

A Conversation with Mouin Rabbani on The Uncharted Territory Podcast: Ep.14

A 59-minute conversation conducted by Abdelhalim Abdelrahman, viewable in full [here](#). Conducted on October 30 or 31, 2025.

[Abdelhalim]

As-salamu alaykum everybody. Welcome back to another episode of the Uncharted Territory podcast. Recent developments in Gaza call for this interview, as we all know.

Over a hundred Palestinians have been slaughtered in Gaza over the past 24 hours, including 30 women, and many of them children as well. With me today is a fan favorite. He is a fellow at DAWN Mena, the co-editor of Jadaliyya, and a very well-respected Palestinian political analyst, Mouin Rabbani.

Mouin, thank you very much for coming back on.

[Mouin]

It's very good to be with you, and thank you for having me.

[Abdelhalim]

You're very welcome. The pleasure is mine. Mouin, as I had kind of stated in the introduction, while there was never really a ceasefire in Gaza to begin with, Israel has killed over a hundred Palestinians in Gaza.

Netanyahu resumed the large-scale bombardment of Gaza just 24 hours ago. Trump initially framed his security agreement in Gaza as peace. But are you surprised to see that Israel has resumed its bombing of Gaza?

[Mouin]

No, and I also wouldn't make a statement that it has resumed its bombing of Gaza, because in fact the bombing of Gaza never ended. You mentioned a casualty toll of 100 dead in the last 24 hours, but in the days prior, between the agreement coming into October 8th and yesterday, at least another hundred had been killed. What is happening, and what I think is important to understand, is that this was not an agreement Israel wanted.

Israel was very reluctant to join this agreement. Israel entered this agreement because it came under U.S. pressure to do so, and what it has been doing since is try to change the terms of the agreement that it has endorsed in order to give itself maximum freedom of action without violating Washington's red line, which appears to be that Israel can do whatever it pleases, provided it doesn't formally renounce the agreement or resume its genocidal military assault on the Gaza Strip in full force.

[Abdelhalim]

Yeah, what's happened, and I think you've correctly established that, there really was never a ceasefire agreement, there was bombing, but the killing had been kind of more sporadic and of low intensity despite the mass carnage. I want to just talk briefly about the future of Gaza. I've seen this term come up a lot.

It's something that I've discussed in my previous interviews, and Haaretz used it recently, and it's becoming more of a mainstream term, and that is the West Bankification of Gaza. If we look at phase one of this security agreement, Israel still retains roughly 60 percent of control over Gaza. There is that infamous yellow line that we've seen all over media outlets indicating where the IDF is withdrawn.

But, Moin, do you see this being the long-term arrangement for Gaza, where you'll kind of see pockets of calm? You, of course, use that term in air quotes, and then you'll see essentially the continuation of the genocide, where Gaza is fragmented in daily life, if that's even possible. It's normal in only a small confined amount of number of areas.

[Mouin]

Well, it depends what you mean by the West Bankification of Gaza. I think what's meant by that is if you look at the initial 1993 Oslo Agreements, Israel committed to withdrawing from all West Bank territory, except for settlements, territory installations, and East Jerusalem. Under the terms of that agreement, Israel accepted an obligation to withdraw from basically at least 60, 70 percent, if not more, of the West Bank.

But Israel has always had a very peculiar approach to the agreements it signs, which is first you sign an agreement, you negotiate an agreement, and then you sign it. And then you hold a new round of negotiations about how the agreement that you've just signed is implemented. And those negotiations treat the initial agreement as essentially non-existent.

And then there's the actual implementation of the agreement, where Israel deals with the commitments it has already accepted, not as binding obligations, but as the preferences of the other side, which it is free to reject if they don't suit it. And so what happened in Oslo, I already explained what the initial accords required of Israel. But then you had the negotiation of the Oslo II Agreement in 1995, and that introduced an entirely different geography, where the West Bank was divided into areas A, B, and C, and where the Palestinians only really acquired civil and security jurisdiction over Area A, which was essentially only the large urban centers in the West Bank.

Area B, joint responsibility, was I think around 18 percent of the West Bank. And at least 60 percent of the West Bank was Area C, where Israel maintained full direct occupation. And then that was implemented in a way that gave Israel even greater control.

So what I think is meant here is that if you look at the agreement that was signed on October 8th in Egypt by Israel and the Palestinians, it made a number of requirements of the parties. The Palestinians were required to release within 72 hours all living captives that they held, along with the corpses of all dead captives. And they were required, of course, to cease all military operations against the Israeli occupation forces.

Israel, for its part, was required to withdraw to what you correctly noted as the yellow line, leaving them in control of, I think, roughly half the Gaza Strip or slightly more. It was required to release in excess of 2,000 Palestinian captives of various categories. It was required to allow the entry of at least 600 trucks carrying goods and humanitarian supplies into the Gaza Strip through various entry points.

And there was also one other commitment that, of course, it was supposed to cease all military operations. Well, none of those things happened. The Palestinians released all the living captives.

They began the process of releasing the bodies of dead captives and then said that they couldn't simply excavate and hand all of them over because Israel had produced 61 million tons of rubble in the Gaza Strip. The Palestinians didn't know where all of them were located. And even in some cases where they did know the location, they didn't have the equipment to excavate them.

The Turks offered to provide heavy equipment. Israel rejected this and then blamed the Palestinians for not retrieving the bodies. Israel has accused the Palestinians of slow-walking the process of returning the bodies.

There may or may not be something to that. Given Israel's consistent violations, I wouldn't be surprised to learn that the Palestinians are not immediately handing over all remaining bodies in order to keep Israel somehow entangled in an agreement it doesn't want. But then from the Israeli side, it's allowing in only a fraction of the trucks it committed to.

It didn't fully withdraw to the Yellow Line. It released less captives under different categories than it committed to. And of course, from the get-go, it has continued bombing and shelling the Gaza Strip.

And many people suspect that the second phase of negotiations, which is supposed to be about post-war governance, that it will allow these to basically lapse without an agreement so that it can then use that as a pretext not to undertake any further withdrawals within the Gaza Strip. And so you will basically have two zones, an occupied Israeli zone and a Palestinian zone. And the absence of agreement on post-war governance, as it's called, would then be used as a pretext by Israel to obstruct reconstruction, to prevent reconstruction, to obstruct the delivery of goods and humanitarian supplies into the Gaza Strip.

And given that, on the one hand, Israel's strategic objective remains the ethnic cleansing of the Gaza Strip, but that it is unable to carry out, let's say, a Nakba-type operation where you simply force everyone into Egypt because of the refusal of even the Egyptians and even Israel's closest Arab allies to join it in this endeavor. It wants to create a situation similar to what we had in Syria during the war there, which is that there's no government policy of expelling everyone, but the conditions of life become so intolerable that people simply begin leaving at their own initiative in any way they can, to anywhere they can. And I suspect that helps explain a lot of what Israel is and is not doing in the Gaza Strip these days.

[Abdelhalim]

Certainly. It very much is. Everything seems to, unfortunately, be in flux, as we know.

Israel is not really keen on agreeing to the parameters, or even withdrawing completely from Gaza, and they're still very married to the idea of ethnic cleansing. You also mentioned something I think is not really getting a lot of media attention more, and that was Turkey's initial request to be deployed in Gaza in some way, shape, or form. Why do you think Israel is so concerned about a possible Turkish presence in Gaza?

What would that mean for Israel's military freedom if there's a Turkish force in Gaza? And of course, what would that really mean at large for the sustainability of a future ceasefire and reconstruction of Gaza, if indeed Turkey was allowed to maintain some type of presence?

[Mouin]

Well, Israel only wants troops from states that are entirely beholden to Israel to participate in what's being called an international stabilization force. So Azerbaijan, which is for all intents and purposes an Israeli colony, Egypt, which is entirely subordinate to Israel, certainly under the Sisi government, and perhaps the Indonesians, who in exchange for normalizing relations with Israel, and Israel being able to boast that it now has diplomatic relations with the state that has the largest Muslim population on earth, as if Mecca and Medina and Jerusalem are in the center of Jakarta, it'll allow that as well. But Turkey, of course, was the first Muslim state to recognize Israel, I think even before Iran, and for decades was a very close strategic partner of Israel.

Those relations have frayed in recent years, even though Turkey remains a key transit point for Azerbaijani oil going to Israel, particularly aviation fuel, so we have to look at it objectively. But Turkey is not viewed as a reliable subordinate by Israel. And of course, the membership of the international stabilization force on Palestinian territory, as far as the Israeli government is concerned, is something that Israel will decide in coordination with its sponsor in Washington, and not something over which Palestinians can or should have any say.

But there are also larger issues at stake between Israel and Turkey, and that concerns Syria even more than the Gaza Strip. You now have a strongly pro-Turkish regime installed in Damascus at a time when Israel is increasingly encroaching on Syrian territory. And so I think given the rivalry between Israel and Turkey for domination over Syria, that's one more reason that Israel would not want any Turkish presence in the Gaza Strip.

[Abdelhalim]

Perhaps I'm looking at this from maybe a more dystopian point of view. Turkey is not perfect, but I think given their membership in NATO and them having a very robust military, I think the line of thinking for some political observers is that if Turkey is deployed in Gaza, whether it be in a humanitarian or military standpoint, if Israel is brazen enough to attack those troops in the same way that it attacked Qatar, then perhaps that triggers a wider

diplomatic crisis at hand, and this could also essentially force Turkey's hand to respond, in which you may possibly see a direct confrontation between Nicaragua and Tel Aviv.

Do you think that part is overstated, or do you think that's another part of Israel's future calculus in possibly isolating Turkey from being in Gaza?

[Mouin]

I think it's overstated. It's certainly not impossible, and of course NATO would be under no obligation to come to Turkey's assistance if Turkish troops in the Gaza Strip, which is not a NATO territory, were to come under Israeli attack, but that is a complicating factor. Israel over the years has routinely shot and shelled Egyptian troops, the Sinai Peninsula.

Egypt's response has been something akin to, we're sorry you were forced to kill us, and the Turkish response obviously would be much more robust. But again, I think Israel's main consideration is that it increasingly views Turkey as a rival in regional terms, especially in Syria, and in this context, even without the factors that you mentioned, would not want any Turkish troops stationed in the Gaza Strip. And there's another issue, there's also now a fundamental debate, the so-called international stabilization force, will it be authorized by the United Nations or not?

If authorized, will it be a multinational force or a United Nations force? And this gets back to a fundamental question, are these troops being sent into the Gaza Strip as a surrogate for the Israeli occupation to, on the one hand, protect Israel, and on the other, seek to achieve in the Gaza Strip what Israel has signally failed to achieve over the past two years? Or are they going there essentially to defend the Palestinian population, victims of an ongoing genocide from the genocidal apartheid regime that is Israel?

These issues are still being discussed. And *one of the problems for Israel is that not just Turkey, but all the countries that have been approached to participate in this force have made very clear they need a UN mandate, and the UN mandate needs to be made clear that what will happen in the Gaza Strip has to lead towards a different reality in the Gaza Strip. In other words, we cannot just go back to the situation that exists on the 6th of October 2023, because after the 6th of October came the 7th of October and two years of genocide.*

There needs to be an entirely different political trajectory, and that is really not on the table.

[Abdelhalim]

Yeah, you expressed a point that I think a lot of political pundits and just ordinary Palestinians such as myself are very concerned about, is that we hear talks about a multinational force governing Gaza, one in which Hamas is out of the picture, in the picture. That is not clear at the moment. But is there...

[Mouin]

Sorry to interrupt you, but that is clear. Hamas will be out of the picture, and Hamas has agreed to be out of the picture. So that's not really up for much discussion anymore.

[Abdelhalim]

That is actually true. I think there was just some conversations about, well, who's going to control the arms, but perhaps that's another conversation.

[Mouin]

Yes, that's a separate issue.

[Abdelhalim]

Yeah, which actually brings me back to the question of Hamas. Hamas may be out of the picture, may be sidelining themselves, but in seeing how capable they were in kind of reconstituting themselves in Gaza in some way, reasserting control, issuing what some people have either declared as reasserting security control or extrajudicial killing, is it possible to have an Arab multinational force in Gaza in which Hamas is also armed?

[Mouin]

Yes and no. In principle, yes; but no, if part of the terms of their deployment is to ensure the disarmament of the Gaza Strip in a situation in which Hamas refuses to disarm. And just to be clear, *Hamas, as well as others in the Gaza Strip, Islamic Jihad, Popular Front and so on, have already made clear that they have absolutely no intention of disarming, regardless of what Trump or Israel think, in the context of a continued indefinite Israeli occupation.*

And they've made very clear, we will disarm when we hand over, when the conditions exist, for us to hand over our weaponry to the security forces of an independent Palestinian state. If you want us to relinquish our arms, you have to remove the motives that led us to take up arms. In other words, end the occupation, establish a Palestinian state, and we have no need for arms.

Maintain the occupation, we're going to maintain our arms. And even apart from that kind of rational approach to the issue for Hamas, especially in the aftermath of the last two years, to now come and say, okay, we've decided to give up our arms would be politically suicidal for them. So even if you look at it from the terms of their narrow self-interest, they're never going to do this.

Now, do we really expect that the Egyptians or the Qataris or the Turks or the Indonesians are going to deploy to the Gaza Strip to disarm these groups that Israel, over two years of 24-7 intensive genocidal warfare, was unable to do? You know, there's a basic principle in international relations, which says that you can't achieve at the negotiating table what you have failed to extract on the battlefield. And so this idea that now Israel has put forward an entire 20-point wish list in the Trump proposal, consisting of things that it signally failed to achieve in two years of war against the Gaza Strip, why anyone takes that seriously is really beyond me.

[Abdelhalim]

Yeah. Firstly, I agree wholeheartedly with you. I think unless there's a legitimate plan to end the occupation of Palestine, it would be foolish to expect Hamas or really any armed group in Palestine to just disarm and say, fine, we'll give this concoction of some semi-vague plan a shot.

Now, focusing more on the West Bank, the intensification of settler violence since October 7th, particularly in the last week, has been unprecedented. I think the UN said earlier this year that there was more settler violence in the first six, seven months of this year than the first three months of, excuse me, or in the first half of last year. So clearly we're on a trajectory here to see an increase.

But the Palestinians in the West Bank are helpless. The Palestinian Authority is nowhere to be seen. They also don't really have the means or it seems to be the desire to protect their people.

Do you think that there also needs to be a conversation for an international coalition, whether it be through the UN or otherwise, to deploy some type of protective force in the West Bank against Israel's plans to not only expand the settlement empire and attack Palestinians, but also ethnically cleanse them and push them into Jordan or other neighboring countries?

[Mouin]

Look, if you're going to put together and deploy an international protection force to the West Bank, that's going to take massive amounts of political capital from the participating states and from the governments that would allow such a resolution to get through the United Nations. I think it would make much more sense to expend this political capital on evicting Israel from the West Bank, because the difference is not going to be that large in terms of what it would take for these states to do either one or the other. An international protection force might make sense if you come to the conclusion that Palestinians lack any kind of national cohesion or institutional framework or capacity for self-governance or there's been catastrophic natural disasters and they need international help.

Palestinians are perfectly capable of governing themselves, can do much better than this corrupt clique that has been foisted upon them by Israel and the West. And the real issue is, will Israel be allowed to remain in the Gaza Strip, or in this case in the West Bank, by a coalition of states that keep uttering two-state settlement, two-state settlement as a slogan to camouflage their complicity with Israel's de facto annexation of the West Bank? Or will they actually introduce the concrete policy changes that are required to end the occupation?

So again, you know, it's not so much a principled opposition to international protection force or peacekeeping forces, when you consider about how much pressure is required on Israel to even consider letting such a force enter its territories it occupies. My view is, if you're going to put this much effort into twisting Israel's arm, twist it a bit more and get them the hell out of the West Bank.

[Abdelhalim]

Perfect. I think you just captured the feeling of just about every single Palestinian and their allies and supporters globally. On the topic of the West Bank as well, Mahmoud Abbas, which I'm sure everybody loves to hear whenever he talks, said that Hussein al-Sheikh would be the vice president of, you know, is essentially his vice president.

And in the event that Mahmoud Abbas becomes incapacitated or steps down or otherwise, Hussein al-Sheikh would basically be the president for 90 days. In the event that there is not elections, then there'd be a decree through the Palestinian Legislative Council to extend his term until they can get to that conclusion. Be as unfiltered as humanly possible.

What is your response to Abbas's declaration that Hussein al-Sheikh is the vice president and so on and so forth? And I mean, correct me if I'm mistaken, but this doesn't really move the needle for the liberation of Palestinians.

[Mouin]

When Yasser Arafat was removed from the scene in 2004, you had a number of powerful competing Palestinian power centers. Arafat had already anointed Abu Mazen as his successor when under severe international pressure over many years, not just to appoint his successor, but to appoint Abbas as a successor. He did that, but that's not the reason that Abbas became leader.

The reason that Abbas became leader is because all these rival power centers could agree on one thing. And that is that, you know, rather than enter into open conflict with each other and a conflict that none of them could win, they coalesced upon the idea of Abbas, who was seen as weak and ineffectual, not powerful enough to challenge them to elevate him to the leadership. So he arrived by consensus, in the end turned out to outfox all of them.

Much more authoritarian than Yasser Arafat at his very worst. Personalized rule to a much greater extent than Arafat ever did, and that's saying quite a bit. And now Abu Mazen is appointing Hussein al-Sheikh as his successor.

Now Hussein al-Sheikh has a distinction of being one of really the only Palestinian leaders who can successfully compete with Abbas in an unpopularity contest. There's very few who can do that successfully. Hussein al-Sheikh is certainly top of the list.

But he's going to face exactly the same problem Abbas did after they got rid of Arafat, which is that his ability to fill leadership posts is not going to derive from the no longer existing authority of someone who is no longer there. It's going to require the agreement and the tacit or active support of those who are there. And this time there's not going to be a consensus coalescing around the candidacy of Hussein al-Sheikh.

So I think it's extremely unlikely that he will be able to consolidate power over the Palestinian Authority, let alone over the entire Palestinian political system in the same way that Abbas did before him.

[Abdelhalim]

There's only one man that you and I know of that could unite all of Palestine and that's Marwan Barghouti.

[Mouin]

Well, even that I'm not so certain about. Yeah, I mean, that's what's said about him. And that certainly would have been true in the past.

But, you know, there is also this phenomenon of people being extremely popular and having a hold on the public imagination when they're absent, and then that changing when they're present. I mean, the perfect example is Yasser Arafat, who prior to his arrival in Gaza after Oslo was seen as kind of this, you know, very iconic national leader. And then his reputation, of course, deteriorated very significantly once he took actual control in the occupied territories.

And I'm not saying that that's kind of a law of nature. But with Marwan Barghouti, yes, I agree that he is the natural choice for those who would like to see a very different kind of Palestinian leadership and a Palestinian leadership that prioritizes national consensus among Palestinians rather than obeisance to occupiers and foreign powers. But what kind of compromises will he make if he gets out of prison?

Will he decide that he's better off pursuing national unity under the umbrella of the PLO by including Hamas and Jihad? Or will he decide it's better to exclude them so that he can get a few shekels from the Americans and the British and the Europeans? I don't think those answers can at this point be answered in any definitive way.

[Abdelhalim]

Certainly. Personally, yeah, you do make a very good point. You know, Arafat was seen as the savior, then he returns to Oslo, then that deteriorates.

Then, you know, there are some parallels between at least that situation between Arafat and Barghouti. So I think the question some people would want to know more in is that if it's not Marwan or perhaps maybe Marwan's influence and ability to guide and engineer the Palestinian National Project to a place where liberation is attainable, if not him, then who or how? What is the question?

I think that is something that we all struggle with. What would have to be the...

[Mouin]

Well, I think we would do well not to focus on individuals and constantly ask who is going to succeed this Abbas when we finally get rid of him, who can do this and who can do that. As you said, we need to ask how. And in this particular case, there is already a formula.

There is already a formula that was agreed between the Fatah movement and the Hamas movement and the others some time ago, which is to establish a temporary leadership

council consisting, if I recall correctly, of the leaders of the existing PLO factions, Fatah, the Popular and Democratic Fronts and the others, including representatives from Hamas and Islamic Jihad, who will then collectively on a transitional basis decide on issues of national strategy and the reconstruction of the PLO and its institutions and so on.

Yes, I agree. Marwan Barghouti is one person who I think would be ready, willing and able to perform this role. There could be others as well, but he certainly, from what I know of him, wouldn't be an insurmountable obstacle to this-- in sharp contrast to Abbas, who has made a career out of being an insurmountable obstacle to Palestinian reconciliation and liberation. So the key issue is we need to rebuild our institutions.

We need to develop a national strategy. We need to have a genuinely representative national leadership rather than a strong man or strong woman, for that matter. And so *we really should ask the question about what do we want rather than who we want.*

[Abdelhalim]

Honestly, the ending of that was quite profound because it's a question amongst really, I think, not only just Palestinians and Palestinian proper, but in the diaspora, is what do we want and how do we define it as freedom? Obviously, Palestinians are not a monolith. You and I are not a monolith.

I'm sure we have varying different degrees of opinions on certain things. But I think in order to answer that question, wouldn't we have to answer what do we want in terms of a one-state or a binational state in which Palestinians obtain citizenship in Israel? And there's some type of confederation where the Palestinian identity and the culture is woven to the fabric of Israeli society.

And we're one, much like America post-segregation. For all of its faults and imperfections, we're slowly becoming what we want to be as a country.

[Mouin]

I'm not so sure, but go on--

[Abdelhalim]

I hope. I'm an optimist. I know we're not perfect, but we're going to keep trying.

But then the opposite of that is an independent Palestinian state where it's on the 1967 borders. Some say that's a good idea. Some say that's not a bad idea.

But don't you think answering that question first is integral to really everything else? Because I fear that simply just having effective leaders and a mandate will fall short if we keep asking ourselves, how do we define liberation? Is it one state or two states?

[Mouin]

Well, I think at this stage, what you think about these issues, what I think, and what anyone else thinks is not particularly relevant. I think the real challenge is developing the institutions and the fora where you and I and everyone else who has an opinion about the matter can gather and discuss and debate it. So that the response that emerges from that consultation, from that discussion, from that debate doesn't represent my view that you reject or your view that I refuse to accept.

But represents a point of view that may not represent everyone, but that everyone can accept as representing the national consensus. And so the key issue is developing the mechanisms to answer these questions. And for many years, Palestinians had them.

They weren't perfect, but there was absolutely no need for them to be perfect. They were institutions in which issues were discussed, debated, often fiercely debated, in which some people won the argument and other people lost the argument. But those who lost the argument were able to recognize that they were being confronted with a national decision that they didn't like, rather than the imposed views of a narrow clique imposing it on the rest of the political system.

I mean, that's a bit of a simplification and idealization of the reality. But I think, you know, until the early 1990s, or at least late 1980s, it seemed to work. You know, the PLO had a quota system.

Yeah, there are all kinds of issues with a quota system. But in our experience, a quota system worked better than having a formal democracy, a quota system in which the entirety of the Palestinian people were in one way or another represented. In my view, it worked much better than having a formal democracy, which was a free and fair democracy, but served less than half of the Palestinian people.

Because if you weren't a legal resident of the West Bank of the Gaza Strip, you weren't part of that system. So, again, the issue is, you know, we need to develop the mechanisms, the institutional mechanisms to address these issues in a way that the decisions which emerge from them can and will be seen as national decisions, even by those who are dissatisfied or even reject the decisions that are being made. It's perfectly fine for someone, you know, to lose an argument.

But if you feel that you lost an argument in a legitimate institution that is genuinely representative of everyone, you're going to respond to not winning the debate in a very different way than you would where these decisions are made unilaterally by a small, narrow, self-selected clique without consulting anybody. Then, of course, you're going to respond very differently.

[Abdelhalim]

Yes, you know, the idea of kind of reinvigorating the Palestinian political polity and establishing functioning institutions is undoubtedly one of the main hurdles and, of course, one of the key aspects of this, of course, to achieving liberation. After October 7th, I kind of thought, okay, what now? And, of course, many Palestinians did, and I'm sure you did too.

I was very surprised to see that – well, perhaps not surprised, but the West Bank did not really respond in a way that I think some observers imagined, whether it be an intifada or a rise in armed confrontation or some type of unified struggle.

Mouin, from your perspective and expertise, why has the West Bank been so quiet since October 7th? Of course, there have been protests that have been broken up, but I guess when we define action, some think the first intifada, the second intifada, the March of Return in Gaza that we saw. Why haven't we been able to see those things?

[Mouin]

Well, you mentioned the March of Return, and that was, for the most part, also a phenomenon that reached its height in the Gaza Strip rather than the West Bank. I mean, I think there were also some activities in Syria and Lebanon, but I think there are multiple reasons. For one, I think Hamas focused very strongly on the October 7th attacks that were launched from the Gaza Strip into southern Israel and invested much less in preparing its forces in the West Bank also to unleash a general uprising or whatever you want to call it.

Secondly, the situation in the West Bank is very different. It's much more fragmented. I mean, in the Gaza Strip, after Israel removed its settlements in 2005, you could basically drive from Beit Hanoun to the Shapura camp in Rafah without encountering a single Israeli checkpoint or soldier.

It almost became like a continuous territory. It was a continuous territory. In the West Bank, you can't go from Ramallah to Jerusalem at all, and you certainly can't go to Bethlehem or to Jericho or to Nablus or even many of the surrounding villages without going through what Jeff Halper so perceptively calls Israel's matrix of control. So the conditions were much more challenging.

And also, Israeli violence, and I don't like the term settler violence because settlers are committing violence on behalf of the state that arms and sponsors and enables them. So this idea, you know, it's almost like people talk about the settlers the way you might talk about gangsters or a mafia in a form of something that operates independently or in opposition to the state. No, *the settlers are the state. They're the spearhead of state policy.* But that trivial point notwithstanding, Palestinians in the West Bank had been under unprecedented attack. And so that also explains it.

And I think the key Hamas figure who would have been responsible for kind of, let's say, leading any such effort in the West Bank, Salah al-Aruri, was assassinated in Beirut quite early on. And I think it's, you know, for the same reason that you didn't have the eruption of rebellion or whatever elsewhere, which is that Hamas did not act in coordination with its partners and what was known as the axis of resistance. It certainly didn't act in coordination with other elements, other Palestinian elements and apparently informed them of the impending attacks on the morning of October 7th.

And there's, you know, there has also been a systematic fragmentation of Palestinian society in the occupied territories, certainly beginning in the early 90s, definitely since 2006,

2007. I mean, you can't go from the West Bank to the Gaza Strip or vice versa. There are very few people who qualify for such Israeli permits.

These societies have, to a certain extent, become a little estranged from each other, not altogether different from the distinctions you have between Palestinian society in the West Bank and Palestinian society inside the Green Line. You know, are they one people? Yes, of course they are.

But, you know, do they have the same frames of reference? Do they see things through the same? Do they participate in the same institutions and so on?

No, they don't. And so it became quite easy over the years for people in the Gaza Strip to look at the West Bank as kind of over there and vice versa. And I think that played an important role as well.

[Abdelhalim]

Certainly, the fragmentation of Palestinian society in the West Bank played a big part in why we are where we are today.

[Mouin]

And also, you know, it's not like nothing happened, particularly in Jenin and Tulkarem and Tubas, to a lesser extent. There was quite a bit, you know, that's where you, I think, Hamas and Islamic Jihad and these more local groups were at their strongest. They did take the initiative, but the Israeli response was unprecedented and was also conducted with the full and active support of the Palestinian Authority, to the extent that certainly in Jenin, the forces that entered that camp initially and that were killing people initially were not the Israelis, but the Palestinian Authority security forces they sent in to clear their path.

And the Palestinian Authority was making the argument that we are doing this to avoid a repeat of what Israel is doing in the Gaza Strip. In other words, by clamping down on resistance, we are removing from Israel the pretext to do in the northern West Bank what it is doing in the Gaza Strip. Well, of course, what happened is Israel said to the Palestinian Authority, you know, wham, bam, thank you, ma'am.

And then went in and flattened everything anyway, because it had less of a challenge in going in after the Palestinian Authority did its dirty work for it.

[Abdelhalim]

You brought up a very key sentiment that I've heard from a lot of, excuse me, Palestinian American analysts here, some of my friends and just people in the diaspora, as we of course know.

[Mouin]

Sorry, you're in the United States?

[Abdelhalim]

Yes, I am.

[Mouin]

I see.

[Abdelhalim]

So, you know, that is why I asked the question of why we didn't see an uprising in the West Bank. While I'm familiar with the realities, some people who are Americans who are watching this may not be. So it would be important to hear from someone such as yourself as to why we didn't see that.

But on the topic of eliminating pretext, this was an argument that I had with so many of my friends here and, you know, people who are journalists. I know that there were some Palestinians who were supportive of the Palestinian Authority's actions in the Northern West Bank because they were very afraid of the response that Israel may impose upon the Northern West Bank and Tul Karem and Tubas and Jenin in wake of October 7th and not wanting to see a Nakba-like calamity unfold in the West Bank. I had often countered an argument and said, look, while I do believe in national unity and I do believe in a national struggle, I don't really think Israel ever needed a pretext to make us suffer.

So what would be your response to somebody that would say, I am in support of the Palestinian Authority clamping down on other militias or armed groups, other movements in the West Bank because A, we need unity and B, we need to eliminate pretext for the occupation to expand its operations, genocidal operations, that is, from Gaza to the West Bank?

[Mouin]

Well, my response, first of all, I don't think, you know, you can be sitting in the United States or Argentina or whatever and demand that people rise up. That's absurd if you feel so strongly about it. But, you know, you're certainly entitled to support whatever the people do.

But I also don't agree with the opposite of your position, which is that these people are under some kind of moral and political obligation to go out into the streets and put their lives on the line so that I can watch what happens from the comfort of my own home several thousand miles away. But having said that, look, the issue is that people who believe that Palestinian Authority security cooperation with the Israeli military serves Palestinian interests because Israel will take satisfaction with the Palestinian Authority doing the dirty work and therefore Israel will stay out, has been consistently disproven by reality. I just gave you this example where it was a Palestinian Authority that went into Jenin and its refugee camp to clamp down on the armed resistance there.

And yes, they probably did so on the assumption and perhaps even with commitments from Israel that if you clean this place up, we're good and you can, you know, we won't go in

ourselves. Well, the next day they went in and they started razing the place to the ground. So, you know, *the idea that you can somehow get rid of the occupation by collaborating with it, it doesn't work*. It hasn't worked anywhere else. And Palestine is not some kind of unique place where everything, you know, where the laws of gravity don't work anymore. No, you know, you can't remove an occupation by collaborating with it.

When you collaborate with an occupation, you deepen it. It's always been the case everywhere. And I've seen no evidence that the case of Palestine is any different.

[Abdelhalim]

Absolutely. Firstly, I want to say that I absolutely agree with what you said about, you know, whether you're a Palestinian in America or, you know, in the UK or Europe. I don't really think it's our place to say what people in Palestine should do.

And I've certainly never really been a proponent for somebody to say, well, everybody in the Dafa [the West Bank] should rise up and take their arms and fight. I've never really been a proponent of that. There are some that unfortunately do feel this way, and I've gotten in many arguments with them, but that's neither here or there.

And yes, of course, on the other point you make, collaborating with an occupation does not get rid of it.

The final question that I have for you is something that I think could very well determine the future of the liberation of our people. And that I think about a week from now is going to be the first anniversary that Trump defeated Kamala Harris in the 2024 presidential election.

Just about any observer of the election has determined, whether through their own opinion or through fine data analysis, that Gaza played an integral role in Trump being elected. And we have not seen the kind of deprioritization of Palestine as a political and human rights issue beyond 2024.

How optimistic are you that what we've seen the past year in terms of global and domestic support for Palestine-- I say domestic being here in the United States-- can be sustained in a way that effectively ends the occupation and brings about the emancipation of the Palestinian people?

[Mouin]

Well, that's giving this issue much more than it can bear. I don't think any people have ever been liberated on the strengths of solidarity activities anywhere else. It's crucially important, but the heavy lifting is going to need to be done by the people themselves.

And by the way, that was absolutely the case in South Africa. Yes, the solidarity movement, the boycott, the investment movement played an absolutely important role, but it was a prolonged mass mobilization and uprising within South Africa that ultimately showed the white minority regime had no viable future and forced it to the negotiating table.

Look, the interesting thing about Harris is at the time of the election, it was clear that Gaza played a role in her defeat, but I'm not a Democratic National Committee top strategist, so I didn't want to make too much of it.

And it was clear to me that there were multiple reasons that she lost. For one, the Democratic Party really, really went out of its way to choose a worst possible candidate they could conjure up, and other factors, but it was clear that Gaza played a role.

With the benefit of a year of hindsight, *it's now absolutely clear that if Harris had changed her position on Gaza, it's possible she wouldn't have won. But what is absolutely clear is she could not have won without changing her position on Gaza.* So in that sense, it played a really important role. And that reflects, I think, a wider transformation.

Traditionally, Israel and support for Israel has been an electoral asset and a requirement for political success in the United States and the West more broadly, whereas solidarity with the Palestinians has been the career-ending kiss of death. That's completely changed. You saw it in the British parliamentary elections recently.

Now look at New York. Zohran Mamdani is about to win the New York mayoral election, and *the more he's attacked for not being basically an Israeli minion, the stronger he gets.* To the point where now the main argument against him is not about anything he says, but a demand to revoke citizenship and deport him.

That's all they have left. So there's been an absolute sea change. And these things take time to work through political system.

But I think the situation I grew up with, where you would only very occasionally find a politician who's willing to speak out for Palestinian rights, and the reason he or she speaks out for Palestinian rights is either because they've left politics or because their situation is so unassailable, they can say whatever they damn well please and nothing will get rid of them. Now you have politicians whose position are precarious, who will say things in support of the Palestinians and even say things against Israel and not suffer for it and may even be strengthened for it. Of course, Israel and its flunkies like to say, well, this is because these countries are being taken over by Islam and all these politicians are just pandering to the Muslim vote.

Well, if they were just pandering to the Muslim vote, it's quite marginal, certainly when you look at it on a national scale. No, they're pandering to the national vote. And that's what's putting the fear of God into these pro-Israel strategists.

[Abdelhalim]

Yes, 110%. So actually, you said something that I do feel requires a brief follow-up and a brief question is that, you know, when I had initially posed the question about the tides turning that can lead to the emancipation of our people, you touched upon a phenomenon is that you're now starting to see, you know, prospective congressional candidates, presidential candidates, even possibly be critical of Israel in a way that was not feasible prior to October 7. And I think that's what gives me some hope more than is that there's finally a reckoning in this country where being pro-Israel is so distasteful, where it's now become a

political liability that sooner or later mandating from a, you know, constituent level, a complete arms embargo on Israel or sanctioning Israel in some capacity, whether it be, you know, settler organizations or so on, that those movements that are needed, that type of political action that's needed from the West, from America in particular, could possibly get the ball rolling in ending the occupation. Perhaps you don't have much faith in that, or maybe you think that...

[Mouin]

You know what gives me hope? What gives me hope is seeing some of these politicians, who you know are Israel flunkies, who you know are in thrall to Israel and its lobby, who have already taken its money and sponsorship from Israel and its lobby, who are now getting up in public and saying, "I will no longer accept a penny from AIPAC." And you know how much it pains them to have to say that. You know, that 10 or 15 years ago, they would have just as easily slit their firstborn through the throat or thrown their own mothers into the fire rather than to have to abandon AIPAC and are now publicly abandoning AIPAC and making this pretense of coming out in opposition to Israel. Even though we know how in thrall to Israel that remains.

So when you have people like this, who are really rank opportunists, in other words, they know which way the wind is blowing much better than you or I. When you have those kinds of people distancing themselves from Israel in public and doing so insincerely, because they feel they have to do that to survive: That's what gives me hope.

[Abdelhalim]

Yes, I do agree with you on that. And I'm hoping that can stay sustained where essentially, you know, taking support from AIPAC is essentially the equivalent to contracting the plague. Mouin, I know I keep saying one last question, but this is my one last question.

So people in the diaspora like myself, we've been following your work for decades, going back to the '80s and the '90s and your interviews with Edward Said and your critiques of Oslo and so on and so forth. And the way people ask me to ask you this question, we look up to you. I mean, I'm a young guy.

I'm 28. So it's like sometimes we are so helpless, we don't know who to go to for answers. So I'm gonna ask you, me being a member of the Palestinian diaspora, and of course, the other millions who have this experience, what could we do to help accelerate the liberation of our people and the occupation?

What is it that we're not doing now that we should be doing, in your opinion?

[Mouin]

Well, I think the most important thing every Palestinian should do is to be as well informed as they possibly can. And second of all, to convey that information to those in their environment. I'm not talking you should become like some kind of missionary screaming on every street corner.

But, you know, the key issue is to make sure that Palestine becomes an issue in every nook and cranny around the world, so that it solidifies in the global collective consciousness. And if you compare the situation now to the [nineties.] You know, when I was growing up, people would ask, where are you from? And I'd say, Palestine. They'd just give me this blank stare and say, but that doesn't exist. And they weren't trying to be mean or hostile. That was just the conventional wisdom.

You know, now you tell someone you're from Palestine and they begin telling you how terrible they feel about all the slaughtered children in the Gaza Strip. So it's almost, you know, I don't want to exaggerate, but, you know, so much of the hardest work has already been done by my parents' generation. And yes, you know, my generation may have failed.

But I have full confidence that the next generation, if they get their priorities straight, and work hard enough, and join forces, rather than expend their efforts ripping each other to shreds over trivial and meaningless differences, that will be what produces liberation.

[Abdelhalim]

Well said. Honestly, I couldn't have said it any better myself. Moin, thank you so much for coming on.

[Mouin]

Thank you.

[Abdelhalim]

Thank you for your wisdom. I look forward to meeting you soon.

[Mouin]

Thank you.