



"It's Just Horrific": Israel's Destruction of Gaza Chronicled in New Documentary

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Glenn Greenwald (GG): Richard, thank you so much for taking the time to talk to us. Congratulations on this very important documentary. And we are excited to talk about what went into it and everything else. So we're delighted to have you.

Richard Sanders (RS): Thank you very much. Thank you for having me.

GG: Sure. So, as a journalist, there have been a lot of things I've covered that have been really excruciating and awful to write about, but then also to witness. And I know in the past, once I feel like I have an understanding of the extent of the horrors and suffering entailed by whatever I'm writing about, I always find myself wanting not to look any more just because it almost seems like gratuitous suffering. And there have obviously been a lot of people watching and talking about and reporting on the atrocities that have been taking place in Gaza over the last year. This film, I think, does a remarkable job of synthesising it, of putting it into a whole narrative, but a lot of it is extremely difficult to watch. So what is it that you feel that this documentary adds that people who've been following all along maybe haven't quite gotten yet?

RS: Well, if you've been following it all along on Western media, I think it adds an awful lot. I mean, for people who've been following it on the sort of sites and news outlets that you and I perhaps follow, then, as you say, I think it synthesises it and brings it all together. I think it was inspired by two things. One is the desire simply not to leave the space to Western media outlets to cover this because they do it so appallingly. But also this realisation that there was this extraordinary resource out there. You have this extraordinary phenomenon of Israeli soldiers posting videos of themselves continuously which were completely candid. They seemed to have no sense of shame and a complete sense of impunity. And it struck us this was a quite extraordinary and unique source for being able to tell the story of a conflict.

GG: Yeah, and I want to get into that a lot because obviously I know when defenders of Israel hear that Al-Jazeera has any role in anything, they immediately dismiss it as unreliable

or anti-Semitic. You know, all the accusations that get hurled. But in this particular case, so much of what your reporting relies not upon even necessarily Gazans or critics of Israel, but about what IDF soldiers themselves have said and shown about their own conduct in the war. And I want to get to that in just a second. But before I get to that, there was a woman in Gaza who is a journalist with Al-Jazeera, and she described the last year as being, quote, "the first ever live streamed genocide". And I think clearly beyond what the IDF has shown, one of the differences in this war as compared to almost any other is the Israelis tried to keep journalists out. The ones that were there, they tried to kill, but they couldn't prevent real time videos taken by the people there. How much of that did you rely on and how were you able to confirm that what you were seeing was, in fact, what was purported to be shown?

RS: So we relied quite heavily on Al Jazeera footage. Al Jazeera has been in there all this time and filmed this; we rely very heavily on that footage. You're right. We do rely on stuff shot by Palestinians in Gaza. I mean, unlike the BBC and ITV, I think right here in Britain, we don't start from the presumption that they're trying to get one over on us. You just have to look at footage. And they've set up the most extraordinary movie sets if it is false. Now, there are one or two videos you sense are a little bit contrived. And we have Palestinians working on the team who are very tuned into these things. And, you know, we filtered out a few. But on the whole, but those, I mean, you know, if you're looking at a ruined landscape and shredded bodies, you know, I don't know what else you're looking at but the truth.

GG: Before we get to the substance, let's talk a little bit about the film. How it was produced, who was behind it, who financed it. Because whenever there's a film that in any way reflects negatively on Israel, not just a film, but a report or any kind of document of any kind, there is immediately an attempt to discredit it as some kind of propaganda against Israel. Can you talk a little bit about who worked on this project, who financed it, where it came from and who kind of oversaw it?

RS: Okay. So I mean, I made it. I'm a freelance journalist. I've made about 60 films for British television; primarily for Channel 4, but also the BBC. I've made a lot of dispatches for Channel 4. And the people who worked on it, it is the superb team at the investigative unit at Al Jazeera; Al Jazeera funded it, it is an Al Jazeera production, specifically the investigative unit and some some excellent freelancers we've brought in as well.

GG: One of the things that caught my attention to your work in particular, to your involvement in this, is that a lot of times people who are willing to be so harshly critical of the Israeli military or Israeli policy are people who are in some sense already kind of marginalised. They're people who are already on the fringes. They don't have a lot to fear. One of the things that's so notable about your work, your body of work over many years is that as you just got done saying, you've done a lot of your work for some of the most mainstream and well regarded media institutions in the UK. For those who don't know, Channel 4 News is among those, obviously the BBC, the Daily Telegraph, many of these institutions that are among the most mainstream and established in the UK are ones with which you've had a relationship. Did you think about and I'm sure you did, but what were

your thoughts about what possible implications there might be for your career or for your standing inside the British media world by having overseen a documentary of this kind?

RS: It's true. If you step out of the frankly very peculiar consensus there is about Israel in the West, you do come to be regarded as a marginal figure. And it's quite tricky when you're trying to pick people to interview because you track people down and you talk to them and think they're very interesting. Then you suddenly discover their regard as very marginal. When Andreas Krieg, who we interview in our film in a fascinating manner, a security expert, he was on the BBC last week saying the same sort of things he said to us, just sort of a rational analysis. And it provokes an absolute firestorm. And he was heaped with abuse and so on. In terms of myself, well, Al-Jazeera is continuing to employ me for the moment, so we'll see how it goes.

GG: One of the things that I'm always interested in is sort of the idiosyncrasies of British political culture because it goes back so many years, it has a lot to do with centuries old animosities between various countries, a residue of the British Empire in a way that I think a lot of people outside the UK, certainly in the US, don't quite fully understand. And there has been over the last several years things involving Jeremy Corbyn and other incidents like that, very clear expressions of just how strong the pro-Israel consensus in the UK is, not just in the Labour Party but in the Tory Party and just in the general media establishment as well. Why is that? Why is the UK so devoted to and intense about defending Israel or justifying what it does?

RS: I mean, it's interesting you put that point. I don't think it's worse in America. It's certainly not worse than Germany. I think it's a broader question, and I think it's a fascinating question. Why is the Western media political establishment so enthralled to this very small and very, you know, questionable country?! And I think one of the fascinating things here, and I here I can speak for Britain specifically, but there's a problem in Britain generally at the moment that the media political class, which is very much a club in Britain at the moment, is very out of touch with the general public. You just have to analyse the figures in elections and so on. There's a real problem there. But it's massively out of touch on this issue. So you watch British media, you listen to British politicians and yes, you would think Britain is a sort of slavishly pro-Israel country. You look at the opinion polls, and that's not the case at all. And what support there is for Israel is deteriorating sharply.

GG: Yeah, I mean, just one more question on this before I have a lot of questions about the substance of the film – most of them are about that, actually – but before we delve into that, I just want to ask you on that last question. Obviously, there have been books written about what's called the Israel Lobby, including by very respected scholars like John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, who were the first to, I think, really kind of have the courage to document it; one at Harvard, one at the University of Chicago. But there's been a lot of revelations about the ability of pro-Israel activists to kind of influence political parties, mainstream political parties in the West, far beyond what their numbers might suggest they're able to do. Oftentimes, this is a taboo topic. People like to write it off as anti-Semitic. And it can actually, I think, fall into that trap at some point. But in terms of the UK and other places,

what role do you think that plays in that question you raise? Namely, why is it that the West is so enthralled with and so devoted to this kind of tiny little country on the other side of the world?

RS: Well, the first of the three films I made for Al Jazeera was the second episode in *The Labour Files*, where we picked apart this whole extraordinary anti-Semitism crisis around Jeremy Corbyn, who was a radical left leader of the Labour Party. And there I very much came to the conclusion, yes, the Israel lobby is very powerful. The thing was there it tapped into the vested interests of a whole range of groups. I mean, there were an enormous range of groups, most particularly the security establishment, that really, really didn't want Jeremy Corbyn to be prime minister. And the Israel lobby is powerful but it ain't that powerful. And these groups all came together essentially. And it was the perfect weapon to beat him with because it left him, you know, he was a man who spent his life combating racism, and it rather left Jeremy Corbyn disarmed. He appeared to be totally powerless to fight back against it. And it proved an immensely effective weapon. I think an awful lot of people were very puzzled by it. They didn't really get why Jeremy Corbyn was supposed to be an anti-Semite. What they did get there was that the Labour Party had this problem, it was being criticised day after day and it wasn't pushing back. It was doing this makeover and sort of squirming around. And what people got was there was a problem and the Labour Party couldn't solve it. And it was a very effective weapon to destroy Jeremy Corbyn. So it's yes, you have the Israel lobby people who are intent on pushing the interests of Israel and delegitimizing the Palestinian cause very often because the people they are targeting are the radical left and increasingly just the broader left. Then there are other people who have a very vested interest in jumping on that bandwagon.

GG: Yeah, I think the way Jeremy Corbyn responded, instead of kind of being very aggressive and rejecting the idea or even showing of great offence that he is anti-Semitic or would tolerate anti-Semitism instead constantly feeding into it, like, yes, there's a problem, but I'm fixing it and working on it unintentionally, but very much in line with Corbyn's character I think is a big part of what enabled that to succeed. But that's for another day. All right. Let's get to this documentary, some of the more specific aspects of it. Although I began by saying I think people paying attention to this intently and not just through the Western press might have known a lot about it, even though this documentary, watching it all at once kind of gives you a newfound sense of just how extreme these sufferings and atrocities have been. One of the things that I felt like was new was a lot of the information about what these, quote unquote, "evacuation orders" entail, we were constantly hearing, almost as though it was like a humanitarian thing that the IDF would order civilian populations to evacuate the area they were about to attack. And in the West that got depicted as, look, the IDF does something that no other military does, which is it warns the civilians about where the bombing is coming and it tells them to leave. And yet a lot of these, quote unquote, "evacuations" were not just extremely arduous, but themselves very violent, very deadly, very brutal. Can you talk a little bit about what it is that this film was able to reveal about just that part of it?

RS: But it's very, very vivid, isn't it? It's a specific evacuation, there have been so many evacuations, but there's a specific one where we focus on. Now right at the beginning of the war, the Israelis ordered everyone to leave northern Gaza. A lot of people didn't. They couldn't or they didn't want to or whatever. Now, when do you then get the Israeli ground invasion at the end of October, the situation becomes untenable for a lot of people, including people we interview in our film; that includes humans outside the Gaza correspondent of Al Jazeera English, also a young journalist, Mohamed al-Helou and they both flee at that time. And it's an extraordinarily vivid portrait, isn't it? And there's the pictures to accompany it, which are obviously always so important at television, of these these great columns of people being forced, you know, the resonances of this are so awful, these great columns of people being forced to walk along with their hands in the air, holding white flags, holding their identity cards in the air. You know, Mohammed says, if you dropped something, you weren't allowed to bend down to pick it up. You couldn't look to the left or the right. You had to keep walking straight forward and the children had to walk with their hands in the air. And there are pictures of that. And yes, that made quite a profound impression on me. Yes, and as Mohamed says in the film, Mohamed al-Helou these were not safe corridors. As you walked along them, you could see the bodies on the ground. They weren't safe.

GG: I mean, I think just on that issue alone about what these evacuations entailed, this film does provide a lot of new information even for people who are paying close attention, because on some level, I think the evacuation seemed like almost benign compared to what everything else that was happening. And then when you see the reality of what those entail, they turned out to be anything but benign. Another thing that was new to me and yet resonated a great deal because I have worked on this issue for a long time, was that the Israelis used artificial intelligence in order to assign different values to different people based on a whole variety of metadata about who they speak to, where they go, and then they would assign points and they would basically would decide who they could kill based on that. This came from an investigation from the Israeli Journal at 972 that you credited based on interviews with Israeli sources. I remember back when I was doing the Snowden reporting, one of the things that alarmed me the most that we were able to report on was that the US military was using a much cruder version at the time, of kind of assigning numerical values to people based on who they were speaking with. And a lot of journalists, including Al Jazeera journalists, ended up at the top of the list, not because they were terrorists, but because they tend to talk to people the US considered militants because they're journalists. And the ability to just kill people based on numerical assignments with no real human judgement is beyond dystopian. It's the sort of thing you might expect in a scientific film set, you know, 250 years from now. And yet it's something the Israelis are using to a great extent. Can you talk about what it is that you were able to learn about how the Israelis identify who they think should be assassinated? '

RS: As you say, Glenn, we credit 972 Magazine, a very good radical Israeli magazine, an English language magazine. They've done the research. They had all the sources. The Israelis have denied this. But I have to say they haven't denied it terribly convincingly. I think you've described it there, absolutely terrifying. They scrape all the intelligence they can about you, a

lot of it coming from your phone and you know including which other phones you've been near and so on, and if you passed a certain number, then you can be killed. And the horrifying thing is this, then the second bit of AI, which is called Where's Daddy?, which is basically where are you. They're going to kill you on when and how and where. And it's much easier to kill people at home. So, Where's Daddy?, when daddy is home, that's when you kill him. And of course, you kill everyone else in the house as well. I've got to say, during those first, perhaps two or three months, it seems to me that this AI system is simply providing the thinnest of veneers for what is essentially a punitive slaughter. I think it's as near as random the bombing the Israelis are doing for the first two or three months.

GG: Well, I want to go a little bit into that. And by the way, just to emphasise this, Where's Daddy?, the name itself is so creepy. And we have seen so many instances of not just where journalists or suspected militants were killed, but their entire families were wiped out precisely because their homes were targeted. I mean, we've seen so many of those. And absolutely one of the examples was an Al Jazeera journalist who had been working almost every day and reporting what was going on, only then to discover, I believe he was about to go on air or shortly after he came off the air that his home had been targeted while he was working and most of his entire family had been either killed or severely wounded. Can you talk a little bit about that case?

RS: Yes. Well, this is Wael Dahdouh. And he was the bureau chief for Al Jazeera in the Gaza Strip. And the horrific thing there is, his family had done what they were told, they had evacuated. They'd left the northern zone. They'd crossed the Wadi Gaza. They were in Nuseirat refugee camp, which was in the supposed safe zone. And the building they were in was directly targeted. He lost four close family members. A son of his, who was a cameraman, was later killed as well.

GG: One of the most disturbing things that is included in the documentary and that we've heard as well is how often people who were speaking out on social media or reporting for established news outlets like Al Jazeera were receiving direct threats over their telephones and over their attacks from identified Israeli intelligence or military officials, basically saying, we know who you are, we know where you live, and if you continue to do this, we will end up killing you or you better evacuate your family. What is it that you were able to find out about those sorts of things in the documentary?

RS: Well, Youmna ElSayed, the Al Jazeera English correspondent, she tells the story of her husband who gets a direct call on his mobile phone from a private phone number. And they clearly know who he is and they're telling him to get out and leave at a time when he can't possibly get out, there's bombardments all around. But Youmna speaks very powerfully about this. As does Maha Hussaini from Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor, another remarkable interviewee we talked to who is still in the Gaza Strip. And that it means you're carrying this terrible burden. You're terrified for yourself. But you're terrified for your family, indeed, you're terrified for everyone around you. And everyone around you is aware that you are a threat because you're likely to be a target. It's a very simple thing. You know, when journalists had to finally leave Gaza City and were moving into Khan Yunis and Deir al-Balah and so on,

they often had to pay a premium for property because landlords didn't want to rent property to journalists.

GG: You begin by describing this kind of indiscriminate attempt on the part of the Israelis just to avenge what they believe happened on October 7th, what did happen on October 7th, to avenge it through what the documentary calls purposely disproportionate force as a way of re-establishing fear of the Israelis or a deterrent. So there was this just kind of deliberately indiscriminate destruction on the one hand, and then on the other, we know of a lot of cases of prominent Palestinians, prominent Gazans who were active on social media, who were journalists, who ended up being killed as well. Did you walk away convinced that the Israelis were, in fact, targeting prominent critics of the Israeli war effort in Gaza as opposed to just having these people die as part of this indiscriminate violence?

RS: There's no question that people are being targeted. I mean, you just have to look at the circumstances of the deaths of some of our Al Jazeera personnel. You know, it's absolutely clear they're being targeted and that they are sort of hunted down.

GG: One of the bizarre features of this war, and you cover it in your documentary, and it's actually so bizarre that even Donald Trump, in the course of making clear how supportive he was of Israel, actually criticised this as well and said Israel needs to put a stop to this, is just how many degenerate, sadistic, gratuitously cruel, creepy videos have been posted not by a few Israeli soldiers here and there, almost systematically, you know, to the point where they were getting celebrated in Israeli culture for it. And one of the components of this that the film delves into a little bit, and I'm just interested in your understanding of why you think this happened is how much of an obsession there was with kind of a psychosexual humiliation, in particular, a lot of these videos involve rifling through the lingerie drawers of women whose houses they were ransacking and destroying, showing these this lingerie, often wearing it. And there's a lot of scenes posted by the Israelis themselves of deliberate, psychosexual humiliation of the kind, for example, that we saw in Abu Ghraib, which the US government kind of wrote off as an operation and punished the people involved, even though I think that turned out to be untrue. Do you think that in general, when young people, young men and women are trained to go and invade another country and kill them and are trained to dehumanise them, this is a natural outcome of that kind of training? Or do you think there was something particular about the Israeli military that led them to do these specific sorts of things in what seemed like a quite common in disproportionate way?

RS: Well, you know, let's not be naive. Soldiers behave badly, you know. And I think what's extraordinary about this is that there's been no attempt to control the production and publication of these videos. That's what's astonishing. And so the soldiers behave as if they have a complete impunity, but the high command behaves as if it has complete impunity. That is what is really extraordinary, that they keep being posted online without the commanding officers being at all worried. Now, does that simply reveal them behaving like normal soldiers? I suspect they are worse than normal soldiers. You know, this is a society which is built on the subjugation and dispossession of Palestinians. And the dehumanisation of Palestinians is the psychological prerequisite of that. And that goes back long, long before

October the 7th. I think then October the 7th served to legitimise a lot of the nastiest, darkest emotions within Israeli society. But also, as I say, I think what often stops young men in particular behaving very badly in combat situations is good command. I mean, that's part of the point of officers, and particularly ground level officers. But it's one of the problems Hamas had on October the 7th, was they had this sort of catastrophic success. And once they had that success, they didn't have good ground level commanders. That's why, you know, many, many very serious human rights abuses are committed on October the 7th. What seems to be extraordinary with, as I say, with the Israeli soldiers is that their officers are not exerting any control and indeed can very often be seen joining in, in these videos.

GG: One of the things that has, I guess, confounded me in the last year or so is that Israeli abuses and war crimes and indiscriminate violence is absolutely nothing new. But for a long time, the Israelis cared a lot about presenting a positive face, especially to the West, that Western support, not just of governments, but of populations, was very important to them. The IDF was constantly called the world's most moral army. They were very boastful of their extreme military discipline in ensuring that immoral acts of this kind don't actually happen. It seems to me, and I'm wondering what you think, that in some sense, the Israelis have almost stopped caring. I mean, like I said, even Donald Trump, who has been running his campaign based on almost a kind of Let's Make Israel Great Again platform, said, the one thing that the Israelis have to stop doing is allowing these soldiers to post these horrific videos online because it makes them look terrible and they haven't been punished. There's been no attempt to stop it. It's as if the Israelis don't really care anymore. The Israelis seem to be instead saying, we're going to do whatever we want, and we don't think there's anyone in the world, particularly in the West, who can stop us. And maybe they're right about that. Have you perceived the change in their mindset, the leadership's mindset, about the extent to which they care or don't care about how they're perceived in the West?

RS: It is extraordinary, when Donald Trump thinks you're behaving like a crass idiot, then that really is quite extraordinary. I mean, don't overstate the degree to which before October the 7th, Israel was a responsible moral army that cared about how it was seen in the West. I mean, take a single incident, the murder of journalist Shireen Abu Akleh, in the West Bank. They've been granted extraordinary indulgence and leeway for decades. But I think it has increased to a whole other level after October the 7th. And I think they're doing it because they can. I think Israeli foreign policy to a degree is very, very simple. Israeli foreign policy consists of one thing: What can we get away with? And what they've learned over the last years, it's astonishing what they can get away with. And they're not doing it to Lebanon.

GG: The question of what the Israeli motive has been in terms of what they're doing in Gaza since October 7th has been one that has been well debated, I think, among a lot of Israeli critics. And typically, trying to debate motive is very difficult. It's like, why did the U. invade Iraq? Why did the UK go along? Probably there's different interests inside the government. You can't really reduce it to just one motive or another, different actors have different motives. But I want us to focus on one just so that we can set it aside, which was the main one offered, namely that we're doing what we're doing because we want to save the hostages

or get our hostages back. And the fact that that could be said with a straight face, it was repeated so often in Western media was always so astonishing to me because as several people in the film said, if you wanted to save your hostages, the last thing you would be doing is indiscriminately bombing the place that, you know they're being kept or starving on purpose. The place that, you know, they're being kept. And a lot of Israeli hostages who were released from captivity said that by far their biggest fear was not Hamas, but was dying in an Israeli airstrike. Why do you think something so facially ridiculous that, Oh, we're doing this in order to get our hostages back while we're bombing the entire place, we know that they are, was taken so seriously by Western media?

RS: Well, I mean, this is something we don't do in our film. The Israelis often make denials or give explanations for things which are just absolutely very, very obviously flatly contradicted by the facts on the ground. And this is one of the exasperating things about watching, for example, at the BBC, whereas where you will have an overwhelming mass of evidence about something, you will have a very puny, rather absurd denial by the Israelis. And the two things are given equal weight. So, yes, I mean, why? And this ties into a broader cognitive dissonance. The West tells about Israel, that it treats it as if it is a serious Western democracy and which it isn't, you know, particularly the government that currently runs Israel is extreme right wing. And certainly many members of the government are extremely rightwing and overtly racist. So why the BBC solemnly repeats without scrutinising all the things these people say, I don't know. In terms of what the game plan is, yes, I mean, it is being obvious from the very beginning and quickly became obvious to the families of the hostages that Netanyahu did not give a damn about their safety. So what is the game plan? Now again, I mean, I you know, I'm long enough in the tooth that I picked apart in my minute detail, the Iraq wars and the Afghan wars, you know, sometimes people just do really dumb things, they just do sometimes. Now, is there a strategy? Is there a plan? I think what we can see absolutely clearly and again, you wouldn't really grasp this from watching Western media is they plan to depopulate the area to the top half of the strip, the area to the north of the Wadi Gaza. I was at an event last night where Youmna ElSayed, the Gaza correspondent for Al Jazeera, she was saying, she thinks the Egyptians are going to be bullied/bribed into effectively opening the border and shepherding an awful lot of these people into new settlements in the Sinai Desert. I mean, that was Youmna's feel. I'm not enough of an expert on these things, but it's you know, it's incredibly bleak to try and look forward and to see, you know, what is the Gaza Strip at the end of all this, what does it consist of, and what do the lives of the people who currently live there consist of?! But around 180,000 have already left. They have to pay a very big bribe to the Egyptians to get out. But a lot of people have already left.

GG: I remember very vividly and again I realise motives are difficult to talk about, but I also think they're extremely important to understand why a country or a government is doing what it's doing. When there was all that propaganda from the actual Israeli government about saving the hostages and all that or destroying Hamas, Naftali Bennett, the previous Israeli prime minister, gave an interview in The Economist and he was asked about what the Israeli goal is going to be and what it's about to do over the next however many months or years it

responds, and he was very candid. He said what Israel is going to do and needs to do more than anything else is to show that it's willing to cross every line that people think it's unwilling to cross in order to put such fear in the hearts of Arabs around that region, not for the next few years, but for generations, so that they will basically be all terrorised, subdued into ever again, thinking about, as he put it, trying to harm the Jews. That was part of what he was saying was we want to show we're basically a crazy state, that we don't abide by international rules, that we're willing to do anything. The other theory, of course, is one that has been explicitly defended by the current Israeli government, including the more extremist people in Netanyahu's government, which is saying a lot, which is that we consider the West Bank and Gaza a part of Greater Israel. And we want to flatten Gaza. We want to make it so that the people there have to leave. I have always kind of been a little bit in doubt about what the motive is, but I have to say, one of the things that I concluded with having watched your documentary and you see so many Israeli soldiers saying that, I mean, they're going on purpose, once they order people to evacuate and they're destroying their shops, they're destroying their buildings, they're destroying their homes, they're destroying their sewage systems, their water systems, and they're explicitly saying, look, they're going to have nothing to come back to. It seems like Gaza, if it's not already, is well on the way to becoming completely uninhabitable in a way that you can't almost even conceive of how it could be rebuilt as a society where Gazans can live. What is your view on having delved into this in order to make the film and what the Israelis at the top level, the ones kind of guiding these actions and this policy are hoping to achieve? I mean, as you say, maybe it is an irrational desire to destroy and kill, but it seems like there's more going on than that.

RS: Well, I think to a degree, it is a bit like 9/11, that 9/11 was grasped as an opportunity by a lot of people in Washington who for a long time, wanted to do all sorts of things and that there's clearly an element of that going on. You know, as I say, I think they clearly want to empty the space to the north of the Wadi Gaza, the northern end of the Gaza Strip. But at the moment, you know, quite grotesquely, the Israelis are using the destruction of Lebanon to distract from what they're doing in Gaza. And, you know, there is at the moment almost unreported going on the final cleansing of the final pockets of population in northern Gaza and hospitals being closed down and so on. So, that seems to me quite clear they don't want any Palestinians north of the Wadi Gaza. But also the impulse to annexe and settle the West Bank has clearly received an enormous impetus over the last year. And horrific things have been happening on the West Bank. Hundreds of Palestinians have been killed on the West Bank. And yes, I mean, I think those expansionist – I mean, I don't think Bennett's comments and the annexation of the West Bank are exclusive. I think they go very, very much hand in hand. But to simply ratchet up the deterrents of terror, seems to me in the long run very dangerous. I mean, it's always struck me that Israel is a colonial settler state, it just clearly is. And Israel has always struck me that it's South Africa trying to pretend it's Australia. Even after almost a century of dispossession, apartheid, ethnic cleansing, half of the population between the river and the sea, are Palestinian. And the lesson of these situations throughout history, throughout the world is people never resign themselves to being second class citizens in their own country. I would invite anyone to spend any time in the West Bank and you get it. You get it immediately. I'm not a particularly aggressive, assertive person, but I could not

live like that. You cannot live as a despised second class citizen in your own land. The only way colonial settler countries become permanent is when you exterminate the local population effectively, as happened in North America, as happened in Australia. And this is what is so terrifying. These societies carry within them genocidal impulses. And I think to a degree, that's what we're seeing now.

GG: Just a couple more questions. First of all, did you attempt as part of this documentary to request or obtain any kind of response from the Israeli government about what you were showing and what you were claiming?

RS: Oh, yeah, and we always write a very thorough right of reply to the Israelis and they always ignore us. So what we did, I think we were – they did reply to 972 Magazine. They gave quite a full reply to that. And so we take...

GG: Denying that report?

RS: They denied that, but also said basically Hamas is a terrorist organisation which hides behind the civilian population. We are a society and a military that abides by the rule of law. I mean, that's essentially their argument.

GG: All right. Last question. I know this goes beyond the scope of your film, which we are going to very heavily promote and recommend. I've already started to do that, and I will definitely continue to in conjunction with this interview. So just I want to take the opportunity while I have you to ask and you mentioned what the Israelis are doing in Lebanon now, and it seems to me like if you compare the first month or month and a half to what the Israelis did to Gaza, it looks a lot like what the Israelis are doing to Beirut, including purposely attacking medical workers and health clinics and hospitals so that the people who they kill or wound have no place to go to seek out any kind of medical services. Obviously flattening residential buildings and the like. Do you think the Israelis have planned for Beirut more or less what they have done to Gaza? And if they do, or even if there's something short of that, do you think the world will stand by and allow it the way they did with Gaza?

RS: Well, I think the Americans have made a statement, haven't they?, saying you don't do to Lebanon what you've done to Gaza, but it's just horrific that we are in this position. It is unimaginable that any other country would be being granted this sort of license and that you and I are having a conversation about whether the Israelis intend to entirely destroy southern Lebanon is just breathtaking. And this was one of the reasons for making the film is to bear testimony for history. There were people at this time who could see what was happening and who told the story of what was happening and didn't take shelter in the idea that it's all terribly complicated and nuanced and it's not black and white and so on. I mean, I would very much hope the Israelis aren't going to do to southern Lebanon what they did to Gaza. And I would very much hope that if they try to, the West will stop them, but I wouldn't bank on it.

GG: [00:39:15] I was about to say, it is true that Biden said and spokespeople said, we don't want to see and don't expect to see the Israelis do to Beirut what they did to Gaza, at the same

time, there were a lot of things that the US told Israel not to do over the last year with respect to Gaza, including when Biden declared as a red line, a very meaningful and heavy term for a president to use, for the Israelis to invade Rafah for the one of the very few refugee camps that had been somewhat safe, and Netanyahu made very clear very quickly that he had no intention of even considering for one second that red line and immediately violated it. The Americans first tried to defend it, Oh, it's just a limited invasion, and then they just gave up on it. So I guess that's what, as grim as it is, I guess I'm not very optimistic about the West's willingness or ability to prevent Israel from doing whatever they want, not just in Gaza, which is pretty much a already done deal, but wherever they want to extend that to.

RS: And very importantly, remember, in four weeks time, the president of America might be Donald Trump. But, yes, I mean, you have this extraordinary phenomenon that the Israelis just again and again and again completely humiliate the Americans. I mean, if you're British, you know, I've studied British American relations in micro details going all the way back to sue Israel, but particularly the wars of our lifetimes. And our relationship with the Americans is astonishingly imperial. I mean, it's, you know, it's quite strange the way we handle our relationship. We don't really have an independent foreign policy at all. Now, the contrast with the way the Israelis treat the Americans, which is, I mean, it really is the ultimate example of the tail wagging the dog. And again, it's just one of these bewildering things; why the Americans allow themselves to be treated like this by the Israelis?! And I think that is a quote from Bill Clinton in the mid-nineties when dealing with the Israelis, and excuse my language, the quote was, "who's the fucking superpower here"? And it's America. But you would never guess it to actually look at the relationship between the two countries.

GG: Absolutely bizarre. The US funds the Israeli military, pays for their bonds, pays for the wars, and then the Israelis turn around and say, we don't care in the slightest what you think is in your interest, we're going to do whatever we want, even if it harms your interest as you perceive it. And the Americans just continue to send more money and more weapons, no matter how often that happens. It is bewildering until you start interrogating the reasons why. Well, once again, congratulations on this documentary. I wish it were a happier and more uplifting documentary, but unfortunately, the events don't permit that. Like I said, for me, even as somebody who has followed it and put together a lot of things that I had already known but in a different way and showed me a lot of things that I actually didn't know. So I can't recommend that highly enough. And I'm sure a lot of work went into it. I believe there was probably some personal sacrifice on your part that I want to congratulate you for as well. And I appreciate your taking the time to talk to us.

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END

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