

JWE president Helena Cobban on the state of the the Gaza ceasefire, on the Electronic Intifada livestream, October 16, 2025

On October 16, 2025, Helena Cobban [appeared](#) on the Electronic Intifada livestream, where in conversation with Ali Abunimah and Nora Barrows-Friedman she assessed the state of the ceasefire attained for (parts of) Gaza six days earlier. Here's how it went, starting at 34:01:

[Ali Abunimah]

Joining us to talk about the latest developments and what might come next is Helena Cobban. She is a writer with decades of experience and knowledge about the region, and she directs Just World Educational. Her latest article for the newsletter Globalities is titled [The Status and Meaning of Trump's Gaza Ceasefire Deal](#), and we'll talk about that now. Welcome, Helena, back to the Electronic Intifada livestream.

[Helena Cobban]

Oh, it's always good to be with you and the amazing team that you lead there, Ali.

[Ali Abunimah]

Thank you. So, Helena, during his speech in the Knesset on Monday, Donald Trump congratulated Israel on victory. Let's take a look at a clip of him speaking in the Knesset.

[Donald Trump]

So, this long and difficult war has now ended. You know, some people say 3,000 years, some people say 500 years, whatever it is. It's the granddaddy of them all.

And in an unprecedented achievement, virtually the entire region has endorsed the plan that Gaza will be immediately demilitarized, that Hamas will be disarmed, and Israel's security will no longer be threatened in any way, shape, or form. So, Israel, with our help, has won all that they can by force of arms. You've won.

I mean, you've won. Now it's time to translate these victories against terrorists on the battlefield into the ultimate prize of peace and prosperity for the entire Middle East. It's about time you all over the place.

[Ali Abunimah]

So, you heard Trump declaring victory there, Helena. What's your understanding of the October 10th agreement leading to the ceasefire, and what has actually been agreed? What did Israel gain, and what did the people of Gaza and the resistance gain or give up in the agreement?

[Helena Cobban]

First of all, some people are calling this the October 9th agreement, some the October 10th agreement. It was agreed on the 9th, but didn't go into operation until the 10th, when the security cabinet of Israel adopted it. So, I put it as the 10th, and that was the time at which the clock started ticking on the 72 hours for the return of all the prisoners of war.

So, what did Israel gain? Of course, it gained the return of the prisoners of war, which in Israeli society was huge, and it won something of a reputation as open to being part of an agreement. I mean, that reputation has been so badly sullied worldwide that-- many of the governments in Europe are so eager to rehabilitate Israel based on anything or nothing, you know, like Eurovision song contest is no longer going to be discussing the possibility of excluding Israel.

I'm sure that arms shipments and military cooperation from European nations will just continue or rather resume pouring at full speed into Israel. So, Israel gained a lot by signing on.

What did the resistance gain and the people of Gaza?

I think what they gained is not trivial. They won the end of the bombardment, you know, that was huge and, you know, all the other forms of attack. They won the ability to return to their homes.

They won the return of some of the, I think it was originally 11,000 prisoners. Now, there are only 9,000 prisoners, political prisoners, Palestinians being held in Israeli tortured dungeons. They won the return of some bodies. I guess you'll be discussing this with John later on.

They won the possibility of some stabilization of their society and possibility of some rebuilding. And they won the re-engagement of the UN aid agencies. So, I gather this does not immediately include UNWRA, but other UN and international aid agencies.

But I have to say that all of these gains, achievements, victories that they got from the agreement are extremely vulnerable to the Israeli-US war axis just resuming the war whenever they want. They're vulnerable. They are partial, you know, and they're very mixed. Like, it's so wonderful to be able to return to your neighborhood in Gaza City, but then you get there and the place is completely leveled to the ground. You get to embrace, you know, your son or your brother who's been in a jail, but you see like tangibly how horribly he has been tortured.

So, you know, they're all mixed in terms of achievements, but that doesn't mean-- You know, it was a gamble as Jeremy Scahill had said. And it remains a gamble, but I think it was a gamble worth taking.

[Nora Barrows-Friedman]

Yeah. Helena, less than a week into the implementation of this very, very fragile deal, where do you think things stand right now and how do you assess its prospects in the next couple of hours or days, let alone weeks or months?

[Helena Cobban]

So, Nora, I'll just take a very like mechanistic view of this. It could go in three directions. It could proceed like with drums and trumpets toward the full implementation of the end of the occupation, but that is not going to happen, clearly, because of the missing 14 points of the--

You know, that this deal started off in Trump's fantasy that he revealed on September 29th in the meeting he had with Netanyahu here in Washington, D.C. and he said, you know, I've got this 20 point peace plan. Well, it wasn't a peace plan. It was like a colonial diktat: "This is how it's going to be. And my buddy, the fellow colonial chief, Netanyahu, and I have agreed this is how it's going to be."

So that was the origin, the 20 point plan. Hamas negotiators were super smart and their response to this was to welcome the plan and then to engage positively on the six points that they wanted to engage positively on. And they didn't mention a thing about the other 14 points. And that's important to recall, you know, to remember that those 14 points, Hamas has never said yes, it's never said no. Silence.

So might this plan lead to the end of the occupation? No, this plan is not leading to the end of the occupation, but we'll get into kind of the geopolitics of this a little bit more, I hope. But it's possible that this, I look at the plan as a kind of a holding action for the resistance, you know, and it's worth having that holding action.

It's so much better to have this situation than the situation that existed a month ago.

[Ali Abunimah]

Yeah.

[Helena Cobban]

Well, but it's vulnerable. So, you know, if they can just hold this, that's worth something.

[Ali Abunimah]

Yeah. Well, we will get back into some of those questions, but let's take a look and get your view about the situation inside Israel. Now that the prisoners of war have been released and bodies of the captives that were in Gaza are being returned, many or most likely killed by Israel itself, how do you see the political dynamics in Israel shifting?

The prisoners of war were the main pretext for continuing the genocide. Has Hamas calculated that by taking away that pretext, Israel will have a harder time both internally and internationally returning to full scale war? And do you think in fact that it will, or is it still completely unrestrained?

[Helena Cobban]

A good question, Ali. You know, the fact that the prisoners of war were still being held by the resistance in Gaza was a pretext for the genocide, but it was only a pretext. So, you know, that pretext has been withdrawn now.

So, if the U.S. Israeli axis does resume the genocide, which is still a very live possibility, then they won't have the pretext. But I think actually the politics inside Israel are quite scary right now, because actually the fact that the resistance was holding on to the prisoners of war did act as a kind of a brake on Israeli militarism in Gaza, because the prisoners of war themselves were vulnerable to the large scale bombings. And so many Israelis understood that.

So, you know, a lot of this social movement that grew up in Israel in support of the hostages and criticizing Netanyahu and whatever, I see that as being completely deflated now. You know, there is continuing criticism of Netanyahu for all the things that people have criticized him for for several years now, but they can no longer criticize him for putting the lives of the prisoners of war in jeopardy. So, in a sense, I think it strengthens his hand in Israeli politics, because the desire for genocide certainly still exists, you know, amongst broad swathes of Israelis.

We saw, for example, even as they were preparing to withdraw from the eastern suburbs of Gaza City, they were torching the wastewater treatment plant, you know, joyfully on TikTok. Like, here we are, you know. I mean, that is not a minority position in Jewish Israeli society.

And those people, those genocidaires, will feel themselves even more empowered now.

[Nora Barrows-Friedman]

And, of course, I mean, Trump was talking about this, all of the, you know, corporate media pundits, and everyone is expecting now that the resistance is going to agree to surrender and disarm and demilitarize. Do you think there's any chance that this is going to happen? You know, surrendering to Israel, what Israel has failed to do for two years to take by force, you know, that Hamas and the other resistance factions are going to just help Israel arm, disarm, because they couldn't do it themselves?

[Helena Cobban]

No, that is not going to happen, clearly. I think one of the kind of the dynamics underneath this October 10th agreement, is that all three of these parties, that is, Israel, Hamas and its allies, and the United States had gotten to a place where they wanted it. And they all want, they all have wanted to describe it as a victory for their side.

And there's some truth in that, in all cases, except for Donald Trump, I don't give him anything. But, you know, okay, he did nail down this agreement that was ready to be nailed down in December of 2023, by some accounts, or according to the Qataris, it was ready to be nailed down in May of 2024. But Biden, by refusing to bring any pressure to bear on Netanyahu, encouraged him and armed him and supported him to continue to do this.

And Donald Trump has done the same. But, you know, finally, Donald Trump wanted the Nobel Peace Prize, we know that. And he had hoped, you know, by launching this thing at the time of the General Assembly in mid-September, that he would have some victory to send to the Norwegians in order to win his Peace Prize.

I mean, he's quite blatant about it. He's quite blatant about so many things. I will say, since I did actually write a book about the Peace Prize 25 years ago, that the Nobel Peace Prize is nothing really, but a kind of peace-washing attempt by Alfred Nobel, who was a major war profiteer, and a pillar of the European military industrial complex.

He thought, oh, well, let's, you know, use some of my ill-gotten gains to make this thing called a Peace Prize. So, you know, that is my current view of the Nobel Peace Prize. I don't think we should actually give the Nobel Peace Committee or the Peace Prize as a phenomenon, any attention at all. We should start something called the Electronic Intifada Peace Prize, that would be one worth having.

[Nora Barrows-Friedman]

I mean, if you have Kissinger and Obama, and this, you know, Venezuela pro-Trump opposition, anti-socialist, you know, pro-imperialist. Now, just last week, winning it, that's, you know, the worth of the prize is what they put into it. But yes, I mean, just remind us historically, what happens when resistance factions in Palestine and in Lebanon, for example, have agreed to surrender or partially disarm?

What happens? Is it all peace and rainbows for them afterwards? Does Israel say finally, we'll stop bombing you?

What happens?

[Helena Cobban]

Well, you know, in 1982, there was an agreement that Ronald Reagan and Philip Habib mediated, under which the Israelis would withdraw, because they had just, I think, eight or 10 weeks earlier, invaded Lebanon massively, right up to Beirut. So under the 1982 peace agreement, they would withdraw from Beirut and then further to the south. And the PLO leadership at that time, Yasser Arafat, would take all their armed people out of Lebanon.

And there were boats, and they sailed off to Tunis and Yemen and various places, on the understanding that *they had the word of the United States of America, for the peace and security of the unarmed Palestinian refugees left behind in the refugee camps of Lebanon*. And within five weeks, we had the massacres in the refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila. I used to teach English to a group of girls in Shatila camp back in the 1970s.

It broke my heart to see like the thousands, we won't ever know how many thousands of people were massacred by the Israelis and their local allies. So, you know, the word of the United States on one of these plans is worth nothing. And obviously, Palestinians all know that.

I'm not telling them anything they don't know. But it's really problematic for Hamas, which has said, and for many years now, that they are prepared to decommission their military forces in the context of having an independent Palestinian state. And that is what happens in all decolonization transitions, you know, has happened for decades, that the Mau Mau or the FLN in Algeria or you know, any of these national liberation movements that have fought against foreign colonialism, once they achieve national sovereignty, national independence, they dissolve their fighting forces into the military of the new state.

So I would hope that we have some movement toward an independent Palestinian state, even on a portion of Gaza. And I know that that's already a little bit of a pipe dream. But as Rashid Khalidi said, very recently, all these European states that are recognizing the state of Palestine, *where do they expect it to be?*

You know, a state isn't just like up in the air, it's on ground, it's on territory. And there is a possibility, I think, that it could start in this part of Gaza, in particular, if international actors, and we all need to work for this, really get serious about opening up the sea lanes, the sea route to Gaza, so that Gaza can have direct access to the international community.

[Ali Abunimah]

So, Helena, I want to just push you again on, or just get your answer again regarding this issue of the Trump plan. Do you think, I mean, there was a point where Trump, you know, he's given very mixed messages, not untypical for him, where he's talked about, you know, Hamas must disarm. They have to, or will disarm them.

Of course, he has no way of doing that. Israel couldn't do it after two years. At the same time, he said, well, we've let them keep their weapons for now, which suggests that they might have a more pragmatic view of this.

Do you think that that is going to be a point at which this whole thing comes apart, and Israel uses that as a pretext to resume the genocide? I mean, this is almost like, I'm putting you on the spot, almost yes, no. What do you think?

Can they find a way around it?

[Helena Cobban]

I think they can have very prolonged negotiations, you know, and the Palestinian resistance doesn't even need to be a participant in these negotiations at the beginning. I mean, there are the three mediating states, the, you know, Qatar and Egypt and Turkey, all of which are in a sense on the spot now, because they've all kind of agreed to be co-mediators with Washington. So, I think there's a real possibility there will be prolonged negotiations between these three local, I mean, they're all actually US vassals.

[Ali Abunimah]

Well, let's talk about that. Let's go into that now, because actually, just a few days ago, on October 11th, the Washington Post published an exclusive story with the headline, Arab states expanded cooperation with Israeli military during Gaza war files show, and it's based

on leaked documents from CENTCOM, the US Central Command, and it states, I'll just read a couple of sentences, quote:

even as key Arab states condemned the war in the Gaza Strip, they quietly expanded security cooperation with Israeli military. Leaked US documents reveal those military ties were thrown into crisis after Israel's September airstrike in Qatar, but could now play a key role in overseeing the nascent ceasefire in Gaza.

Over the past three years, facilitated by the United States, senior military officials from Israel and six Arab countries came together for planning meetings in Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, and Qatar. The article also reveals that, quote, even as security cooperation with Israel expanded behind closed doors, Arab leaders denounced this war in Gaza. The leaders of Egypt, Jordan, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia said the Israeli campaign amounted to a genocide.

And then one more sentence here. The article states that CENTCOM personnel, quote, "led planning meetings to launch information operations to counter Iran's narrative that it is the regional protector of Palestinians, and according to a 2025 document, to propagate a partner narrative of regional prosperity and cooperation."

What are your thoughts on this and the seeming subservience of so many countries, and even the United Nations to US hegemony, which we saw at that Sharm el-Sheikh summit, but how can these countries be any check or balance when they are seemingly so much in the pocket of Israel and the United States?

[Helena Cobban]

Yeah, that Washington Post article was certainly very interesting. I mean, we know that this kind of military cooperation has been going on a lot, and obviously when the Israelis struck at Doha, Qatar, trying to kill the Hamas negotiators back on September 9th, I think it was, I think the Qataris and those other Arab collaborating states took it as a very personal affront to their dignity, obviously, and the cooperation that they had given to Israel and the United States. So I was just listening to Ambassador Chas Freeman talking about the state of the region earlier this morning, and he actually referred to "the eunuch level of the subservience of many of these Arab states to American power," which I think kind of captures it in a sense.

So Turkey, first of all, we need to remember is a full member of NATO. Egypt is bound by many clauses of that Egyptian-Israeli peace agreement that is policed by a US-led force, not a UN-led force, and Qatar has had under the table relations with Israel for a very long time, and of course hosts the largest US base in West Asia, US military base there.

So it's not surprising that they are all working with the Israelis in spite of, I mean, working with them at the military level and with CENTCOM, in particular CENTCOM has been working very closely with Israel and Arab states for many years now, and they had this Admiral Brad Cooper, who is the director of CENTCOM, I think he's currently in Israel leading this unit that's supposed to be supervising or monitoring the ceasefire.

Do these countries have public opinion? Yes, they do.

In Egypt, the public opinion is very, very tightly policed and oppressed. You will recall when there was the attempt to have an aid march to Gaza from Egypt, the Egyptian authorities just clamped down extremely hard. And Sisi himself, we need to remember, came into power through a military coup that he launched with the support of primarily the United Arab Emirates back in 2013, in which he overthrew the democratically elected Muslim Brotherhood government in Egypt. So he is absolutely no friend of Hamas, which had its origins with the Muslim Brotherhood, very similar kind of approach to politics.

So it's hard. Turkey does have public opinion, very strongly in favor of the Palestinians and the resistance in Gaza, and allowed a certain amount of ability to express themselves and to organize. For Qatar, I think it's hard to think that there is anything that you could call Qatari public opinion. Maybe there are a few sheikhs or whatever emirs in Qatar who are a little bit upset by the relationship with the United States, but then they go and give all this stuff to Donald Trump and to his children, and they invest all this stuff in the Bitcoin or whatever it is that the Trump family is trying to huckster around the world.

So there is a possibility that public opinion can, in those three countries and throughout West Asia more broadly, can influence those three governments. And there are also other actors internationally, specifically China and the Belt and Road Initiative, the BRICS.

So I think we need to build on all of these pillars in order to build the resistance to this colonial retaking of all of Gaza. So, you know, under the six points of the plan, Hamas and the resistance have a sort of a temporary and, as I said, vulnerable hold on about 50 percent of Gaza's terrain.

[Ali Abunimah]

But let's talk about the situation in Gaza, which relates to these Arab states, because under Trump's plan, and this has been the fantasy for a while, the Arab states will ride in as a proxy force. Turkey is willing to participate in that. And there are these fantasies that Hamas would collapse and then, you know, an Arab proxy force would go in and then eventually Palestinian Authority forces trained by Jordan and Egypt.

But the reality is that Hamas has moved to reassert governance very quickly. They appear to be completely well organized and ready to take up their positions and start restoring law and order. And this is how it's being presented in Western media.

Let's look at this article from The Washington Post, Helena, the headline there, Hamas reasserts control on streets of Gaza, turning guns on its rivals. What do you have to say about that framing?

[Helena Cobban]

Well, you know, all the Western media has been so deeply influenced-- not influenced, bought and paid for, you know-- by various Zionist bodies that I'm not surprised by the framing. But actually, the content of that article is worth reading because it cites people who work with the PA intelligence and security forces in Ramallah as saying that they had

actually been working with some of these anti-Hamas units inside Gaza, possibly for quite some time with Israeli help and under the support of the Israelis. So that was interesting to me that this article revealed that.

There is also today in *Times of Israel*, a report that a significant number of trucks full of armaments were in the hands of these PA people in Gaza, and they got seized by Hamas in the days that the ceasefire started to go into operation, which, you know, in a sense, that would be a major loss for the Israelis and for the PA if that had happened.

I think that obviously, Hamas and the resistance people have very complicated relationships with Fatah and the PA. And it's worth remembering that practically every single family in the West Bank and Gaza has some people who are working with the PA and some people who are working with the resistance, you know, and when they're in a family gathering, they can kind of laugh about it or talk about it or explore ideas or challenge each other.

But when they get called up by their various, you know, when the PA people, you know, have to go and receive their orders from the US-Israeli colonial powers, then they have to do what they're told to do in order to receive their salary. But, you know, there's a lot of, let's say, fuzziness, you know, it's not like let's say, Kurds versus Arabs in Syria, you know, you have some Kurdish families and some Arab families. It's not like what I encountered when I was covering the war in Lebanon, that, you know, you have Sunni Muslims and you have Maronite Christians and you have Druze and, you know, they're kind of separate communities.

No, I mean, the communities in the West Bank and Gaza are all very intermixed. So I think there is a possibility that smart Hamas outreach to the, I mean, they obviously already have relationships with the Fatah al-Intifada, which is a portion, a break off from Fatah. They have relations with Al-Aqsa martyr brigades, which originated as a militia for Fatah.

So they might be able to reach out and bring over the bulk of the PA to the resistance side. I'm not saying it's going to happen, but it's definitely a possibility. I've talked about this with Mouin Rabbani a number of times. He says it's not going to be doable so long as Abu Mazen is alive. Abu Mazen is a very old man, as you can see when he appears.

[Ali Abunimah]

That's Mahmoud Abbas, of course.

[Helena Cobban]

Yeah, sorry. So that's one possibility. And certainly the PA has gotten nothing on the ground in the West Bank except continuous settlement and terrorism from the Israeli settlers and land theft and oppression from the settlers and Ben-Gavir and all his people in the Israeli government.

So the incentive for Palestinians throughout Palestine to continue to be supportive of the PA and of Fatah is very low.

[Nora Barrows-Friedman]

Maybe talk just a little bit more about the political situation in the West Bank and where it goes from here. I mean, the West Bank has been somewhat obscured by the genocide in Gaza. As you mentioned, Mahmoud Abbas has long been regarded as a quisling and has been very open about his desire to keep collaborating with Israel.

What situation does the kind of fomenting, growing resentment against the PA look like on the ground in the West Bank, and how is that related to what's happening in Gaza?

[Helena Cobban]

I think for those of us in the West, that focusing on saving Palestinian land in the West Bank should become now a much higher priority, because we've been so focused on getting a ceasefire in Gaza. We have a ceasefire. It is vulnerable and reversible, but it is still like, it's a holding action, and we need to try to make sure that it's not rolled back.

But that allows us to pay a whole lot more attention to these outrageous things that have been happening in the West Bank, where there is active presence by many Western-- I won't say EU governments, because we know that the EU governments are not doing anything to protect the rights of Palestinians in the West Bank. But there are NGOs and a lot of civil society activists with good links, and of course you have a lot of Christian sites and links that people in the West Bank have with Western society, more perhaps than Gaza people. So I think that if we want to think about the campaigns for Palestinian rights and where they go in the next few months, that obviously securing the ceasefire in Gaza is really important. Now that we've won it, we need to defend it. And then defending the lands and rights of Palestinians in the West Bank. In a sense it all becomes one again. And just continuing to expose the lies and hasbara and violence of the Zionist project.

So is that going to be easier in the West now, or is it going to be harder now that we've got the ceasefire? I would hate for people to just rest back on their laurels and say, oh, we got the ceasefire, that's it. No, the ceasefire is just the first of a thousand steps that we need.

So rolling back, actually going from this partial and very vulnerable ceasefire to ending the occupation wherever that is possible. And actually being able to implement some of those rulings of the International Court of Justice that say that Israel's occupation everywhere in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem and in Gaza, Israel's occupation everywhere is illegal. So do we stand for international law?

Or are we prepared to go home and say, oh, the Israeli prisoners of war have been released and therefore everything is okay? No, I don't think anybody watching this livestream is going to rest. But we do need to think a little bit strategically about how to get to the next stage of actually *rolling back the occupation*.

So there are international allies, a lot of international allies. And there is a kind of a something, there's a lot going on at the international level. I can't go into all of the details of it, you know, because there's so much--

But Trump's tariff policies have pissed off everybody worldwide, which is good. And then, you know, you have the extension of Chinese and BRICS economic power and military

power to a certain extent. So for example, the Pakistanis recently won a very significant series of battles against the Indians.

The Pakistanis were using Chinese military technology, and the Indians were using both a combination of Western military technology and very outdated Soviet Russian technology. So now we have, you know, the Pakistanis in a military alliance, training alliance with Saudi Arabia. We're going to see, and we've already seen for a number of years now, the extension of Chinese military tech, Chinese intel mechanisms and communications mechanisms (which the Iranians already have to a large extent)-- We're going to see the extension of that further across West Asia, which will diminish US military power, which has often been based on the US selling a lot of totally overpriced military junk to GCC countries, with the idea that that could protect them. It did not protect the people of the Qatari capital, Doha, when the Israelis chose to come in and kill six people there. So things are changing at the international level in many different ways.

I think this holding action for the people of Gaza is the best thing that they can do to hold on to what they can of normal life of restarting, you know, schools and hospitals and rebuilding homes to hold on to what they can until the international geopolitical balance shifts even more against the United States. And I think it's happening. But I know it's hard for people in Gaza to be able to just survive, with winter coming on.

[Ali Abunimah]

And that's, you know, the point you make. It's a point I think many of us have been making that's so important. It's so important that people don't go home just because a ceasefire has been achieved.

People need to still be out in the streets. They still need to be pressuring their governments. They still need to be making sure that the realities in Gaza, the voices of people in Gaza are being heard.

Because the Western media that enabled this genocide and governments that enabled this genocide will be working as quickly as they can to sweep this all under the rug. Because the last thing they want is accountability. I mean, some of the horrors that are just being revealed in the past few days, bodies being found under the rubble, and that's without sufficient equipment to dig.

The bodies that have been returned to Gaza from Israel, showing signs of torture, people with bodies with garrots around their necks, blindfolded, or, you know, things tied around their necks. I'm not going to share the link to this, but the health ministry in Gaza has actually published these photos on a special site whose goal is to help family members identify them. So I've looked at the photos of these bodies, and they're absolutely horrible.

So given that context, they're going to want to sweep this all under the rug. And as you said, particularly the Europeans, go back to business as usual. The EU never imposed a single sanction on Israel throughout all this.

Some individual countries did, but the EU did nothing. And now they're going to want to go back to Israel. Oh, our friend, scientific cooperation, tea parties, dinner parties with Israeli officials.

[Helena Cobban]

Eurovision!

[Ali Abunimah]

They already held, I mean, it's utterly grotesque, but the new EU envoy in Tel Aviv, Michael Mann, actually held like an EU science night at the rubble of the Weizmann Institute with Israeli children. Remember, the Weizmann Institute was founded by the Israeli defense ministry as a weapons lab. That is where Israel develops its biological, chemical, and other weapons, as well as all sorts of other dastardly weaponry.

And the EU is already whitewashing this as just, oh, it's this lovely science place, and the EU loves science and biomedical science and so on. So, anyway, I'm taking a long digression here to stress the point, do not let up. Do not let these people get away with genocide.

They were complicit, and now they're going to try to masquerade as the saviors supporting aid and supporting peace. No, don't let them do it. Helena, I see you're eager to talk, but I'm going to wrap this in a sort of a final question for you.

Of course, respond however you want to, but also just before we let you go, are there any other issues that you want to bring up or things you think we should be paying attention to?

[Helena Cobban]

I would say that I think calls for accountability are important, but they can also be a diversion. I think the important thing, the number one job has to be to end all these violations, and these violations are not ended with this ceasefire. We know there are another 7,000 prisoners inside Israeli jails.

[Ali Abunimah]

9,100.

[Helena Cobban]

Yeah.

[Ali Abunimah]

I checked this morning.

[Helena Cobban]

Husam Abu Safiyah and so many others, and we know that they are being majorly mistreated, but what we need to do is to *end* all of those violations. Marwan Barghouti, when they paraded him like poor guy, I mean, oh gosh. And of course, I want to obviously give a shout-out here to the work of the people from the Global Samud Flotilla and the other flotillas, because they experienced just a little bit of what happened in Israeli jails. If Ben-Gvir's goons will treat white Europeans like that, just imagine how they are treating captive Palestinians, whether from Gaza or the West Bank or wherever.

So to me, the central thing is while we're documenting and building-- I know there are these wonderful organizations like the Hind Rajab Foundation and many others that are building the documentary base for future accountability projects-- but job one has to be to *end* the violations. And the violation, the big violation is Israel's lengthy military occupation of Gaza and the West Bank. And that's what needs to be ended.

So if we can take this little portion of Gaza and use that as a way to roll back, to start to roll back the Israeli occupation, that would be great. If we can mount really strong campaigns for all the Palestinian prisoners, that's great. You know, there are so many tasks that we need to be undertaking. And, you know, I'm just really delighted to be able to be with you guys and talk about this stuff.

[Ali Abunimah]

Thank you so much, Helena. There is much, much, much work to do. And again, your article in Globalities, which is published by Just World Educational, which your director addresses many of these issues.

And I encourage people to regularly check into Just World Educational. You, of course, to just remind us briefly about the project you did during this genocide, the Hamas, understanding Hamas, because it's now in book form.

[Helena Cobban]

Yeah, so this was something we did last year. Honestly, this was a book that we produced just over a year ago based on a series of webinars that Rami Khouri and I co-hosted with five experts on Hamas. And the goal was to de-demonize Hamas.

And of course, the demonization of Hamas continues. So I think the book is still a really good resource for people if they want to, you know, understand Hamas better and join us in, you know, demonizing it and understanding it. So, yeah, I was pleased to do that.

It was funny when we were doing the webinars in spring of 2024, Rami and I were like, oh, but what if there's a ceasefire next week, you know, and should we continue with the project? And here we are, like 18 months later, and the ceasefire has only just, in a very vulnerable and precarious way, been put into operation. So yeah, the book still needs to be used by people who want to challenge the demonization of Hamas.

[Ali Abunimah]

And it's called *Understanding Hamas and Why That Matters*, and people can find it wherever books are sold, and they can find more about your work and the work of people you cooperate with at Just World Educational. Helena, thank you as always. We'll have you back again before long, I hope.

And thank you for all the great work you do to make sense of this situation.

[Helena Cobban]

Well, it's a long task, but thank you, Ali and Nora and all of your team, because you guys are like, you've just been on it for two and a half years now.

[Nora Barrows-Friedman]

And we'll remain on it. Thank you so much, Helena, for all your work.