

# The Iran Crisis, #7: Barbara Slavin on Iran's durability, Israeli-U.S. war goals, and more

*Transcript of the conversation Helena Cobban had with Barbara Slavin on 3/3/2026. Find the full video and audio records of this conversation [here](#).*

**[Helena Cobban]**

Hi, everybody. I'm Helena Cobban. I'm the president of Just World Educational, and I'm delighted to have you with us for the seventh in our ongoing series on the Iran crisis.

We started last week, actually, on February 25th. And then on February 28th, Israel and the US launched their current large scale aggression against Iran, which makes our project even more timely. And I'm super delighted today to have with me Barbara Slavin, who is a well known expert on Iran and things more broadly in the region.

Barbara, great to have you with us.

**[Barbara Slavin]**

Thank you very much for having me.

**[Helena Cobban]**

So we've got so much to talk about. You're an expert in so many different realms of this. I want to start with US decision making.

It's been my contention and that of, I think, all of my guests so far, that Israel has actually driven just about all the decision making, both regarding launching this assault and the timing of it, and possibly also the scope of it. How would you assess that, first of all, that dimension of the decision making, the Israeli influence?

**[Barbara Slavin]**

Yeah, well, obviously, this whole operation is something that Bibi Netanyahu has been wanting for many, many years, decades, in fact. But I think that that takes away responsibility from Donald Trump. Trump was willing to be convinced by Netanyahu.

We have, as the President of the United States, someone who is looking to secure a legacy, as we see here in Washington, where he slaps his name on every building in town. And he was convinced by Netanyahu that this was the moment to strike. Iran is weak.

Iran has suffered from decades of American sanctions. Trump pulled out of a previous nuclear agreement and reimposed all of those sanctions, and they were not lifted under the Biden administration. Since the Hamas attacks on Israel of 2023, Israel has systematically weakened all of Iran's so-called forward defense partner militias in Lebanon and elsewhere.

The Assad regime has fallen. So we know this about Donald Trump, that he likes to prey on the weak. And so I'm sure that Netanyahu convinced him that this was the moment that Donald Trump could be the American president on whose watch the Islamic Republic of Iran, that thorn in our side for 47 years, finally fell.

So yes, Israel obviously had a lot to do with this. But let's not take the responsibility away from the President of the United States. He is high on his own supply.

He's had a number of small military operations that have not turned out to be disastrous. But now he has essentially decided on a cosmic roll of the dice and gone up against Iran. And we will talk about the ways in which Iran, while weak, still is a very potent enemy, especially now that it has been attacked in this way.

**[Helena Cobban]**

Thank you. That's really helpful to refocus attention on President Trump. And I'd also note that just last night, Wednesday, March, whatever it was, 4th, yesterday, an attempt by many leaders in Congress to rein him in with some iteration of the War Powers Act failed.

So he is now like completely free to do what he wants with his very bizarre set of cabinet members, Pete Hegseth and Marco Rubio. And I mean, terrifying people if you listen to what Pete Hegseth is saying. What do you see as the potential for differences between Trump and Netanyahu as this war proceeds?

**[Barbara Slavin]**

I've just actually commissioned a piece-- I work for the Stimson Center, and there is a site called Middle East Perspectives on the Stimson website that I edit and write for as well. And I've just actually commissioned a piece from an Israeli expert on Iran on this very topic.

The way I see it is that Trump is still somehow looking for a Venezuela solution from Iran. He wants to find someone within the regime who will collaborate with the United States, who will capitulate to American demands over Iran's nuclear program and regional posture. Whereas Netanyahu is looking for a Libya solution.

From his perspective and that of many Israelis, the desired outcome is a weak, chaotic, fragmented Iran that cannot pose any kind of threat to Israel in the future. And while I am an opponent of this war with every fiber of my being, I think it's fair to say that the Islamic Republic of Iran, through its rhetoric as well as its actions, has encouraged this interpretation, this aim in Israel by calling for death to Israel for 47 years and by supporting the most radical and militant elements of the Palestinian opposition instead of a two-state solution. Hindsight is 20-20, but if Iran had been able to pivot to that kind of position on Israel, I think we might not be where we are today.

**[Helena Cobban]**

Well, I think this is, in a sense, a separate discussion as to whether there ever was a viable two-state solution. Quite possibly, I don't know, back in the early 1990s, [but] once we got into Oslo, I think the prospects for a two-state solution vanished.

**[Barbara Slavin]**

That's a topic for another webinar. I'm not attempting to justify what Israel and the United States has done. I'm trying to explain it.

**[Helena Cobban]**

I understood.

**[Barbara Slavin]**

When you look at the polls in Israel now, 90% in favor of this war on Iran.

**[Helena Cobban]**

Well, first of all, the polls in Israel only ever poll the Jewish citizens of Israel, although Arab citizens of Israel do constitute, I think, 25% or 22% of the country. So, yes, the Jewish Israelis seem very high on colonial expansionism right now. I see a huge body of opinion in Israel that wants not just the greater Israel that we have been looking at, Netanyahu and Ben-Gavir and all these people wanting to take the whole of the West Bank as well as Gaza, not just that Greater Israel, but what I would call the Very Much Greater Israel that is part of Mike Huckabee's vision of from the Nile to the Euphrates, and that massive chunk of the Jewish Israeli population that supports that is a real concern and the demise of what was once a very vibrant peace movement in Israel.

So, I mean, those are all realities that we have to deal with. I want to come back to what you said about Netanyahu wanting some kind of a Libya solution, which, of course, is no solution at all. It's just a horrendous, chaotic outcome.

Whereas Trump probably, if he thinks about this at all, would like a Delcy Rodriguez kind of outcome, which I also call the Emperor Hirohito outcome. You find a way to bend the existing order to your desires.

We saw a couple of days ago, Trump said something like, "The trouble is, all the people that I was considering dealing with in Iran have been killed."

Killed by whom? At the operational level, if he wanted to preserve certain segments of the IRGC leadership or the political leadership to be the potential Delcy Rodriguez, then who ordered that they be killed? And if that is the case, that Israel ordered that they be killed, is there resentment or anger inside the Trump administration that the Israelis are stymieing a possible Trumpian plan?

**[Barbara Slavin]**

I don't think we see that yet. But if this war goes on for quite a long time, especially if the American death toll increases, as we're speaking, I think we have, is it six or eight? I forget now, Americans who've been killed.

But if the costs, also the economic costs of this war, and we'll talk about that as well, increase dramatically, I think we're going to see the divergence between the US and Israel. And my sense is that the Israelis are trying to hit as much as they can and kill as many potential leaders of Iran as they can before Trump calls it quits, and essentially tells Netanyahu that's it. I think we will get to that moment.

I just don't know how long it will take.

**[Helena Cobban]**

Well, that's an interesting point that Donald Trump could at any time, tell Netanyahu we're calling it quits. And this comes back to the point you made earlier on, that Trump needs to take responsibility. We can't just say he is a willing dupe of Netanyahu.

We have to recognize that he has ultimate decision making power, because the defense of Israel would not last you know, five minutes without consent.

**[Barbara Slavin]**

No, exactly. I mean, you know, Netanyahu has been trying to get American presidents to attack Israel forever, Sorry, attack *Iran* forever. And, you know, Donald Trump is the first American president, crazy enough to fall in with Netanyahu. He was persuaded, as I said, that he could be the president on whose watch the Islamic Republic of Iran would collapse.

But you know, Netanyahu has tried this with, he tried it with Obama. He tried it, he's tried it with every American leader. And until Trump, there was no American president foolhardy enough to say yes.

**[Helena Cobban]**

So part of this I saw coming in the kind of the some of the mainstream media over the past, let's say, months has been, you know, the Iranian regime, as they call it, the Islamic Republic of Iran is unprecedentedly weak and now is the time to strike. And of course, particularly since the big popular protests over the economic issues that broke out in late December.

Do you see-- I guess it's difficult to see things while this war is going on-- but do you see this possibility of a regime collapse as being plausible right now? You know, my family grew up in London under the Blitz. And when Hitler was blitzkrieging London, nobody in London, you know, even people who were, you know, very opposed politically to the government wanted the government to crumble at that point.

And they made a government of national unity, as we know, but how do you see that happening in Iran with so much death and destruction currently being visited on it?

**[Barbara Slavin]**

Yeah, well, you know, there are a number of ways to measure this. I mean, my own personal feeling from nine trips to Iran is that the regime is incredibly unpopular and has been for a

very, very long time. Iran now has perhaps the most secular society in the Middle East as a result of 47 years of Shia Islam being stuffed down their throats by this regime.

The vast majority of Iranians want to be part of the international community. And they want nothing to do with the Islamic Republic and the clerics and the IRGC, etc. But so far, despite the unpopularity of the regime, which was, of course, intensified by the vicious crackdown on protests in January, when at least 7000 Iranians were killed by their own government.

Despite all of that, the regime is holding together so far. I mean, until or unless we begin to see men with guns, turning against other men with guns in the regime, until we start to see a viable organized opposition movement with a clear and credible leader within Iran, and I'm not talking about the son of the Shah who lives in Potomac, Maryland, but someone within the country who has real support. Until then, I think the Libya model, well, I mean, their Qaddafi did fall.

But in Iran, you have hundreds of potential leaders among the clerical establishment and the military establishment that can, you know, move in. And we've seen this after the assassination of the Supreme Leader, the country is being ruled on an interim basis by a three-member council. There's the president, the head of the judiciary, and a senior cleric.

There is an organization called the Assembly of Experts, which will choose a new Supreme Leader. There is a new commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, and so on. So, so far, I do not see signs that the regime is collapsing.

But of course, there is incredible damage and devastation being done, many people being killed, officials as well as civilians in the country. And so we have to, we have to watch. The other thing, of course, is that Trump is now trying to energize ethnic minorities.

He's calling Kurdish leaders and urging them to begin to try to destabilize the country. So this is also kind of worrisome. And it's part of this scenario of fragmentation that I worry about.

**[Helena Cobban]**

Yeah, it strikes me it was a very kind of pro forma and belated attempt that suddenly on Sunday, he picks up the phone to speak to some Iranian Kurdish leaders. I mean, if it had been a serious attempt to foment an ethnic Kurdish secessionary movement and to support that, I would have imagined it would have been carried out over some years by the CIA and, you know, Mossad. And I know they have been doing a lot of things from Erbil, from the Kurdish area of northern Iraq, where Mossad has a very robust presence, and so do all kinds of nefarious organizations.

But they haven't really, you know, until Trump picked up the phone on Sunday, they hadn't made a big deal about Iranian Kurds. And of course, the prospect of another large bunch of Kurds getting some form of self rule is terrifying above all to the Turks.

**[Barbara Slavin]**

Yes, it is. No, and I mean, the Kurds have been used, exploited by Israel in the United States for I mean, how many times, you know, we remember, I remember the the Kurdish rebellion in the 1970s, when the CIA and SAVAK worked together to support the original Barzan and sold them down to Saddam Hussein, who, in return for more power over, you know, the Persian Gulf, and what was it, the, the straits, you know, that comes down from the Persian Gulf, so the Shatt al-Arab.

**[Helena Cobban]**

Yeah.

**[Barbara Slavin]**

So I mean, you know, the Kurds, frankly, I think would be very foolish to get involved in this and to allow themselves to be exploited once again, you know, by Israel in the United States against Iran. It's an old story.

But, you know, the other thing is that Iran is ethnically more coherent than a lot of Middle Eastern countries, it has a Persian majority, and the largest minority is the Azeri minority, which is Shia, even though it is Turkic speaking and Iran, you know, Pete Hegseth, I mean, my God, at a press conference said, we will outlast Iran.

And the first thing that popped into my head was Iran is 2500 years old. You know, it's it and we are what 250 maybe--

**[Helena Cobban]**

If we if we make it to July--

**[Barbara Slavin]**

...if we make it to July, and this poppinjay fool in a tight suit is saying that we're going to outlast Persia. Okay.

I'll take a bet on that, you know, one of the the betting platforms that now proliferate all over, all over the internet. I mean, I don't think so. You know, Iran will be degraded, it will be weakened.

Some are even saying it might go back to sort of its status during the Qajar era when it was really very, very weak and exploited by both Britain and, and, and Russia, Imperial Russia.

But Iran will survive this long after Donald Trump is gone. And certainly Pete Hegseth has gone back to Fox News.

So yeah, it's troubling, but you know, every old technique will be pulled out of out of the grab bag of ways to destabilize the country, I'm afraid.

**[Helena Cobban]**

I mean, you talk about the possibility of a Libya outcome. I lived and worked in Lebanon for for the first six years of the civil war there. And, you know, the prospect of men with guns opposing other men with with guns inside one country is something that, you know, still haunts me very, very deeply.

And what's happening in Libya, what happened in Syria, and is still happening in Syria, what is happening in Lebanon now is also very concerning. So I think, you know, everybody who watches this should really be very aware of the dangers to humanity and to all the values that we hold dear, of any kind of serious civil breakdown of that kind in Iran.

Now you talked about, about the 2500 year timeline. Let's look at the like, 10 day timeline here. Because you said that if the timeline gets drawn out, then the differences between the US and Israel will become more apparent. When I was talking with Ambassador Chas Freeman yesterday, he said that his best estimate-- and you know, he's somebody who's worked at a high level in the Defense Department and knows a lot about the region and a lot about everything in the world.

He said that the the serious anti-missile interceptors will start to run out in about 10 days. And so that will be the crucial turning point when tough decisions have to be made. Do you share that kind of a timeline?

Or how do you see? Well, I guess the the possibilities are that, no, the only possibility is that the Iranian governance system continues in some form, and we've seen it continuing to coordinate military attacks across a range of targets, including targets in the Arab Gulf countries, which have a huge impact. But I don't see the Iranian governing system collapsing within the next months.

So then how does it play out as the US and Israel start to understand that they're going to have to like, ease back on some of what they're doing, because Israel is going to get very badly hit, I think?

**[Barbara Slavin]**

Well, look, at some point, President Trump is going to decide to declare victory. No matter what has happened, no matter what the outcome. And to my mind, I think the domestic political pressures on him are going to be decisive.

The price of gasoline in the United States has already gone up 20 cents a gallon. And Trump is very sensitive to the inflation question. We have midterm elections coming up in the United States in November.

The Republicans were not slated to do well anyway. But if this crisis continues for weeks and months, the impact on American domestic politics is going to be quite significant. Donald Trump lied to the people who voted for him.

He promised no more stupid wars, particularly not in the Middle East. He said he would be the president of peace. He said he would focus on the economy.

And look at this. I mean, he is unleashed, he's unchained. He has bombed, what, seven, eight countries since he became president again.

He staged an intervention in Venezuela, and now a war on Iran. So I think the domestic political pressures are the ones that will eventually cause him to diverge from Netanyahu.

**[Helena Cobban]**

That's fascinating. I mean, we're seeing very serious splits from the get-go within the Republican MAGA base, which I think, you know, we didn't see anything like that during the invasion of Iraq. Well, I suppose there were some paleo-conservatives back in early 2003, who tried to rein in George W. Bush, but he and Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld overcame them very speedily. And the Republican Party became a party of war. This time, there are more possibilities for, I want to say, cross-party cooperation between opponents, among opponents of this war, which are very interesting to look at.

**[Barbara Slavin]**

Yes, absolutely. I mean, if you look at the Tucker Carlson's of this world, they are vehemently opposed to this war. Megyn Kelly, who's a former Fox News personality, has an apparently a very influential show.

She has come out against it. Marjorie Taylor Greene, the former MAGA congresswoman, has come out against it. People from defense priorities and other organizations that are libertarian in nature have come out against it.

Even some of the members of Congress who are not voting for the authorization or against the authorization of war on Iran have said that basically, Trump has a couple of weeks. And if this goes beyond that time period, they would reconsider their votes. This is enormously expensive, the billions and billions of dollars that are being burned up in this illegal, immoral war, money that obviously could be better used for domestic priorities.

This is going to become a bigger and bigger issue, the longer this goes on.

**[Helena Cobban]**

Yeah, this is a time when people's medical insurance premiums in many cases across the country have more than doubled just since the beginning of the year. And when food aid projects across the country are being squeezed very, very tight, you're absolutely right that there's huge potential for this. So if we're looking at a let's say the next two weeks, we could see something happening.

Trump could declare victory at any point. I was hoping before the war got launched, that he would declare victory with negotiations with Iran and essentially reinstate something like the old JCPOA, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and just call it the Trump Comprehensive Plan of Action. I had the logo and everything: the TCPOA, it could have been his thing, like the Trump Kennedy Center and all these other things we see around town, but he chose the war option.

**[Barbara Slavin]**

Yeah, in fact, a colleague of mine named Laura Rozen, who is an excellent journalist and covered the JCPOA talks for years and years, just put up a piece on her Substack, which is called Diplomatic, if anybody is interested, on the incredible incompetence of Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner, who kind of speed dialed through these negotiations without even proper technical backup.

The Iranians made quite an offer, they offered not to do any uranium enrichment for five years, according to Laura, which is far better than what the JCPOA promised. Under the JCPOA, the Iranians demanded that they continue to enrich at a low level 3.67%. This would have had no enrichment for five years. I know, it could have been quite the TCPOA, right? Yeah, and then enrichment just for the Tehran Research Reactor, which produces medical isotopes. And Iran would have down blended the highly enriched uranium that's buried under rubble from the previous strikes into fuel for the Tehran Research Reactor.

Apparently, Witkoff and Kushner didn't understand that the Tehran Research Reactor, which, by the way, the United States gave Iran in 1967, that it has no centrifuges, that it produces medical isotopes. To treat cancer, but because they had no technical backup, and because they were never interested in a deal, except they wanted Iranian capitulation, that's it. And if Iran wouldn't agree to everything that Trump demanded, these talks were essentially kabuki theater.

They were never serious. And they were a way to buy time for the United States and Israel to prepare to go to war. And actually, you can't understand that.

**[Helena Cobban]**

Yeah, I totally agree. And we can see a very consistent pattern, because when Trump came in, in January of 2025, very rapidly, he did restart the negotiations with Iran over nuclear matters that Biden had let lapse many, many years previously. But he restarted those negotiations, precisely as a way to gain time for the June attacks, which were indecisive and ended in what I called a mutually hurting stalemate after 12 days.

**[Barbara Slavin]**

Well, actually, the June attacks did devastating damage to the Iranian nuclear program, which is why when Trump now trots out this idea that it was this or nuclear war, he is once again, not just lying. I mean, if he were Pinocchio, his nose would be a mile long. He obliterated, in his own words, Iran's ability to produce a nuclear weapon last June, which makes all of this even more inexplicable.

**[Helena Cobban]**

Well, and then he said, in one of his many different attempts to explain the launch of the war on February 28th, that he had "a good feeling" that they were about to attack. First of all, basing policy on feelings is a very bizarre concept. It was no imminent threat.

No, but then a good feeling, a *good* feeling? Oh, gee, that means we can go to war. Is that the good part of it?

I mean, anyway, I guess expecting organizational coherence from Trump's utterances would be ridiculous.

There is just one thing before we move on from US decision making, and I know our time is getting along here, but some people in the administration, including Marco Rubio, have tried to kind of sell the war as being something that's in Israel's interests or initiated by Israel or at Israel's behest or whatever. Trump has gone both ways on this.

His main thing is to say, no, it's my decision. But he has also alluded to the Israeli interest. I think that there is an understanding in the American body politic that putting a kind of Israel brand on a policy, which always used to be uncontroversial, we do this because it's good for Israel, and then the AIPAC money flows in and the voters get persuaded and then you do well politically.

Now, there's a much more wary understanding that branding things as pro-Israel could well be a negative in the US body politic. Are you seeing this?

**[Barbara Slavin]**

Yeah, well, look, as a result of the Israeli brutality in Gaza, for the first time, we see in the polls that more Americans support the Palestinians than the Israelis, and this was before the Iran war. So, I understand why Israel is doing this now, but I think it's very short-sighted because I think that, as you pointed out, Israel needs the United States. We don't need Israel.

And if this war comes out badly and is perceived to have been something that kills and destroys and in the end really accomplishes nothing, apart from death and destruction, it's going to hurt Israel in the United States even more. And that means that more candidates will be elected to office who are not supporters of Israel. AIPAC will lose its ability to influence elections.

And over the long term, Israel will find itself more isolated internationally and in the United States. So, at some point, I'm hoping that Israelis recognize this and that this is not even in their interest long term, but certainly Americans are going to feel that this enormous expenditure of money and American service personnel's lives is not in our interest. And there should be a reassertion of American national interest going forward.

**[Helena Cobban]**

So, that segues nicely into a consideration of American soft power and the effects of this war on American soft power as measured. Well, economics is to some extent an element of soft power. But if we see the world economy being seriously impacted, I guess what Chas Freeman was saying was that India will be one of the hardest hit, but the Europeans are being extremely hard hit.

And it's also going to come back home here in terms of rising gas prices, as you mentioned. But the other element of soft power, in a sense, is international legitimacy and UN charter. Do you remember the UN charter? There was that thing back when. And this war is shredding all of that.

**[Barbara Slavin]**

Well, Donald Trump has been shredding it ever since he came in. I mean, blowing up boats in the Caribbean, not even bothering to save people. We haven't even mentioned that the U.S. sank an Iranian ship that had been in India for friendly maneuvers, killing hundreds of people on board, did nothing to even try to save these poor sailors who were far from the fray. And Pete Hegseth bragged about it, about the first time we've sunk an enemy warship since World War II. He was gleeful about this. This is a war crime.

**[Helena Cobban]**

Yeah. I mean, somebody also pointed out that when the Nazis did it with their U-boats in World War II, they would actually stick around and save the survivors if they could.

**[Barbara Slavin]**

We didn't even do that. Fortunately, there were some Indian ships around that did save some of the people on board. But apparently, we waited until this ship was just out of Indian waters and in international waters and then sank it with a torpedo.

So, I mean, the United States has become unrecognizable to me in many ways under Trump, both domestically and internationally. We have no soft power anymore. We destroyed USAID.

We don't care how many people die of AIDS in Africa anymore. He's become like some sort of avenging angel. He is clearly enjoying the sight of bombs falling on people and forget international law.

There is no international law under Donald Trump. The beneficiary is China, which comes across as the adult in the room and as the upholder of international law. I mean, it's absolutely bizarre.

The Chinese, by the way, are apparently bestirring themselves to try to see if they can reach some sort of diplomatic resolution to the war. And as you pointed out, the Arab countries are hurting terribly. The whole notion that they are stable countries has been punctured by this, by the Iranian attacks on the Arab states, hitting the airport in Dubai, hitting all kinds of civilian infrastructure throughout the region.

This is the Iranian strategy to make these countries pay for their ties with Israel and the United States. And it's causing great consternation. We haven't mentioned the one million Americans stranded in the Middle East by a state department that didn't even bother to think about warning them sufficiently in advance so they could come back to the United States.

The dereliction of duty is just extraordinary. So there will be a lot of repercussions that will flow from this. And maybe they will sober Trump up so he doesn't declare war on another country.

**[Helena Cobban]**

Yes, it's hard to think where he might go that would be more consequential than attacking Iran.

**[Barbara Slavin]**

Cuba would be easy compared to this, right?

**[Helena Cobban]**

Right. I mean, Iran does play a pivotal role in Eurasia as a whole, I want to say, because of its location, because of its compactness, because it's on the Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz. I was actually just writing something on Twitter the other day about the fact that when Western imperialism first encountered that portion of the Eurasian landmass, the Portuguese went to Hormuz and wrecked the island and the little emirate that was on the island.

So Hormuz was at the beginning and may well be at the end of Western hegemony of the order, which is an interesting thought.

Just one more question about the Arab Gulf states. You said the Arab states have been badly hit.

It's basically the little what the British used to call the Trucial States, which were the result of truces concluded between those sheikhs and emirs and the East India Company back in the day, which was part of the British Empire. So that's why they were separate from Saudi Arabia. So all those little city states essentially on the Gulf that are Arab states, I think all of them have been hit to some extent, Oman less than the others, because Oman, well, as we know, the Omani foreign minister played an important role trying to mediate the nuclear agreement and was brushed aside.

But even Oman has been subjected to some Iranian bombing. What do you think the Iranians are hoping to achieve?

**[Barbara Slavin]**

They're trying to shorten the war by increasing the pain for these countries. They hope that Trump will listen to the Saudis, the Emiratis, the Qataris, especially given the financial connections between these countries and the Trump family, that he will listen to them and that that will shorten the war. This was a strategy that was obviously designed in advance.

A lot of these strikes, I think, were pre-planned. Decision making has been decentralized in Iran because of the decapitation strikes mounted by the Israelis. So that's the game plan.

We'll see if it works.

**[Helena Cobban]**

One thing I noticed was that one of the targets of the Iranian missiles was a series of Amazon Web Services, AWS data centers in the United Arab Emirates. That was going to be a big thing. The Emirates was going to become a big center of data services and AI and everything.

I very much doubt that anybody right now wants to invest much in Dubai. I call it "Do Sell", not Dubai.

**[Barbara Slavin]**

It really will have major ramifications. I was on an internal podcast with a colleague of mine, Randa Slim, for Stimson Center stakeholders yesterday. She was talking about the impact on Lebanon and Syria, which can no longer count on Gulf money for reconstruction, which they both desperately need, and of course Gaza.

These countries are now going to be focused on repairing the damage to themselves and trying to salvage their very ambitious economic plans, Vision 2030 in Saudi Arabia, which means that countries like Syria will be even more destabilized than they already are after going through more than a decade of civil war. Gaza, forget Gaza, nobody's going to put in a penny for the Board of Peace. What Muslim country in its right mind is going to contribute troops to the stabilization force, so-called Malaysia or Indonesia, and certainly not Turkey?

Gaza will suffer even more as a result of this war.

**[Helena Cobban]**

I'm not sure that the stabilization force and the Board of Peace ever meant anything positive for the people of Gaza at all. The fact that it's going to fail-- so Gaza remains in just this horrible, ever-shrinking genocidal concentration camp, which is a sort of an extermination camp as well.

And Lebanon, I'm glad that you mentioned Randa Sliem and Lebanon, because of course, what's happening in Lebanon is also of great concern. The Israelis are ordering the entire population of Lebanon south of the Litani River to move. If we didn't have this big war with Iran, then the Israelis doing something as outrageous as that in Lebanon would at least make the front pages here in the United States.

But the Israelis feel that they can do whatever they want. They cut off all the aid trucks to Gaza, which is back now in a situation of deliberate starvation. And they want to push the entire population of South Lebanon out.

I mean, those are, you could call them collateral damage, but for the people involved, they are...

**[Barbara Slavin]**

I would just say one thing, and that is that Hezbollah should not have attacked Israel. Hezbollah made the decision to try to act in solidarity with Iran. And as a result, Lebanon is now in this terrible condition again.

And the Israelis are invading again for the umpty umpth time, you know, over the...

**[Helena Cobban]**

But we do also have to recognize, Barbara, that the Israelis have been violating the ceasefire in Lebanon systematically since November of 2024..

**[Barbara Slavin]**

Hezbollah did not have to start rocketing northern Israel again. You will notice, by the way, that the Houthis have not gotten into the act quite yet.

**[Helena Cobban]**

Well, the Houthis, they've shut down the Red Sea.

**[Barbara Slavin]**

No, not again. They're calculating what to do. They have not started attacking shipping again.

Very interesting. So, you know, each of these organizations, I know people call them proxies, but each of these organizations has its own national interest to consider. And I can tell you from my conversation with Randa Sleem that the vast majority of Lebanese Shia are furious with Hezbollah for getting into this war.

So, you know, there are a lot of nuances, and we have to appreciate, I think, the fact that this is not black and white.

**[Helena Cobban]**

I totally agree. And, you know, Lebanon is such a complex and beleaguered society right now.

I think we should probably wrap this up, Barbara, although it's been just excellent to have chance to have this conversation with you, which I've been wanting to have for a super long time.

And I'm sorry that it took this war for us to-- You know, Just World Educational has been focused on Gaza so closely for the last two and a half years.

**[Barbara Slavin]**

I wanted to say that, you know, I feel I've felt so terrible for you since the Gaza war started. And now, you know, here, Iran is my specialty. And now I'm watching, you know, the Gazafication of Iran.

And so it's been extremely painful, the last couple of years in particular, extremely painful to watch the Middle East, an area that I've lived in and spent so much time in, and you have as well, be just, you know, further immiserated and dragged down into violence and chaos. It is, you know, at some point, you know, it has to stop getting worse and start getting better. But for the life of me, I just don't see when.

**[Helena Cobban]**

You know, scholars of settler colonialism, historically and today, say that, you know, it has the logic of elimination of the indigenous peoples, which we have seen here in the United States over the course of more than 250 years, because the British did it before [the USA.] But that is kind of what the Zionist project seems to be doing in their neighborhood. And with the Dahiya doctrine, the word Dahiya means neighborhood, which is what they first applied in in South Beirut in Lebanon, and then they're applying, they applied it in Gaza, and now they seem to be applying it in Iran.

But Iran is very, very much larger and more robust and resilient than either Lebanon or Gaza. So I think they may have met their match. But it's tragic.

You're quite right. It's tragic to watch it and think about the lives and the hopes and the futures of the people that have been devastated.

So anyway, big thanks to you, Barbara Slavin, for your work and for being out there and studying this and caring about it and analyzing it.

This is, as I mentioned at the beginning, the seventh in our current series on the Iran crisis. We're going to take a pause right now and reconsider how we want to plan our programming for next week. We've been doing essentially one every day.

People can find them on our website, [www.justworldeducational.org](http://www.justworldeducational.org), where we have a special section called The Iran Crisis that contains the multimedia records of all of these conversations: video, audio, transcripts and summaries. So we do what we can to present information for a general audience and activists and people who care about peace and justice at the global level, through our website. It obviously takes a little bit of resources to do that.

So if you can donate, you'll find a donate button at the website.

And finally, just a big thank you to you, Barbara Slavin. It's been a pleasure to talk to you.

I think I failed to mention at the beginning that you are a Distinguished Fellow at the Stimson Center, but I really appreciate your work.

**[Barbara Slavin]**

If I may just plug once again, Middle East Perspectives, you will find amazing content there about the war.

**[Helena Cobban]**

Okay. Thank you so much and talk to you again later, I hope.