



EU elections, US-backed ceasefire in Gaza & French troops in Ukraine

This transcript may not be 100% accurate due to audio quality or other factors.

Zain Raza (ZR): Thank you for tuning in today, and welcome back to another episode of The Source. I'm your host Zain Raza. Today I'll be talking to longtime peace activist Reiner Braun. From 2013 to 2019, he was one of the presidents of the International Peace Bureau. He's a regular speaker at peace demonstrations in Germany, and is one of the founding members of the international peace network called No to War - No to NATO. Reiner Braun, welcome back.

Reiner Braun (RB): Thank you for the invitation.

ZR: Let us begin this interview with the European election. Across the board, particularly in countries such as Germany and France, rightist parties made major gains in the European election. In Germany, the opposition conservative parties Christian Democrats, CDU and CSU, came out as clear winners with 30% and the rightist party Alternative für Deutschland, AfD, came with 15.9%. The ruling coalition suffered a major setback. The Greens finished with 11.9%, the Liberals, FDP, came in at 5.2% and the Social Democrats, SPD, won just 13.9% of the vote, which according to the Deutsche Welle, is the worst result for the SPD in a nationwide democratic election in more than 130 years. Notable gains were also made by Germany's new leftist party, the Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance, BSW, which appeared for the first time on the political stage and won 6.2% of the vote in its first outing. In France, President Emmanuel Macron dissolved the parliament and called snap legislative elections after the preliminary results showed that Marine Le Pen's far right National Rally is set to win about 32%, which would double Macron's centrist Renaissance, which currently has 15.2%. Could you provide your assessment on these election results and what it means for the future of Europe?

RB: The results of the election are one of the worst cases you could get. The winning of the right wing and the conservatives shows that neither peace nor social ecological transformation is on the agenda of the people. The people are deeply disappointed, above all in Germany, from the so-called government. And the alternative for them is to go to the right,

not to the left. And you can see quite the same in France, even when it's quite optimistic to see that 30% in France were voting for the left parties, and that these left parties are united now in the election campaign. This is definitely a sign of hope. But for Germany, it shows that the people who are suffering under the social conditions have no hope. And with no hope and the resignation, that means that they are voting more or less to the right or are not going to the elections. Quite 50% are not voting. The minimum hope of the elections is the Sahra Wagenknecht party; the party was elected, which has a very clear anti-war and peace position, which says we need negotiations and a ceasefire for Ukraine and for other international conflicts. But what does this 6% mean, if the others, the AfD for example, got more than 50%. What this means is that for the peace activists and all the critical voices in the country, we have to more or less unite our voices and enlarge our activities and we have to speak a language that the people in the country understand and where the people can see hope that changes are possible. This is a very difficult question when we are looking at the media and the propaganda of the media, which is supporting these two blocks, the government block and the conservative right wing opposition bloc with the same arguments. And I can see the big danger that we were calling in Germany *Brandmauer*, a firewall, to the right wing. Not to accept them in the government, they will be broken when we are looking towards the elections in the East European states, which will happen in September. So it is a very difficult, very dangerous and perhaps also a situation with a big, big challenge.

ZR: Mass immigration was one of the major driving topics. Don't you think there's an argument to be made that so many people that are entering our country uncontrollably and there's so much burden on the social infrastructure, whether it's in social services, healthcare – everywhere you look, you don't get appointments, there's not enough of doctors, etc., etc., etc. – that this is a legitimate concern that people wanted to voice. And secondly, we also saw with the ecological transformation that you talked about just right now, that it was faced with a lot of costs for farmers, for everyday people. It's not like people's lives are getting better with the ecological transformation, and that the burden is more on middle class and lower middle class people than it is on the richest. So with that argument being made, don't you think the Right is addressing all of these points? Even Sahra Wagenknecht has talked about, for example, how migration should be criticized constructively in a way that we should not let everybody in and that we should take into concerns the communal and local towns and the issues that they're facing. So what do you make of these arguments?

RB: You know, the consequences of the migrations are brutal for many, many people. But the reasons why they are brutal are not the migrants or migration. The reason is neoliberalistic politics in our country, which destroyed the social welfare state and which reduced the social activities of the state, putting more and more burdens on the shoulders of every of the German participants and people who are living in the country. So there is no relation in reality between the concerns about social developments, bad social developments and migration. And please let us not call this mass migration what we have in Germany. Looking to other countries in the world, above all, looking to countries in the Global South, they have real mass migrations in their country, but not in Germany. It is very easy under normal conditions of social politics, where the social question is the middle point of the activities of

the government to help these people, to get jobs, to integrate these people. But there, nothing is being done. So the people are suffering. The people are lying on the streets. And people see this and see their social situation and that is the reaction. And the right wing is misusing the situation which was developed by the neoliberalistic government during the last 30 years. And what makes me really furious is that the main reason for migration are the wars. The wars mainly NATO is doing. And no one is speaking about the wars. When you reduce the wars, when you don't have so many wars in the world, from Sudan over Congo, Libya, you can go through the whole world, the number of migrations will dramatically be reduced. So let's speak about peace. Peace is the alternative to solve the migration question also. When we have migration and when we have fair trade relations, that's the next point, with these countries, don't steal their resources and pay quite nothing for that, then you can really speak about migration. The migration problem can be solved. I absolutely agree, and I think everyone agrees, that people have much more to live for in their countries than to make these dangerous and cost intensive ways to Europe. But you have to be human to the people who are here, and we have to solve the background of the problem of migration. And one of the main backgrounds is the war situation. That's regarding the question for migration. And the second to transformation; I'm a big fan of social ecological transformation. We need this. But I'm deeply against that normal people are paying for the social ecological transformation and the rich get the profit, when the rich are much more responsible for the problem, for the ecological problems we have. They are driving the big cars. They are flying every day, and so on. We need a transformation, whose first point is: No one should live more. Everyone should live better, when you make the transformation. And we have to explain to the people why we make the transformation and we have to develop the solutions for the transformation with them, not to make law and say please do and pay. That will not work. I know that people, many people, hate transformation now, but we need this transformation for our planet and human beings to survive. So we need a social ecological transformation for the people and with the people, not against the people, and not be paid by the poor and by the normal people.

ZR: I would like to transition to the latest developments in connection with the war in Ukraine. The situation in Ukraine has escalated dramatically, especially since Russia launched an offensive in eastern Ukraine this summer and made considerable territorial gains, despite billions invested in military aid, including high tech weaponry. The West, led by the US, also reversed its long time policy of prohibiting Ukraine from using Western made weapons to target military targets within Russia. Following this reversal, British broadcaster Sky News recently reported that a Ukrainian jet fired inside Russia for the first time since the war began. In addition, France has recently announced, despite facing disagreements with the US and Germany on this issue, that it will send French military trainers and specialists to support the Ukrainian military. Moscow responded to this development by stating that no military trainers supporting the Ukrainian military have immunity, regardless whether they are French or not. How do you view the West's response since Russia's successful summer offensive? Will it be enough to deter Russian aggression and reconquer all of the territory that Russia has taken so far?

RB: The only possibility to solve the Ukrainian war is to come to negotiations and a ceasefire

and to follow the suggestions which are now developed mainly by Brazil and China. I think the suggestion of Brazil and China to make a real international peace conference, which includes all parts of the conflict, is the right suggestion and we should follow this suggestion. A peace conference like now in Switzerland, which includes only one side, is a propaganda conference. We can forget it. We need all parties, including Russia at a table, coming to solutions. Maybe the solution will take time, like all the other negotiations. Look at the Vietnam negotiations. They were done in years. But they started. And we need the start of these negotiations now. And if we could get a ceasefire, this means you could have a frozen conflict, we will save hundreds of thousands of lives of young men on both sides and we reduce the killing and we reduce the much bigger destruction of Ukraine. The second point is the last development; above all, the attacks of the early warning system of Russia is the preparation of the Third World War. Everyone knows, and in the strategy of the United States nuclear forces and the strategy of the Russian nuclear forces it is mentioned, that attacks to warning systems means that we can answer with nuclear weapons. That is a dangerous situation. And we have never had such a dangerous situation in Europe since the beginning of the 80s. And I think we have to do everything to stop this enlargement of the war. And, you know, frankly speaking, this is the Vietnam syndrome. First the US were sending helpers to Vietnam, then they were sending some officers and then they started sending some troops. And then at the end, 500,000 dead people come home. And when you start sending troops, you will enlarge the sending troops, you will send more and more troops. And what is the consequence? The consequence is the war will be longer. The war will be stronger. More people will be killed. There is no solution on the military field. It is impossible to win this war against Russia. The only possibility is to come to negotiations and a ceasefire. And if the front will be 20 km to one side or the other side, this is not winning the war. You can see, Russia developed in a very short time, a military industry, which is impressive, in a very short time. And they can enlarge this and are able to have more troops, more weapons at their frontline. And so this means that the escalation becomes higher and higher, but the escalation is not the solution of the problem. So my only point is to say: Stop it, come to the table, follow the suggestions of the Global South, mainly from Brazil and China, but also from the African Union, and from many, many other countries, to come to the negotiation table and try to solve the problems. But first come to a ceasefire, so that the killing and the destroying of the country will be stopped.

ZR: The argument that is usually made is that the peace that you are, for example, advocating will be an unjust peace. It will be immoral as with the negotiations Russia has the upper hand now, it has made substantial territorial gains, that it will demand a freezing of all of the territories that it controls, which according to international law are not belonging to Russia. So the peace that will be negotiated will be in Russia's favor. And therefore the West, led by Germany and the United States, is against an unjust peace and is advocating that we make sure that Russia is driven out. What do you make of this argument?

RB: You know, first of all, we don't know the result of the negotiations. And before you start negotiations, you should be very careful to predict the end of the negotiations. So let's see what every side is putting on the table. When we are coming back to the negotiations we had

in March/April 2022 between Ukraine and Russia, which led to the Istanbul Agreement and to the discussion with the Israeli Prime Minister at that time, Bennett, I think that was not an unjust peace. It was a peace. Russian troops are going home, we will have discussions and elections in the eastern part of Ukraine, and Ukraine will come back to a neutral country, which was for many, many years in their constitution and which was also the background of the Budapest Agreement for 94' and many other things. So I can only say, let's see. And I'm very cautious to say what the result of the elections will be. The second point is, we have to accept the people's vote and then let people vote in the different parts of Ukraine under the control of the United Nations, and see what the people in the east of Ukraine and maybe in Crimea will decide what they want. And not that Russia is controlling these elections, we need neutral election observers. Maybe under the control of the United Nations or the OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-operation). So let's discuss this with the people, because we have two elements. We have the sovereignty of Ukraine, but we have also the self-organizing interests of the people, the independent wish of the people. And between both we need to balance. And the only possibility to balance is to ask the people in these different regions for their opinion of what they want to have in the future. And definitely in the process of negotiations, Russian troops must be reduced. Russian troops must leave the country again. And then we have the biggest question of reparation. There we also have to come to an agreement. So it is not easy for these negotiations, but negotiations are never easy, and I can only recount what the former German Prime Minister, Helmut Schmidt, was saying. "I'm always", he was saying, "in favor of hundreds of hours of negotiations. They are better than one hour of shooting". So let's go this election way and then see how it will develop. And let's go back and ask the people in the different parts, in the controversial parts of Ukraine, what are their wishes and how they want to live in the future?

ZR: I want to move towards a breaking development surrounding Israel and Gaza. On Monday, the United Nations Security Council endorsed a United States drafted ceasefire resolution to end Israel's military offensive in Gaza. This resolution comes after eight months since Israel began its offensive in Gaza, which thus far has killed around 37,000 Palestinian civilians, as well as severely injured another 85,000. Before this development, the US vetoed any resolution at the UN Security Council calling for a ceasefire, stating that Israel has a right to defend itself. 14 of the 15 Security Council members voted for the US backed resolution, while Russia abstained. This resolution divides the ceasefire into three phases. Phase one entails a six week ceasefire, allowing humanitarian aid to enter, negotiations of the release of Israeli hostages, as well as Palestinian prisoners. Phase two outlines a permanent end to fighting, the release of any remaining captives, and a full withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza. Phase three is around the construction and development of Gaza and that the people can return back again. Yesterday, the Israeli newspaper Haaretz reported that Hamas has accepted a UN Security Council resolution and is ready to negotiate over its details. The ball is now in Israel's court and although the US has stated that Israel accepted the ceasefire, it is unclear how it will be compatible with Israel's goals, that entails the complete elimination of Hamas, return of all hostages, and ensuring that Gaza never poses a threat to Israel ever again. How do you assess this development, and do you think this proposal can bring enduring peace to the Israel-Palestine conflict?

RB: You know, I'm not a religious man, but I'm praying that we will get a ceasefire in the region and stop the brutal – it's difficult to explain the situation. It is so horrible that every picture you see makes it even worse, and that words are not enough to explain what you see in the pictures. When you look at women, children, how people have to run from one part of the country to the other, it is absolutely needed and the most important thing to come to a ceasefire. So everything helping to come to a ceasefire, I'm deeply welcoming. On the other hand, I can say it is very easy. You know, when the United States and Germany, which are giving 80% of the support to Israel and 90% of military support for Israel, would stop sending weapons and munitions, the war would end in the latest four, or five or six days because the Israeli army will lack weapons. So when the western countries mean it seriously and want to stop it, they can. They only have to stop weaponizing Israel. That is a very easy way. And they are not doing it. So it is always, like in many other conflicts, this double moral of the Western countries. On one side speaking for peace and on the other side sending weapons and militarizing Israel. So that is the point that I'm saying, that our government and above all, the US government, has a part of the responsibility for the day to day killing which happened in Gaza. That is my answer to the conflict. My second answer to the conflict is, we need a solution which is more than a ceasefire and which tries to solve a conflict now over 70 years old. And for me, again, this needs negotiations. And there has been for years a suggestion for a peace and security conference in the Middle East. All parts of the Middle East, including the Great Powers, should sit together and develop a peace process. It's a little bit like in Europe in the 70s, which led to the conference in Helsinki in '75'. We need the same. They have to sit together. They have to find solutions for reconstructions, for helping the people, for solving the problem of the Palestine people. And it's a big question for two independent states. All the discussion is serious. When I'm looking at the settlers who are living in the Palestine area, this is very difficult, but you can only solve this problem when you are sitting together. That is the key point. And frankly speaking, Israel needs a new government. We need as quick as possible elections in Israel. I don't have big hopes in the new government, but maybe it's a government without these fascists in the government. The only aim of these fascists is to kill the Palestinians. This is fascist behavior, killing people because they hate these people. This is pure racism. And then we have to kick them out quickly, the Israeli people have to kick them out as quickly as possible, out of the government. So we also need elections in Israel. But the process starts in the beginning. And every step which helps to come to a ceasefire and negotiations, I think is more than welcome and should be supported. And I say this as a German man, knowing the German history and the German responsibility for many, many developments in the regions. But we have a specific responsibility, but a peace responsibility. And not a responsibility to provide more weapons and help to enlarge the killing. That is the responsibility we have from our history.

ZR: To my last question, and also what inspired us to do this interview, was an email that you sent me about the recent passing of Hans-Peter Dürr, a scientist and visionary and peace activist who recently passed at the age of 84. Can you talk about the life, history and legacy of Hans-Peter Dürr and what we can learn from his work?

RB: When I'm looking at the conflicts we have today, I often remember Hans-Peter Dürr, and

what he would say. And I'm quite sure that he would be all aligned, let's look for a peace solution and bring the people together. He was a scientist. He was very international. He was a big supporter of Albert Einstein, and he was always saying, that science is international and science can bring people together. We are solving the problems internationally, so let's do the same with the political field. And that was one of his visions. And he was doing a lot to realize this vision. He had strong relations with Gorbachev, and he helped him develop his peace and disarmament plan. He was coming up with the suggestion of the nuclear weapon free world. He was going to him saying, let's come up with the suggestions to a nuclear weapon free world. So this is a man with the courage to do things in a time when it was not on the agenda. You know, the Max Planck Institute is a very conservative society, and they were not so much in favor of what they called the Dürsche foreign policy. They wanted to make their own foreign policy. But this was never a peace policy. But he was doing it. He was bringing different thinking people together to solve problems. He was a board member of Pugwash, which got the Nobel Peace Prize in 95'. And so he was also a little bit of a Nobel Peace laureate. And this was for common work, for peace. And that was what he was doing his whole life. He was a brilliant scientist, but his engagement was for peace and disarmament.

ZR: Reiner Braun, long time peace activist, thank you so much for your time today.

RB: Thank you.

ZR: And thank you for tuning in today. If you're watching our videos regularly, please make sure to support our journalism with a standing order via Patreon, BetterPlace, PayPal or directly to our bank account. Even though our videos get watched thousands and even tens of thousands of times, and we have over 150,000 subscribers, only 530 people support us on a monthly basis with a standing order. We are an independent and nonprofit journalistic organization that does not take any money from corporations, governments and even does not allow advertisement, all with the goal of providing you with information that is independent, critical, which you just won't hear in the mainstream media. You will find the links to all the donation platforms in the description of this video. I thank you for tuning in and for your support. I'm your host, Zain Raza. See you next time.

END

Thank you for reading this transcript. Please don't forget to donate to support our independent and non-profit journalism:

BANKKONTO:
Kontoinhaber: acTVism München e.V.
Bank: GLS Bank
IBAN: DE89430609678224073600
BIC: GENODEM1GLS

PAYPAL:
E-Mail: PayPal@acTVism.org

PATREON:
<https://www.patreon.com/acTVism>

BETTERPLACE:
Link: [Click here](#)

The acTVism Munich e.V. association is a non-profit organization with legal capacity. The association pursues exclusively and directly non-profit and charitable purposes. Donations from Germany are tax-deductible. If you require a donation receipt, please send us an e-mail to: info@acTVism.org