

## IC project #8, HC alone

Hi, everyone. I'm Helena Cobban, the president of Just World Educational. And I know that today we were promising you a conversation with Vijay Prashad, but because of time changes and such, we were unable to organise that.

But I am actually happy to tell you that, based on the seven conversations I've already held in this series on the Iran crisis, which is part of our ongoing Gaza and the World project-- based on those seven prior conversations, I feel I can really pull together a lot of what I have learned and what I've been thinking. So today, I'm just going to give you a little individual discourse telling you where my thinking is right now.

It's March 20. In today's talk, I'm going to cover the following items: I'm going to talk about Israel running rampage in Gaza and Lebanon. I'm going to talk about Israel doing exactly the same thing in the war on Iran.

I'm going to talk about the nature of the US-Israeli relationship as we can see it right now. I'm going to quickly review the global economic crisis and the paralysis of the United Nations right now. And then I'm going to look at the responsibility of US citizens to do what we can to bring a stable and sustainable end to this crisis.

And then end with the question, what do people do if you have a rogue elephant in your community? That's obviously related to Israel, but also to our own president, but mainly Israel.

So diving right in here, Israel running rampage in Gaza and Lebanon. Obviously, the news from both areas is terrible, as is the news from the West Bank, where the Israeli military in Gaza, as we know, has continued with its attacks.

I think I learned from Electronic Intifada yesterday that more than 630 people have been killed by the Israelis since the so-called ceasefire of last October. And of course, they've nearly wholly clamped down on the vital entry of humanitarian goods into Gaza. I can barely think how terrible it is.

The latest was that there was a sandstorm this week. So, you know, at a time of Eid al-Fitr, when Muslims everywhere should be celebrating the end of, or marking the end of Ramadan, the people in Gaza are just suffering terribly. 2.1, 2.2 million of our fellow humans there.

And the same in Lebanon, where the Israelis-- You know, they took the Dahiyya doctrine that they used in Lebanon, in the South Beirut suburbs of the Dahiyya, in 2006, they took that and applied it in spades to Gaza over the last two and a half years. And now they are taking the Gaza doctrine back to South Lebanon, demanding the evacuation of 800,000 or a million Lebanese residents from their homes and their home communities. And the scenes that we see from Lebanon are just, again, heartbreaking.

And then in Beirut, not just the southern suburbs, but throughout the city, they are leveling whole buildings. And this, this is all proceeding in spite of the fact that there is supposed to

be a ceasefire in Lebanon, as in Gaza. The ceasefire in Lebanon was concluded in November of 2024. And it was guaranteed not only by the United Nations under a continuation of UN Resolution 1701, but also explicitly by the United States government and the government of France, both of which have been completely asleep on the job of monitoring this ceasefire, given the horrendous scale of Israel's continuing violations, which have continued since November of 2024, but were obviously escalated since the beginning of their war on Iran.

It's important to note the paralysis of the United Nations in both these instances, and of course, in the case of Iran, where Israel has been running rampage since February 28. And I know when I say running rampage, what do I mean? I mean that they are using military force in close coordination with US CENTCOM, in order to sow chaos, havoc, devastation and destruction in key areas of Iran. Now, Iran is a huge country, it has 92 million people, and it has a lot of mountains.

So obviously, the Israelis are not able to destroy Gaza--They're not able to destroy **Iran** in the same systematic physical way that they are, that they have been able over the course of two and a half years, to destroy Gaza. But what they've done is they've targeted key nodes of governance, including, as we know, leaders at all levels across many different spheres of public institutions, most recently, the National Security Advisor, Ali Larjani, and the heads of so many police and Basij and IRGC and military units, political leaders, governance leaders across the board.

And I want to say, more than what Donald Trump has been happy with. And he's expressed his sort of joking "concern" about this a few times.

They've also, the Israelis, been targeting infrastructure, most recently on March 18, we saw them attacking the South Pars oil and gas field, which caused a huge crisis, of course, not only paralyzing the export of gas from there, but also the Islamic Republic of Iran has made quite clear throughout that they are going to retaliate eye for an eye, you might say, in biblical terms, for any escalation that the Israelis visit on them.

And so they, yesterday, March 19, attacked, as I understand it, portions of the gas field, the North Dome, I think it's called in Qatar, which is actually also part of the South Pars. It's the same gas field. The gas doesn't know whether it's on the Qatari or the Iranian side of the border, but there is a border. It's the same gas field. And also oil and gas facilities elsewhere in the Gulf and at Haifa port in Israel. So, yeah, this has caused a massive economic crisis worldwide.

And I'll come to that in a moment. But first, I want to delve into this question of the nature of the US-Israeli relationship, because at certain times, President Trump seems to have implied that the Israelis have gone further in their attacks on Iran than he would have been happy with. Which raises an interesting question.

The first was, you know, back on the first and second days of this war on Iran, they assassinated not only Ayatollah Khamenei and all of his family and senior colleagues in the clerical leadership and the political leadership on the first day, but also the Israelis assassinated a broad range of what you might call second tier leaders. And then Donald Trump came back and said, well, you know, we would have done a negotiation with the

second tier leaders, but the Israelis knocked them all out. He seems to deal with this matter, which is one of not just life or death for the people targeted, but of life or death, I want to say for just about everybody on the planet, if this horrible crisis continues to escalate and gets out of control.

And then again, with Israel's deliberate escalation by attacking the South Pars gas field-- Trump said, well, we kind of told them not to do it, but they did it anyway and they're such independent people.

You know, let's be quite frank here. The Israelis could not do any of this. They could not even get an airplane near to Iran if they didn't have close coordination with the U.S. military at every level. Now, we know that there has been close coordination between the Israeli military and U.S. CENTCOM, the Central Command since 2020. And parenthetically: important to note that that was enabled precisely by the Abraham Accords.

There is no way Israeli planes or missiles could overfly the West Asian heartland, which is a bunch of Arab states like Jordan, Syria, Iraq, Saudi Arabia-- no way that the Israeli planes or missiles could fly over that heartland without close coordination with U.S. CENTCOM, which has been active in those states and with the militaries of those states since 1983. So those are very deep relationships that CENTCOM has with those militaries. Well, the Syrian one is a little bit more recent, but definitely Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Iraq.

So that is how the Israeli planes and missiles get over the West Asian heartland from Israel to Iran. They call it the "air bridge." And it only operates at a certain height and in a certain direction.

But the whole thing is run by the U.S. military, by U.S. CENTCOM. And that is what enables the Israelis to get to Iran at all. So when Trump says he didn't know about the attack on the South Pars gas field or he didn't know about the extent of the assassination campaign back in the early days of the war, he is either outside of the chain of command of the U.S. military, or the U.S. chain of command is highly dysfunctional and doesn't report basic operational news-- important operational news!-- up the chain of command through Secretary Hegseth and to the president.

So he's either out of the chain of command or the chain of command is dysfunctional-- or he is lying. Those are the three options. I tend to think it's probably a combination of the three.

I want to note too that Donald Trump has been jerked around by the Israelis since day one of this current presidency and to some extent prior to that. People who know him well and have worked closely with him, like Tucker Carlson, Marjorie Taylor Greene, and Joe Kent, are all quite correct in their analysis that the Israelis have jerked him around and tricked him maybe, but talking about tricking Trump is a difficult matter because it implies that he has some kind of an otherwise rational mental process, which we have to worry about. Anyway, the Israelis have been jerking him around.

Meantime, of course, we have the globe-wide economic crisis and I have some slides that I want to share here. I'm not even sure if I can do this. Of course I can.

I've been doing screen share since I was-- well, for a long time... Should be sharing and is sharing. Good. Okay.

So this slide shows you... Sorry. This is quite old. This is maybe two weeks old at this point. This shows the American bases in red that Iran had struck in the early days of the war in retaliation for the initial phase of the war, which was undertaken obviously by Israel and the United States on February 28th. Just to show you kind of how widespread the US basing structure in West Asia actually is, I think the blue ones, this is a slightly old map.

The blue ones had not been struck as of then, may have been struck. Now, I also note that there is the Akrotiri RAF base, UK base in Cyprus. So that's just one little thing I wanted to share.

Here now we go down to the Straits of Hormuz. This is a really important map. You see, the Strait of Hormuz is very narrow, the navigable part of it, and it's very bendy.

That means that tankers that go through it, a tanker or a container ship is a massive piece of ship. It has a deep draft, so it has to have a certain depth of sea in order not to get stuck on the bottom. It has to maneuver very carefully around all these bendy parts.

So in other words, they have to go very slow. Then all along here, along the north coast, you have mountains. All of this is Iran.

This is the navigable part here. The Iranian missile batteries and whatever else in these mountains totally dominate that whole portion.

While I'm in the slideshow, here's the oil prices, which have gone up. This is from the Financial Times. It actually shows you the benchmark price for something called Brent Crude, which is now well north of \$100 a barrel. Maybe today it's gone up once again above \$110, maybe toward \$120 from a baseline around here of \$70.

But Brent Crude, it turns out-- these are sort of benchmark futures that people are bidding on. But I actually went to a website that I sometimes visit called GCaptain, which deals with navigation matters and obviously, oil tankers. They say the benchmark Middle East Dubai Crude price hit a record of \$166.80 a barrel. "If outages persist, Brent is likely to pass its all-time high of \$147 that it reached in 2008." Therefore, the Middle East Dubai Crude could well be toward \$200. That's my takeaway from that.

I'm going to stop this screen share now. I think it's a little clunky for me to be doing this.

Just World Educational has a new presence on Substack. It's here. [Justworlded.substack.com](https://justworlded.substack.com). We are hoping to be able to do livestreams on our Substack platform. Maybe we'll be able to get our tech a little bit higher grade once we do that.

So: the economic crisis globewide. And I have to underline here, again, the paralysis of the United Nations, complete paralysis. Was it last week that the United Nations, the Security Council passed a really stupid, I want to say, resolution criticizing Iran for the attacks it had launched against the Arab states of the Gulf, which have been hosting those US military bases?

And given that those military bases are, as I noted earlier, totally tied into CENTCOM and Israeli military planning, they evidently, not just the bases, but all the other infrastructure outside the bases, like the places where the sailors stay overnight, the American sailors and servicemen, are, I would say, valid targets. But anyway, this UN Security Council resolution criticized the Iranians for their retaliatory strikes. It said not a word about the outrageous Israeli-US attack on Iran that was launched on February 28.

And in that Security Council vote, China and Russia, once again, as they did last November, with the Board of Peace vote, abstained, and they let the resolution go through. Big question in my mind: Why do they do this? Why do they let these extremely harmful, extremely pro-Israeli, pro-Trump resolutions go through when they could, either of them, or maybe even the UK and France, they all have veto power in the Security Council. I was discussing this with Dimitri Lascaris earlier this week.

So we have the paralysis of the United Nations, which should be, once upon a time, I would have hoped that the United Nations could be an effective place to help deal with this worldwide crisis. However, other actors in the United Nations are doing useful things like Spain, for example, China, several states in the United Nations are playing a positive role.

But we here, who are United States citizens, I think we have special responsibilities. I don't think we can just act as if we were la-di-da, "global citizens," much as we might like to be, much as we might like not to have to take responsibility for Donald Trump's actions. We do have to, because we live in a democracy here.

And we should be able to control our own president, who has been acting in the most cruel and calculated, destructive and inhumane way that one can imagine, as has his close ally, the government of Israel. So we can discuss, did the Israelis snooker Donald Trump into launching this war? But he has to take responsibility. And therefore we, as citizens of the United States, have to take responsibility.

So one thing that I've been thinking about is, I don't know if you can see this, the call that I've been starting to issue that we as US citizens have to take the lead to **take US military bases out of the Gulf**. Those military bases are a remnant of the white supremacist international that has been essentially bossing the people of the Gulf region and trying to run and control the whole of the Gulf region since 1507. That was the Portuguese and then the English.

And then more recently, since the 1970s, the Americans. So for a few years there, the US military had bases on the north and the south coasts of the Gulf. But when we had the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979, they threw out the US bases and the US consolidated, put more effort into the bases it has on the south coast of the Gulf.

Why does the United States have military bases in the Persian/Arabian Gulf? Why? It's just an imperial leftover. It's just a continuation of the policy of white supremacy over world affairs that was inaugurated by the Portuguese in the 15th and 16th centuries of the Common Era, and then carried out even more by the Spanish and French and English and the Belgians a little bit belatedly. But this is what the United States is doing.

We have to get those bases out of the Gulf. And then we have to deal with this other big rogue elephant in the room, which is Israel. Now, my understanding from reading Rudyard Kipling and other authors of the British Empire is that if there is a rogue elephant in the community, you take it out and shoot it.

And honestly, when I look at what Israel is doing throughout the whole of West Asia, I am tempted to say, that's it. This state has no legitimacy whatsoever. Take it out and shoot it.

I'm not quite at the point of saying that, but really, who is going to save the global economy, the hard pressed peoples of Africa, India, Asia, South America, from the economic crisis, the economic chaos, and all this cruelty and violence that the Israelis are visiting on their immediate neighbors and on their more distant neighbors over there in Iran? So like I say, as American citizens, we do have a lot of responsibilities. And I am delighted that in this country, there are more people stepping up to criticize the US-Israeli relationship, something I've been doing for, gosh, 50 years now, and our voices were silenced.

My voice was silenced for many, many years in the discourse in this country. Now we have many prominent people are starting to ask the right questions about the nature of the US-Israeli relationship and about the nature of Israel itself.

So anyway, I want you to go visit our substack, [justworlded.substack.com](https://justworlded.substack.com). Visit our website, [www.justworldeducational.org](http://www.justworldeducational.org), where we have a whole lot of wonderful resources about the Iran crisis.

We will be continuing to add to them. Vijay Prashad should be with us next Tuesday. So anyway, thanks for listening.

Hit the like button, subscribe, tell your friends about this YouTube channel, the Just World Educational YouTube channel, because we are really working hard to try to build a more just and peaceful world. Thanks and bye.