does happen, I can see Israel walking into an ambush in the Gaza Strip.

Nora Barrows-Friedman:

Ali, I know you have a question. I just wanted to reintroduce our guests and pre-introduce Shahd Abusalama. Jon Elmer is a contributor. He's been a researcher for decades working on Palestine. He's also my co-host over at The Brief podcast. Abdaljawad is an academic lecturer at Bir Zeit University, an analyst and scholar. And in one moment we'll bring on Shahd Abusalama who is a good friend, a longtime friend of the Electronic Intifada, joining us from London. So yeah, we'll get to Shahd in one minute. Ali go ahead.

Ali Abunimah:

Thank you, Abdaljawad. And Jon, your analysis is really helpful. I guess the thing I'm thinking about or wondering about, and I suspect a lot of people are, is of course, we've all grown up with this idea of Israel as this immense and capable military power. But we have seen a number of, of notable failures in recent years, of course, going back to the the year 2000 when the Lebanese

resistance expelled the Israeli occupation from southern Lebanon. And then in 2006 when the Israelis, not just the Israelis, but the Americans and the Europeans, they thought that Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 2006 was going to finish off Hezbollah. And there was almost a pre celebration among some of the Arab dictatorships, among the Europeans, and the Americans. You'll recall that Condoleezza Rice, the American Secretary of State at the time, called the Israeli war on Lebanon, "the birth pangs of a New Middle East."

Ali Abunimah:

It didn't turn out that way. The Israelis were humiliated. They ran, they ran away. They talked about their tanks being destroyed, one after the other in, in the valleys of South Lebanon. And we've seen other such failures in recent years, and after every single one, you know, there's this soul searching among the Israeli military and political establishment, and they say, we have to learn from the failures. We have to improve our tactics. We have to improve our training. We have to change our thinking. And, you know, yes, we're going to do that, and we're going to spend all the money and do what we need to do. And yet, here we are again. Why is it so difficult for Israel with all its resources, and its seemingly unlimited backing from the United States to beat Hamas that is besieged in Gaza with probably a millionth of the resources available to Israel. There seems to be something more fundamental that that has gone wrong for Israel. I'd just love to get your thoughts on, on what that might be.

Abdaljawad Omar:

Well Ali, your question is very, very good, but it's also very complicated because it goes to sociology of things. It ties to technology. One of the elements of why Israel is not willing to fight close battles and why it's losing this will to fight in combat and why it's not tolerant for any casualties is this kind of social ideology that exists in within the state, that they can live with zero risk, take people's land and live with zero risk. And that technology can protect them. That defensive layer, you know, with walls and with creation of new defensive techniques can actually enable them to still be on top of things while still not going and sacrificing their young sons and daughters in war and battle like they've done to actually create the state.

Abdaljawad Omar:

So in many ways, I think there is that technological element. There's the structure of the family, if you want, you know, less children, which means less willingness to sacrifice. There's a lot of historical elements that go to why Israel is incapable of fighting wars like they did. And I think because they're also meeting an enemy that is not any more afraid to test its own tactical and technological ingenuity. In a sense, what we see with Hezbollah and Hamas and others are people who take war seriously. They take the science of tactics seriously. They take whatever resources they have and they turn it into political action that opens the horizon of the politically possible, seriously. So I think for the first time, they're also meeting a foe that using whatever capacity, even if it's narrow, if it's simple to create this horizon of what is politically possible.

Abdaljawad Omar:

So they're meeting a foe that also learns, that also understands Israel, it understands its society, it understands what it willing to do, it's understands the composition of its government, its military and intelligence class. It understands also its strong points because it has still, the [Israeli] state

has a lot of strong points, but also it understands its weak points. And it could actually create things like what we've seen in the past couple of days, an offensive maneuver that catches the state by surprise, and it's military echelon, and everybody else. So there's a lot of historical reasons for why Israel is failing in the ground warfare, why it's leaving that ground warfare. And it is social, it's ideological, it's, it has to do with the fissures in society, the structure of the family with technology, and the over-reliance on technology. And this hope that with every technical tool they have, including AI and cyber, et cetera, they can conduct war from the safety of a Tel Aviv high-rise or wherever they are.

Abdaljawad Omar:

And I think this is just an impossible equation, for them. And I think that's why they're also, while they're caught offhanded, while they're in this area where there's a lot of psycho-affective discourse coming from their leaders in a way that shows anger, that shows being shaken. Yesterday, the head of the military, the general, the chief of staff of Israel was speaking to try to give confidence to society, but he seemed really weak, shaken. He didn't look okay at all. His speech was very weak. And you can see that they're making now decisions under duress and within total shock. And I think there will be a lot of miscalculations going into this from their side on what is possible for them to retaliate. Because in many of the campaigns, this is a very concentrated campaign from the Palestinian perspective. And you already have the biggest event in the first two days coming in. And the more they want to push this, the more they want to go after Gaza and the resistance there, the more it opens up the space for a war that Israel certainly does not want.

Jon Elmer:

Yeah, I think there's also just a professionalization of the Palestinian forces that we have to put our finger on as well. That began back in the, you know, the mid aughts. Ahmad Jabari set about making an army. And instead of having guerrilla factions to make a professionalized army, they shared information with the Imad Mughnieh of Hezbollah. And it was a concentrated program to train the fighters in a professionalized army. They recruit better, they recruit younger. They have an eye on building a fighting force the way that Hezbollah did in Lebanon by accessing youth movements, and having people come out as professional fighters right from the beginning and to join the army. And that kind of professionalization is what we've seen really on display, and each year it gets better.

Jon Elmer:

In 2008, we saw the rockets were going further, right? In 2014, we saw that they could repel a ground invasion by moving through tunnels in their own territory that had been pre-built to ambush Israeli fighters. The professionalization on display over these last three days, basically, ghosts coming in and out through the tunnels. The Israelis have no idea where they're even fighting. They can't tell you how many places they're fighting at. But you have a professionalized force that's holding down, resupplying, refreshing its fighters that quality of soldier. I mean, even just something as simple as looking on Twitter at the sort of military nerd community that talks about these kind of things. And they watch the helmet cam footage of the Qassam fighters and they're internationally recognized as competent fighters, as excellent fighters. And that's on display. And I think, to that degree, there was a process within the Palestinian national movement to create a professionalized army. And they've done that rather than fighting under

one banner or another, one faction or another. But to create a unified command, of course Qassam and Saray Al-Quds are the leaders of that. But the other factions have ways to participate as well. But the the professionalization and quality of the Palestinian fighter is what's setting the tone in these last number of conflicts.

Asa Winstanley:

And professionalization of their intelligence operation too, clearly. The fact that they were able to defeat supposedly the most, you know, awesome intelligence operation in the Middle East, Israel. That myth of the invincible Mossad and Shin Bet has just been busted forever. And the fact that Hamas and the other factions were able to defeat that in one day. Although, obviously, as Abdaljawad said earlier, this was clearly months, if not years in the planning. The fact that they were able to defeat that just sh shows how how professional that counterintelligence operation is.

Nora Barrows-Friedman:

I wanted to bring in our friend Shahd Abusalama. She is in London and has family in Gaza. Shahd--

Shahd Abusalama:

Hi.

Nora Barrows-Friedman:

Hi. Thank you so much for being here. How is your family? What are you hearing from your loved ones in Gaza right now?

Shahd Abusalama:

Hi, all. My family, like all survivors in Gaza, are literally waiting for their destiny. My parents are-- they tell us to take care of ourselves and force ourselves to eat and sleep and rest, so we manage to tell their stories in case they are gone. And this is the situation that is facing every Palestinian in Gaza. There is no discrimination between homes, hospitals, mosque, stones, trees. There is no discrimination at all. Everyone is a target, and there is no place that is safe. Right now, I only have one check on my messages to them. And, and every time like this happens, like we we're struggling with the darkest thoughts and the telecommunications are bombed. The internet and electricity infrastructures are bombed, and people feel isolated and, and they feel like they are already in the middle of a genocide being played out on in real lifetime and on live TV screens.

Shahd Abusalama:

And somehow the world is giving is continuing to give a green light to all these massacres. I am, you know, from Jabalia refugee camp and and my birth place, my, my people, my family are amongst those who have lived through the massacre this morning that has been committed against Jabaliyya camp. My auntie and her children, they woke up under the rubble of their own homes. They woke up under the rubble. The house was disfigured. Their account is horrific. They don't know how they made it out. They, they jumped over a broken wall in order to make it out with the children shaking. And, and they, they called it the judgment day. People are, are

literally seeing death. They're experiencing death, and the smell of death is everywhere. There's some like horrible unbearable smell that people are like noticing everywhere. We're-- even in our home, in our home. My parents, my brother, my nieces are breathing the smoke and something that is like-- they, they're worried that it's poisonous.

Shahd Abusalama:

And right now, I have you, to be honest, I have you in like half of my screen. And the next screen is on live TV in Gaza. I'm following Arabic news Palestinian, Palestinians on the ground keeping us updated and it's just nonstop bombing. And when I get hold of my family on the phone, I hear the bombing in the back, and they keep just jumping. Everyone's scared for their lives. Most of my family is displaced. Last night, I couldn't sleep because my mom sent me a message saying Shahd, we are in the street. The house, our neighbors opposite our house have been threatened by bombing. And all of my neighbors have evacuated the house as a result. And my family didn't sleep last night at home. And we were host of other families that escaped heavy bombing. And as we speak right now, there are more massacres. There are, there are more mass devastations and Israeli tanks are being prepared to advance into the Gaza Strip.

Shahd Abusalama:

It's, it's horrific to see this happening yet again. I was with you, I was reporting from Gaza from under fire in 2011. And and even since before then, and, and these horrific nightmares that we live in real life are just causing us more pain, more shock at how the world is allowing this to happen. And Israeli officials, we've heard them. Everybody heard them. Everybody heard them threatening of wiping out Gaza, turning Gaza into an isolated island and making a call-- absurd, full of absurd-- "Leave now." Leave where, leave where, while Gaza is besieged from land, sea, and air and bombed from land, sea, and air?

Shahd Abusalama:

Is it a joke? It's a genocide that is happening taking place right now, that people are being slaughtered, and the US, instead of finally recognizing that its billions of money that they're showering Israel with every year. And more so, at times like this. Instead of recognizing the occupation, the apartheid, the dehumaniz-- the systematic domination of the Palestinian people, as the root causes behind the people fighting back, they're fueling violence against the Palestinian people. They're giving Israel the green light to do whatever they like. I'm, I'm horrified, to be honest. I'm shaking. I'm shaking, and I'm just hoping, praying that I won't receive the news of, of my beloved ones. And they're so close, they're so close to death.

Ali Abunimah:

Shahd, we earlier we spoke with our friend and colleague Refaat Alareer in Gaza at the beginning of this livestream. And we heard the bombing, the nonstop bombing as he was speaking. And we also heard the worry in his voice. And that's something that we've heard from so many people in Gaza. And I can only imagine what it's like for your parents, but also for you and for your sister and your brother who are far away from them now, and the difficulty of bearing the worry about them and all your loved ones and, and your auntie. And thank God that they were saved today. I wonder and you know, it's amazing to me, Shahd, that you have been

writing for so long about all these things. And we actually met for the first time in Gaza 10 years ago.

Ali Abunimah:

10 years ago. We met in 2013 before the 2014 war. And it seems like such a long time for people of your generation and your age to live with the siege, with the nightmare, with the constant bombing. And yet we heard from Refaat, and we've heard from others about how Palestinians in Gaza, despite the fear-- I mean, the fear is human, no-one who is human could face this horror without fear-- but at the same time, they remain determined and defiant. What do you think explains that? Where does that come from? Are the people in Gaza a different kind of people? Do they have a different kind of strength, or is there something that over time makes people willing to show that dignity, that defiance in the face of something against which they're largely powerless?

Shahd Abusalama:

Yeah. And I think the people are just desperate to see a real change to the nightmarish reality that they are trapped under. The Palestinians have endured uninterrupted violence since 1948, and Gaza have seen a drastic form of this violence ever since. Actually, the description of Gaza as an open-air prison was used by refugees since 1948. And my grandparents could see our lands from some parts of the north of Gaza. It's very close. It's very close, and yet it's, it's so far from being reached. My grandparents. They come from lands that just-- it's incredible. We live in incredible times, when the 7th of October, when we woke up that day, like we couldn't believe that Palestinian resistance have made it across the fence.

Shahd Abusalama:

And they are in, basically, where I come from, where my grandparents come from. So if, if my grandparents lived to see this day, they probably wouldn't have believed it. It was such a symbolic moment. And the people have had enough with the dehumanization and with their humanity being denied, basic needs being denied, the rights to freedom, justice and equality being denied. And they have tried every possible way to resist it is from Jabaliyya refugee camp that the first intifada erupted, and it was a civilian form of resistance that was brutally repressed. And then the first intifada was-- the fire was put off by the Oslo peace accords that promised more stability for Palestinians, and more autonomy, and illusions basically, when Israel only intensified violence against the Palestinians, and consolidated the chokehold over Gaza, advanced its settler expansion at a faster pace than ever.

Shahd Abusalama:

And all these are war crimes that the world is observing, and the piles of evidence are just remarkable, but there is not enough will to, to save the people. And, and, and the people realize that it's, it's up to them to free themselves of Israel's domination that is maintained with the Western support. The west is partnered in this, and the media mouthpieces are also partners in this, and they are fueling anti-Palestinian racism and Islamophobia. They're fueling this, and they're creating an apartheid that extends out of Palestine to the UK. We should take a note of what Suella Braverman said,

Ali Abunimah:

And she is the she's a UK government official,

Shahd Abusalama:

Yeah. State secretary. And and she has basically replicated Israel's apartheid in the UK offering preferred treatments to Jewish citizens over anyone else.

Ali Abunimah:

That speaks to the-- I'm sorry to interrupt, but it speaks also to the difficulty, perhaps, or the increasing obstacles that governments are placing, Western governments, the ones who are the so-called champions of democracy and free speech for us as Palestinians, or people in the solidarity movement to even advocate for Palestinian rights, or to speak about Israel's crimes. And as you yourself have experienced Shahd, you are (for our listeners who don't know) you are an academic and you are a lecturer who was basically hounded out of your university because you dared to speak up for Palestinian rights and to speak up, not just as an academic and an intellectual and a writer, but as someone who can speak from direct personal experience. And even that you weren't allowed to do, you weren't allowed to speak about your own life and experience of the kinds of horrors that we're witnessing now.

Ali Abunimah:

So it does seem that the intent is to place Palestinians under siege, not just in Gaza, not just in the West Bank, but even throughout the world. And even in New York, there was news, the mayor of New York announced that the police were going to be monitoring a rally in support of Palestinian rights. And Jon, I'd love to hear if, if you can say something also about the free speech, so-called free speech situation in Canada with respect to the need now for people to raise their voices even louder, given how Canada, just like the rest of the so-called Western democracies are cheerleading for the massacres that we see in Gaza, like the one that happened this morning in Jabaliyya.

Jon Elmer:

Yeah. Canada has been a firm ally of Israel's through and through, right from the beginning. Getting a Canadian politician to speak out in defense of Palestinians is something that we don't really ever see. And I think that's, yeah-- the political environment in Canada, which you guys have probably heard about, is that we're at the stage where we're giving standing ovations in our parliament to Waffen SS fighters from World War II. So the politics in Canada are a little frazzled at the moment for sure,

Nora Barrows-Friedman:

But they're also like, the police leadership in all the major Canadian cities across the country this past weekend was saying that they were going to heavily surveil any protests about, you know, in solidarity with Palestine. And yeah. And this is happening in the UK. This is happening in, you know, California where I am.

Shahd Abusalama:

Yeah. Suella Braverman has authorized police to use full force if there is any expression of, quote unquote anti-semitism. And we know what they are trying to do with making antisemitism a synonym with anti-Zionism. So every one of us in the UK is under threat if they express support with Palestine and our aspirations for freedom, justice, and equality. Apparently these rights that are guaranteed to every people, are denied to the Palestinians. And if they call for it, we are antisemitic.

Nora Barrows-Friedman:

Yeah.

Asa Winstanley:

Yeah. We've seen a lot of incitement, anti-Palestinian incitement from British government officials in recent days. There's been lots of talk in the UK from the British government that, you know, since this particular battle started, that they're going to, you know, they're threatening to take action and arrest people who express solidarity with Palestinians in London. I saw a British minister being interviewed earlier today, and he was saying, well, there is, there is a right to free speech, but I would encourage people not to exercise it, basically was what he was saying in essential. And this morning we've seen a false story in the, in the headlines of several British papers about supposedly a kosher restaurant being attacked in Golders Green, an area with a relatively large Jewish population.

Asa Winstanley:

But it turns out this was-- and also, they were saying that this was due to nearby graffiti that said Free Palestine. Well, it turns out that police later clarified that this was an Israeli restaurant that had its front door smashed because there was a burglary, and it was nothing to do with the Free Palestine graffiti. But, you know, nonetheless, that didn't stop the mayor of London himself saying that this was quote unquote hate and that the full force of the law be used against the people who did it. You know, so we're just, we're seeing a lot of, yeah, false stories and incitement in the west about this. And it speaks to the increased weaponization of antisemitism, especially in Britain.

Nora Barrows-Friedman:

Well, we're going to wrap up in a couple of minutes. Shahd, I want to just ask you like, you know, How are you doing, how are you looking at this? And yeah. And, and, and last thoughts for this broadcast at this time.

Asa Winstanley:

How does it feel to be a Palestinian living in the diaspora? Yeah.

Nora Barrows-Friedman:

Yeah, and watching this happen to your family in Gaza?

Shahd Abusalama:

I'm really struggling to process all this, and and I'm honestly fighting my darkest thoughts. I'm horrified from various angles watching what my family and my people are going through, and the collective punishment that is crossing every red line, and at the same time the justifications that are parroted by world leaders and the military aid packages that are given to Israel and the media how, how they're equating between an occupied and an occupier that is backed by world imperial powers, one of the strongest militaries in the world that is capable of, in seconds, turning high-rise buildings into pile of rubble. I'm shocked, and I'm following with great fear, and I can't, I can't cope with the idea of, of losing my family.

Shahd Abusalama:

And I know that my family are are not, you know-- they're facing the same collective suffering at the minute. They are not immune from Israel's terror, no one is. And the world shouldn't look away. And they should finally recognize the root causes of this violence that we have endured for 75 years, even a hundred years, more than a hundred years, if we count the, the British colonization of Palestine that have led to this uninterrupted suffering, structural violence.

Shahd Abusalama:

And right now, the bombing hasn't stopped on the other half of my screen, the sky is being lit up and places--the flames are rising and filling the skies of Gaza, and the level of dehumanization is unprecedented. So some international action needs to take place and intervene immediately on behalf of the defenseless population. There, all these targets that, that are hit, they're human, they're people, residential homes, civilian properties. And there has to be an intervention on behalf of the Palestinians that are being slaughtered.

Nora Barrows-Friedman:

Yeah. Shahd Abusalama, you are an academic writer, contributor to the Electronic Intifada, a friend, a comrade. Thank you, thank you so much. Thank you so much for being here with us. I think that's going to do it for this broadcast. Ali, do you have any last words?

Ali Abunimah:

Just to say we send you and your family a lot of love, Shahd. We are, we all feel powerless to an extent, but I think for me, who doesn't have to experience a fraction of the fear and terror that you are going through or that Refaat and everyone else in Gaza is going through. But for me, what makes the days bearable as we witness this is the love and solidarity from the people around me and from all our friends and all our supporters. And so we send you that love and solidarity, and we thank you for being here with us. And I just want to say thank you to everyone and to all our supporters of the Electronic Intifada who help us to try to enlighten the world a little bit about about what is happening. We couldn't do it without you, and thank you for joining us on this first livestream, the first and definitely not the last. And thanks to the podcast team for putting it together and making it happen without so far a glitch. That's absolutely amazing. Incredible.

Nora Barrows-Friedman:

Incredible. Yeah.

Shahd Abusalama:

Thank you so much, everybody. Thank you.

Ali Abunimah:

Thank you, Shahd, and also we should say-- myself and Asa and Nora from the EI team are here, and Jon, who's almost a member of the EI team in the sense that he is a great friend of the show. But behind the scenes we have Tamara Nassar, who has been doing a fantastic job of managing the livestream. So thank you, Tamara as well.

Nora Barrows-Friedman:

Thank you, Tamara. Thank you.

Asa Winstanley:

Yeah, thanks for having me.

Nora Barrows-Friedman:

Thanks, Jon. Thanks, Shahd. Thanks Asa. Thanks Ali. And keep tuned to ElectronicIntifada.net, on Twitter @Intifada, on Instagram @Electronicintifada. And we will keep doing what we do best, which is to bring breaking stories and news and analysis, and we'll have another livestream very soon.

Asa Winstanley:

Yeah. And sign up to our email list at electronicintifada.net. It's the best way to keep in touch with all of our daily update, in these days of fractured internet platforms. We still have the tried and trusted method of email, so please sign up to that as well as following, and that's all the platforms and liking and subscribing.

Ali Abunimah:

Yeah. And so people, just to be clear, if you just go to our website, electronicintifada.net, at the top left of the homepage, there is a place where you can sign up for the email list and stay in touch with us. Even if Twitter or Facebook or whatever it is goes under, you'll still stay in touch with us.

Asa Winstanley:

And donate to our work as well!

Nora Barrows-Friedman:

Yes, please. We can't do this without you. Thank you everybody, until soon.