



How Israel Squashes Dissent & Independent Reporting: With Journalist Dan Cohen

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Glenn Greenwald (GG): Joining us now is Dan Cohen, who is a journalist at Uncaptured News. He has co-produced the award winning documentary *Killing Gaza*. He formerly produced video reports and print dispatches from Israel and Palestine, from Latin America, from the US-Mexico border, while working as Behind the Headlines' Washington correspondent. His most recent work covering the imprisonment of Jeremy Loffredo, which we just discussed, is what brings him here to our show tonight. He has really covered this story, knows the details of it, and we are very thankful to have him on. Dan, it's great to see you. Thanks so much for coming on tonight. We appreciate it.

Dan Cohen (DC): Glad to be with you, Glenn.

GG: All right. So let's start by talking about the Israeli version of events when it comes to the detention, arrest, and now the very serious charges launched against Jeremy Loffredo, who's been on our show. I know you know him and have a lot of respect for his work. What is it that the Israelis have done and what are they claiming justifies that?

DC: Well, Jeremy Loffredo was arrested, I believe, on Tuesday, October 8th. I have not been in touch with him, so I don't have any direct contact. But the Israelis accused him of aiding the enemy during wartime and providing information to the enemy. So I suppose what they are saying is that his report, showing the damage that the Iranian missile strikes caused on Israel, on Israeli military bases and near Mossad headquarters, constitutes providing information to the enemy and aiding the enemy. Of course, Iran may be happy to see that, but that's – as his lawyer actually pointed out in court, if he were trying to be a spy, if he were doing espionage, he wouldn't publish it. I mean, that's just journalism. He would send it to them clandestinely or something like that. So it's completely absurd. So this was all based on the fact that Jeremy did not submit his video report that he published for the Grayzone to the Israeli military censor, which few people know that there is an entire military censorship regime that exists in Israel, that all journalists are legally obliged by Israeli law to submit their work to, their written work, their videos, and if they don't, they can be denied a press card or a press accreditation from the Israeli government. So I think it's very much about

narrative control. The thing is, what came out in the court hearing was that Jeremy reported on these strikes, specifically at the Nevatim air base in the Negev Desert in southern Israel and just outside the Mossad headquarters in northern Tel Aviv. And in fact, PBS NewsHour correspondent Nick Schifrin actually reported on the missile strike damage, this huge pit, damaged vehicles very close to the Mossad headquarters days before Jeremy did and published this and was not punished at all. There was no issue for him. Did he submit his report to the Israeli military censor? I don't know. So if he did, then it shows that the same information was completely allowed. If he didn't, then it shows that he was not punished. So either way, it's completely arbitrary punishment of Jeremy Loffredo, his arrest and detention. And in addition to that, the Israeli website ynet, Yedioth Ahronoth, and i24, both Israeli publications, they published articles on Jeremy Loffredo's arrest, in which they included Jeremy's report. His entire video report was embedded in these online articles. And those, at least the Yedioth ynet report, was actually approved by the military censor. So all of the information that Jeremy published was approved by the military censor. So basically what happened is when this was argued in court, the judge who was overseeing the case said, okay, then we have to release him. There's no grounds to hold him. But then the police came back and said, well, we spoke to the actual censor. And they said that the Yedioth report did not actually submit their report to the censor until it was already published. And so therefore they just said, well, it's already published, so we'll just go along with it. So on that basis, they extended Jeremy's detention another 24 hours. The judge approved the police appeal and he will be back in court on Friday. But what's clear to me is that the entire thing is completely arbitrary. Nick Schifrin from PBS NewsHour is not in jail and he shouldn't be, of course, I'm saying, you know, I'm being entirely consistent that he should not be punished. He should not be in prison. But you'd think that he should at least speak out, considering an independent journalist, a fellow journalist, is being punished for the exact same thing that he did. And the other two, the Yedioth and i24 cases show that the Israelis actually don't have any real problem with this information coming out. I think it's just that they want it to come out from approved sources. They don't want some independent journalist digging around, getting his nose in places they don't really want and embarrassing them, as you said.

GG: Well, just a couple of things about that. So the charges that have been lodged against him consist of two different allegations. One is that he failed to submit his reporting to the Israeli censorship regime as required by the region's only democracy, Israel – and you can read oftentimes, it's amazing, you read in Haaretz or other Israeli press when they release even benign information like there was that terrorist attack that killed, I think, six Israelis with two gunmen on a bus last week, and when Haaretz published the identities of the victims, the people who are dead, they made very clear they were allowed to publish the names because the Israeli censors had cleared it. So let's say there's an Israeli censorship regime, and Jeremy did not go through all of the processes to get permission to report this, in no other instance, say, in Russia or China or Iran, we would consider it justifiable to imprison a journalist for failing to get the approval of censors from those government. But let's leave that aside. Let's say that he didn't go through those processes of the Israeli censorship regime; the other, obviously more serious charge is that he aided and abetted Iran by publishing this information. Now, you made the point, obviously, the quite relevant point, that there was

another journalist who published the same information, which means Jeremy's publication of that reporting did not tell Iran anything they didn't already know as a result of their reporting. But even absent that, to me, it seems ludicrous that a country as sophisticated as Iran that just proved for the second time that they had the capabilities to launch highly sophisticated ballistic missiles guided with great precision inside Israel two targets they knew existed, even though they're classified like the Mossad headquarters and this Air Force base, who have satellite imagery of anything required to those, didn't already know where their missiles landed and the damage that it did. Is it even theoretically possible that by driving outside of an Air Force base, Jeremy Loffredo was able to discover things that the Iranian military and intelligence didn't already know?

DC: Well, not a chance. I mean, Jeremy's report from near the Nevatim Air Force base didn't even show actual damage to the base itself, he showed the wreckage of a missile nearby in an unrecognised Bedouin village nearby the base. Let alone we had already seen the videos that came out of numerous strikes hitting near Nevatim air base. So there's no question about it. There were also aerial photographs, satellite photographs that showed damage. So there was no secret about that. And the only other one was the Mossad headquarters in Tel Aviv, which, you know, as we know, we're pointed out, if you watch the video by Nick Schifrin, which is still on his Twitter to this day, at this moment, he points out the Mossad headquarters are right behind him. He's standing in front of a massive pit, 30ft deep and 50ft wide, he says. And there's the Mossad headquarters directly behind me. The only difference, Jeremy added the coordinates, the GPS coordinates for the Mossad headquarters. But again, I mean, as you pointed out, there's no way that Iran's intelligence military is unable to figure out where...

GG: They shot at it. They shot at the Mossad headquarters. They know exactly where it is.

DC: Yeah, exactly.

GG: I know this might be a little bit of a speculation, but I'm just going to use my own experience. Before I, like, I know when I started doing the Snowden reporting, the strategy we used, both Laura Poitras and I, who were unaffiliated in an employment way with any major media outlet, that's why Snowden came to us, was that, look, we can't really just do this on our own, because if we do, it's going to be much easier to demonise us. We kind of commandeered the American media to get on our side by working with The Washington Post in her case, and The Guardian in my case, eventually The New York Times and other major outlets around the world. I did the same in Brazil when I did reporting that I knew if I had done by myself, it would have been a lot easier to criminalise what I was doing. Instead, we partnered with large media outlets. It's not just that Jeremy is independent, it is that he has worked with the Grayzone, which is as vocal and aggressive a critic of Israel as it gets. On top of that, he has done, as we reviewed, a lot of reporting, great reporting that embarrassed Israel as well, showing, for example, Israeli settlers bringing their children to block humanitarian aid, such as food from entering into Gaza. It's hard not to believe that that did not play some role, if not a major role in why the Israelis wanted to arrest him and charge him with these crimes. What do you think about that?

DC: Yeah, I think that's a fair assessment. I mean, Jeremy has been one of extremely, extremely few, if not the only independent journalist I can think of that has gone to Israel over the past year, since October 7th, and shown what is actually happening in Israeli society with the blockade on the aid trucks going into Gaza that you showed, showing the fanatical settlers in the West Bank and their overtly genocidal speech and now this. So I think they do not want pesky independent reporters going around. I'll put it this way, in order to get an Israeli press credential, which technically you have to do if you want to be a journalist in Israel at all, you have to go to the Israeli government press office and basically show that the outlet you work for gets enough views on a daily basis that it basically weeds out the small guys. So if you're an independent journalist, you're not going to be really allowed to do journalism. You need to stay kind of on the down low and avoid brushing up with any kind of authorities or anything like that. And you won't be allowed into any kind of official events, back in the period when you could get into the Gaza Strip. The only way I was able to get in was I got a press card, but I basically deceived to – I said that I was working for AlterNet and I'd barely done any work for AlterNet. And because I'm a nice Jewish American guy named Dan Cohen, they were not as sceptical and so they approved it. But that was the only way I could do it. And I did my work and made the documentary *Killing Gaza*. But once they kind of figured out what I was doing, that was it. They wouldn't give me a visa any more, let alone a press card. So it's very much about narrative control. And yes, I think you're right that it's about punishing Jeremy so he doesn't want to come back. So others who might think of going there will think twice about going to Israel and maybe being thrown in detention or taken to a military base and roughed up or even beaten and so they don't want to do it. So I think it's fair to say that this is really about sending a message when you look at the arbitrary nature of Jeremy Loffredo's punishment.

GG: So there's that side of it, which is the Israeli ability to punish him based on the perception that he's just an independent journalist. But then there's the other side, which is the American media and the American government, which just from a very surface level, reflexive analysis would suggest, should be rising up in defence of the free press rights of their fellow American journalists and their American citizens. And I've seen over the years, probably the thing that has driven me the craziest is that Julian Assange sat in a dungeon for five and a half years for doing some of the most important reporting, while the American media said virtually nothing. There was an independent journalist in Ukraine, Gonzalo Lira, who lost his life and who said he was going to die because the Ukrainians intended to put him in prison for criticising the war effort. Not a word. You can barely find coverage of that in the American media, let alone any denouncement. But then when one of their own, this Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich, is detained and arrested and charged by Russia, it becomes this massive crusade on the part of the corporate media which I wouldn't have a problem with if they weren't so selective about it. So I feel very safe predicting that if Jeremy remains in prison or even if he's released shortly, there will be almost no coverage, let alone a crusade on his behalf on the part of the American media. Why do you think that is? Is it because they perceive independent journalists as sort of not legitimate and not one of them? Or is it because in this case it's Israel doing it and they're loath to criticise Israel or is it a combination of both?

DC: I think probably for the individual journalists, even the ones who may see this and think it's bad, it's if they speak out, that's obviously the end of their career. They're going to be out of the Washington Post or PBS or whatever it may be. There may also be an ideological thing where it's, you know, we don't like what Jeremy's doing, and therefore, we're going to suspend our principles. We're going to abandon our principles because we actually kind of want to see him get punished. But I think in the bigger picture, it's all about geopolitics. It's all about the US – I mean, everything we saw, the outpouring of sympathy that we saw for Evan Gershkovich, the Wall Street Journal reporter, was, as you said, it was a total contrast to what's happening now to what happened to Assange. There was another reporter named Pablo Gonzalez, who was a Spanish Russian citizen. He was held without charges, never charged in administrative detention in Poland for about two years. And he was only released about a month ago thanks to the intervention of actually Russian President Vladimir Putin. This guy is a dual Russian Spanish citizen. And the Spanish government did literally nothing for him. They completely abandoned him. So the only reason he's out of our NATO partners' prison in Poland is because of Putin. So this is the West in general, not only the United States, but its EU and NATO allies that are perfectly happy to see their own citizens suffer in prison or whatever may happen to them because, you know, those are their allies doing it. And the United States certainly doesn't want Israel to be embarrassed because the Biden administration and basically the bipartisan war machine is totally joined at the hip with Israel and wants regime change in Lebanon and Iran and it still has fantasies about destroying and overthrowing Hamas in Gaza. So, I mean, everything I think is subservient to geopolitics.

GG: Including the liberty and the lives of American citizens. We didn't even mention Shireen Abu Akleh, who was shot in the head by IDF forces while wearing a press vest. They first lied about it, and tried to claim it was Palestinians who shot her. When that became untenable, they admitted it was them. They claimed it was an accident. And then reports prove that it was actually deliberate. And the number of Americans who know that happened has to be infinitesimal because it barely got any coverage in the media. All right, well, Dan, I am very appreciative of your coverage of this. I learned a lot of the details about what is going on in Jeremy's case in Israel through your reporting, both online and elsewhere, where you're doing your reporting. So we'd love to have you come back on to sort of fill us in on how this story proceeds, because it's definitely something we intend to cover.

DC: Absolutely. Thank you, Glenn.

GG: All right. Have a great evening and thanks so much.

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