



Dismantling the Media Narrative on Syria, Ukraine & Israel | Dimitri Lascaris

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Zain Raza (ZR): Thank you for tuning in, I'm your host Zain Raza. Before we begin this video, I would like to provide you with the third update to our crowdfunding campaign, which we launched recently with the aim of raising €55,000 by January 10th, so that we can continue with our independent and non-profit journalism in 2025. In last year's campaign, we managed to raise €53,000 thanks to 1,710 donors. And in this year's campaign so far, we've managed to raise €24,700 thanks to 910 donors, which makes approximately around 45% of our target. There's less than 20 days left and if you're watching our videos regularly and have not donated so far, please just take a few moments and donate three to five euros or dollars. If all of our 155,000 subscribers or just the amount of people who are watching this video right now donate that amount, we'll be able to reach our crowdfunding target with ease and also be able to improve our capacities for the next year. You'll find the links to all the donation platforms in the description of this video. Today I'll be talking to independent journalist and lawyer Dimitri Lascaris. As a lawyer, Dimitri specializes in class actions, human rights and international law. He also has a YouTube channel called Reasons2Resist with Dimitri Lascaris. Dimitri, welcome back to the show.

Dimitri Lascaris (DL): Always a pleasure, Zain. Thank you.

ZR: Let us begin this interview with Syria. Before we get into the details and talk about what transpired, I would like to first focus specifically on the factors that led to the collapse of the Syrian government of Bashar al-Assad. Firstly, it is generally understood that Israel had significantly weakened Syria's ally in Iran by weakening its Lebanese proxy Hezbollah by taking out its leadership. Furthermore, the ceasefire deal with Hezbollah was a clever Israeli diversionary tactic designed to catch Iran Hezbollah off guard as it was focused on regrouping and reorganizing. Secondly, it is mentioned that Russia, another Syrian ally, has been specifically weakened in the war in Ukraine. The fact that North Korean troops came to its aid in the Ukraine war theater in the Russian region of Kursk shows that Russia was overstretched and therefore unable to support its ally in Syria when Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, also known as HTS, launched its offensive in Syria. Lastly, the Syrian economy was successfully brought to its knees by Western sanctions and the government was no longer able to pay salaries to manage its affairs, let alone pay its soldiers and military personnel. What do you make of this assessment? Does it depict an accurate picture of the collapse of Bashar al-Assad?

DL: Certainly there's a lot of truth in the account that you just gave. The accumulation of crushing US sanctions, which had impoverished large swaths of the population. I'm not sure if you mentioned it there, but it's very important to understand that the United States has been illegally occupying the agricultural and oil producing region of the country in the Northeast for a number of years. The incoming President Donald Trump admitted that US troops were there to essentially steal Syrian oil. So on top of these devastating sanctions, constant attacks, relatively regular attacks on military targets in Syria by Israel, which are violations of international law, the theft of agricultural products and oil by the US government, and of course up in Idlib, which was effectively under occupation by Turkey and its jihadist proxies, and was a significant population center in Syria, the accumulation of all of these things

greatly weakened the ability of the Bashar al-Assad government to remain in power and ultimately, at a moment that was quite fortuitous, the Turkish-backed jihadists attacked. So the swiftness with which this happened is certainly surprising. It was surprising to me. But that had happened is not particularly surprising in light of the weakened condition of Syria.

ZR: It's been almost two weeks since HTS successfully overthrew the government of Bashar al-Assad. Although HTS is still on the terror list of the United States, European Union and the United Nations, a reassessment of policy towards Syria is currently taking place. For example, the US sent German diplomat Michael Ohnmacht to Damascus to begin talks with the caretaking government formed by the HTS group, stating that it's too early for sanctions to be lifted until HTS takes concrete steps to distance itself from al-Qaeda and ensure the protection of minorities. European Union foreign ministers also agreed that Iran and Russia should have no place in Syria's future, which will also include military bases and any activities. EU Commissioner Ursula von der Leyen this week visited Turkish President Erdogan in Ankara, in which 1 billion euro was agreed to be provided to Turkey to assist it with the influx of Syrian refugees, as well as discuss the future of Syria. The US state Department also announced today that a diplomatic team has arrived in Damascus and released the following statement, quote: "They will be engaging directly with Syrian people, including members of civil society, activists, members of different communities, and other Syrian voices about the vision for the future of their country and how the United States can help support them", unquote. What is your assessment of the West's policy since the fall of Assad? Do you think the West is really concerned about al-Qaeda and the protection of minorities, or are we seeing something else driving their policy?

DL: Well, according to the classic definition of terrorism, which is targeting civilians with violence or threats of violence for a political, ideological, or religious purpose, the greatest terrorist actor in West Asia is Israel itself. If you look at the number of civilians that is killed in Gaza, also in the West Bank, in Lebanon, the purpose for which it's doing that, namely to carry out an ethnic cleansing of historic Palestine and secure land beyond Israel's legitimate borders, including in South Lebanon and Syria, it meets the classic definition of terrorism, and the United States has been arming and funding this terrorist actor in the region with complete abandon for decades. So no one should be surprised by the idea that the United States government would ally itself with people who meet the classic definition of terrorism. This case, however, is a little bit more audacious than the case of Israel because the United States itself formally designates HTS as a terrorist organization. You can go to the website of the US Commission for Religious Freedom, which is an arm of the US government, it says that HTS has committed rape, torture, extrajudicial assassination, other forms of atrocities. The Canadian government website points out that HTS has been fond of using suicide bombings, including one in Damascus in 2017 or 18, I believe it was, that killed 74 people, including eight children. Now, I don't know of any case where somebody had to come along, somebody who engaged in these acts and said, you know, we've decided to become inclusive, we've decided to respect human rights, to be pluralistic, and their slate is wiped clean after having committed atrocities such as these. I've never seen such a case before. But it shows that Western governments really, their capacity for audacity is unparalleled in the world. This

organization has done nothing to alter the assessment that the Canadian, US, and other Western governments have placed on HTS for years. And, as your audience probably knows, the CIA continues to have a \$10 million bounty on the head of al-Jolani, the leader of this organization. So, this is the ultimate in cynicism. I'm sad to say, and I very much hope that I'm proven wrong, Zain, but I don't see how this will not end in chaos for the Syrian people. As you mentioned, the sanctions are continuing. Western designated terrorists are in charge in Damascus. The Turks are fighting with the Kurds in the north of the country, and that could become quite a bloody and protracted fight. The Kurds, of course, being backed up by the United States. The United States continues to steal Syria's oil and wheat. There are refugees streaming back into the country, but there's no plan in place to actually welcome them, integrate them back into the society of Syria, and there's sectarianism. I fear very much for the future of the Syrian people. I don't think that this has anything to do with their well-being. Why would we think that the United States prioritizes the well-being of peoples in the Arab world? When did it ever do that?

ZR: Let me provide an overview of all the operations that are taking place, such as you mentioned the Turks. Turkey, through its Islamic militia, is putting pressure on the Syrian Democratic Forces, SDF, which are composed of Kurdish forces in the north and northeast of Syria. The US, on the other hand, supports the SDF, and is also stationed in the region which you mentioned earlier. The Tagesschau, one of the most watched primetime news programs in Germany, does mention the US presence, but mainly in connection with the protection of the SDF and other minorities. What the Tagesschau does not mention, however, is that the US military is present there, without a UN mandate, and that the eastern part of the region, where it is stationed, has important energy reserves and infrastructure that the US prevented Assad from taking over, which you mentioned in the first answer. Just yesterday, the Pentagon admitted in a press conference that the US has 2,000 troops actually stationed in Syria, instead of the previously disclosed figure of 900. Furthermore, Israeli forces are, by their own account, conducting one of the largest military offensives in their history, and have carried out close to 500 airstrikes in Syria since the overthrow of Assad, destroying 80% of Syria's military capacity to date. Israel continues to invade the Golan Heights, which is considered part of the UN buffer zone, destroying a number of villages, and forcing people to flee there. The UN special Envoy for Syria Geir Pedersen strongly condemned Israel's violation of Syrian territory and called Israel to stop building new settlements in the Golan Heights. Nevertheless, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu recently announced that his government plans to invest more than \$11 billion dollars in the Golan Heights and double the population there. In a video broadcasted from Mount Hermon, the highest peak in the Golan Heights, Netanyahu said that the Israeli Defense Force will remain here temporarily to ensure Israel's security until another arrangement is found. How do you assess Israel's actions in Syria? Is it really just ensuring security from armed groups in Syria, or do you think it has other plans?

DL: Well, let's recall that the Syrian Golan Heights, which Israel has occupied since 1967, is Syrian land, and Israel annexed that land, I believe it was, in the 1980s, or purported to annex it in flagrant violation of international law. The Trump administration separated itself from

the international consensus that this was a violation of international law by recognizing Israel's sovereignty over the Golan Heights. Effectively, Trump does whatever the Zionist lobby demands of him. But the fact of the matter is that this is a violation of international law. Israel's suggestion that it requires some kind of a buffer zone between it and the powers now in control in Damascus ignores the fact that it already has a buffer zone, the buffer zone being the Golan Heights that it illegally annexed. And by the way, there's no provision in international law for unilaterally creating a buffer zone. You can't cross into the territory of another country and occupy it militarily, because you feel that that enhances your security. If that were true, then it would become perfectly lawful for the Russians to do what they did in Ukraine. But of course, the Western governments are adamant that that was a violation of international law. So this is all bogus. And the idea that the Israelis are going to withdraw is no more credible than the notion that they plan to withdraw from the West Bank. They have not withdrawn from the West Bank since 1967. They kept the Golan Heights. They would have remained in South Lebanon had they not been subjected to quite a beating by the Islamic resistance in Lebanon over the past 14 months. So I think we should assume based upon historical behavior that Israel is engaged, as some members of Netanyahu's cabinet like Ben Gvir and Smotrich openly proclaim, in a project of territorial confiscation and expansion. This is not about Israel's security. And in fact, if anything, this is going to undermine Israel's security, because over time, one can anticipate that these areas that they've now entered beyond the Golan Heights that they previously occupied – and there is evidence that they are ethnically cleansing some of these areas – that the people living there are going to rise up against them. And anything can happen at this stage. This is far from settled as to who ultimately is going to be in control of Syria. And Israel probably just bought itself an enormous headache. You know, this is not enhancing the security of Israelis any more than building settlements in the West Bank enhances the securities of Israelis or massacring Palestinian children in Gaza enhances the security of Israelis. All of this undermines the long term security of Israel. And ultimately, the evidence shows, I think, quite conclusively that this is about a project of Greater Israel.

ZR: Let's go through some counter arguments that are appearing in the mainstream media if we could briefly address them. Let's start with: Assad was a brutal dictator that ruled with an iron fist and brutally tortured and executed tens of thousands of Syrian people, including dissidents and democratic voices. He stole and hoarded billions in public funds for his personal use. Regardless of what one holds of US geopolitical goals, his removal was morally imperative to support if we truly believe in human rights, freedom and democracy.

DL: Well, I can't celebrate the downfall of Assad, who was a human rights violator. I don't know that everything that has been alleged against him by Western governments and corporate media is true, but I readily acknowledge that he had no democratic legitimacy and had engaged in human rights violations. The issue is not whether we should celebrate the departure of Bashar al-Assad, the issue is whether we should embrace the people who have replaced him. And by the standards of the West itself, these people are bloodthirsty terrorists. So I don't think that this is a wise policy. This is a humane policy, and it's one that is oriented towards the well-being of the Syrian people. You know, the G7 put out a statement after HTS

seized control of Damascus, Zain, and nowhere in the statement was there any reference to elections. None whatsoever. This HTS organization and those who are allied with it have no democratic legitimacy, and there doesn't seem to be any pressure upon them to organize any kind of elections in Syria anytime soon. If that should happen and the Syrian people should express their will, all of us should celebrate that. If they have a pluralistic, human rights-observing government that respects and enforces the sovereignty and the rights of the Syrian people, that would be a wonderful outcome. But there's no reason to think that that's where we're heading. And the last thing I want to say is if Western governments actually did care about human rights in the Arab world, why are they backing up Sisi, the dictator of Egypt? Why do they give him military aid every year? Sisi himself, according to Western human rights organizations, is operating a torture assembly line. Why are they supporting the Saudi regime, which brutally oppresses women, which has committed war crimes and crimes against humanity in Yemen? Why are they supporting the Kuwaitis, the Bahrainis, the Qataris, all of whom are anti-democratic autocracies? Let's be serious here. The support for the incoming Syrian regime has absolutely nothing to do with human rights.

ZR: The second argument brought forward is: Whatever one holds from the historic track record of the HTS group, they've promised to transform themselves, distance themselves from al-Qaeda and protect minorities. The will of the Syrian people at least now has a chance to be realized with Western governments getting involved and conditioning their lifting of sanctions based on human rights. This was not possible under the Syrian, Iran and Russian constellations.

DL: Well, again, let's look around the Middle East. Virtually every single regime in power today in the Middle East, with the exception of the Iranian government and the Ansar Allah movement in Yemen, which doesn't have full control of Yemen by the way, is dominated by the West and aligned with the West. Every single one of them. None of them is a democracy. Not one. I challenge you to find one democracy in the Arab world that is aligned with the West. Why would we think that Syria is suddenly going to be treated as an exception by Western powers and they're going to promote democracy? And I think there was a really telling moment in the true function of this incoming Syrian regime, led by HTS, was an interview that al-Jolani, its leader, gave to CNN shortly after they seized power in Damascus. And he was asked about the fact that Israel is bombing the country relentlessly, stealing its land, although CNN of course didn't describe it in those terms, and his answer was, you know, we want to have peace with the Israelis. We're not looking for any trouble. The real enemies to our minds are the Iranians and Hezbollah. Now, as you pointed out earlier, Hezbollah is in no position to do any harm to Syria, nor has it indicated a desire to do so. It's recovering from a brutal war over 14 months with the Israelis. The Iranians have indicated no desire to occupy any part of Syria like the Americans and the Israelis have done, nor have they threatened Syria. And this character, al-Jolani, is making nice with Israel at the very moment that it is bombarding its country and stealing yet more of its land. And let me point out that the occupation and annexation of the Golan Heights by Israel happened over 50 years ago at a time when Iran was ruled by the Shah, who was pro-Israel and a puppet of the West. So they can't use the Israelis, and I'm sure al-Jolani understands this, the Islamic regime in

Iran as an excuse for what it did to the Syrian Golan Heights. That had nothing to do with any security threat from Iran. It was just open theft of Syrian land. And yet al-Jolani is saying, I want to make peace with the Israelis, and Iran and Hezbollah are the threat?! I can understand if he expressed hostility towards Iran and Hezbollah, but if he was serious about defending the sovereignty and autonomy of the Syrian people, he would at a bare minimum be calling upon the United Nations to intervene and stop Israel's serial violations of international law in the south of Syria.

ZR: Let us switch gears here and turn to the latest developments in the war on Ukraine. On December 7th, US President-elect Donald Trump met with Ukrainian President Zelensky and French President Emmanuel Macron in Paris, where Trump called for an immediate ceasefire, while Zelensky emphasized the need for security guarantees. It is expected that once Trump takes office, he will push for negotiations that could include territorial concessions from Ukraine. Just when we thought the situation was calming down, this week, Ukraine assassinated Russian General Igor Kirillov, the head of the Nuclear, Biological, Chemical Defense Forces, with a hidden bomb in a scooter. Dmitry Medvedev, deputy chairman of the Russian Security Council, made it clear that Ukraine leadership would suffer immediate consequences for this assassination. Yesterday, Russian President Vladimir Putin held his year-end press conference, which the German media channel Tagesschau called orchestrated. It was a 4.5 hour press conference in which he answered questions from the public in person and by telephone. At the conference, he expressed his readiness for a ceasefire. On the other hand, Ukrainian President Zelensky, at a meeting with European leaders in Brussels this week, stated that the war could not be frozen on our territory alone and that Ukraine must be in a position of strength and therefore need security guarantees. Can you first comment on the assassination of the Russian general and then address the two different positions of Putin and Zelensky and explain whether you think a ceasefire is even realistic?

DL: Well, I don't understand what is going on in the minds of the Ukrainian intelligence and its Western backers, killing the general in Russia is not going to change the reality on the battlefield. Every single day, as even the Western corporate media now concede, the Russian forces are making significant advances at various points in the battlefield. They've recovered a large part of the territory that was taken in Kursk. They now effectively have control of Kurakhove. They have extended down to the southern boundary of Pokrovsk, which is a major hub, logistics hub for the Ukrainian forces. And beyond Pokrovsk, there is really little, if anything, to stop the Russians from going all the way to the Dzinepa River. How does killing Kirillov in Moscow alter the reality on the battlefield? It doesn't alter it one iota. In fact, there's little indication that he was actually involved in the planning by the Russian general staff of the offensive that's now been ongoing for months in Ukraine. Ultimately, I think it's entirely fair to view this as an attempt to provoke a harsh reaction from Russia, which will complicate the ability of Trump to do any kind of a peace deal and possibly lead to an escalation in which the US government would feel forced to take more aggressive action than it has taken to date. That's what's going on here. These are acts of desperation as to whether or not a peace can emerge, even if we put aside these various escalations that the

government of Volodymyr Zelensky is engaging in as its forces retreat all over the battlefield, it's going to be very difficult for there to be a peace deal because we haven't heard anything coming out of the Trump administration which suggests that they're yet taking a realistic approach to this. The Russian Federation has been very clear that they aren't going to agree to a freezing of the conflict. They did that previously under the Minsk Accords and during that time, as Angela Merkel admitted later on and Francois Hollande, the French president, admitted later on, they entered into the Minsk accords to buy time for Ukraine to rearm. And that is exactly how a freezing of the conflict would be viewed by the Russian Federation. So they're not going to agree to that. And there hasn't been the slightest indication, this is what I find most remarkable, Zain, of any willingness on the part of the West and Ukraine to negotiate on the issue of Ukraine's membership in NATO. This was the event above all else which provoked this conflict. The West promised the Soviet government that it would not expand one inch eastward. There's a rich historical record to back this up in exchange for the Soviets agreement to allow the reunification of Germany. And when you think about the number of Russians who died in the Second World War at the hands of the German Nazi regime, you would understand, if you're being objective, that that was an enormous concession on the part of the Soviet Union to not oppose in any way the reunification of Germany. In exchange, what did they get? A lie. A lie that NATO wouldn't expand eastward. So if you want to have a peace deal with the Russians, we have to begin with this historical reality and take off the table NATO membership for Ukraine. That doesn't mean that Ukraine has to be a vassal of any country. As we saw, Austria has remained neutral all of these years and it is an independent state, a prosperous state, a state where more or less human rights are respected. There's absolutely no reason why this can't be true of Ukraine. So if we want to have a conversation with the Russians, we're going to have to dispense with this notion that Ukraine must be part of NATO. And trying to put it off for ten years, 15 years, that I don't believe is going to satisfy the Russian government. There has to be an agreement that Ukraine will be a neutral country.

ZR: In the face of the Russian invasion in 2022, Germany set up a special military fund of 100 billion euros to counter what it calls an existential security threat that Russia poses to Europe and Germany. According to Euro News, military spending increased in 22 of the 27 member states of the European Union. And overall, EU military spending is expected to reach 326 billion euros, or about 1.9 % of EU GDP. However, NATO General Secretary Mark Rutte recently made it clear that even the 2% mark threshold that all of these countries need to reach will not be enough to maintain long-term deterrence against Russia. The mainstream parties here in Germany have all ruled out diplomatic solutions when it comes to Ukraine during their election campaign and stated that they will support Ukraine for as long as it takes. The only difference is that while the Christian Democrats and the Greens have both stated that they will ensure that Ukraine receives the Taurus cruise missiles, the Social Democrats have ruled that out. The Christian Democrats are the strongest political force in Germany currently and are expected to be in government after the next election that is expected to take place in February of 2025. Friedrich Merz, who is the chancellor candidate of the Christian Democrats, recently visited Kyiv in which he stated that he'll form a separate Europe contact group with Ukraine that, in response to Trump, will ensure that Ukraine

continues to receive support for the war for as long as it takes. In your view, do you think Germany's lone approach in solidarity for Ukraine, coupled with EU's militarization, will be enough to keep Ukraine afloat against Russia with dwindling US support?

DL: I mean, they can barely sustain their own economies in the EU at this stage. You know, you shared with me a report from a major German news outlet that Munich is on the brink of financial collapse. Volkswagen is laying off huge swaths of its workforce. Chemical makers that have been a major component of the German economy are going out of business. How the German state or any major European power is going to sustain on a long-term basis dramatic increases in military spending is a mystery. And if it does pull that off, it will be at great expense to ordinary Europeans. They will see a reduction in the quality of their health care, they will see a degradation in their educational systems, they will see a declining state of the infrastructure in their countries. This is all madness saying, and something that nobody ever explains, it's not even a question that is raised in the discourse around military spending in the West, is why isn't current levels of military spending adequate to secure the needs of Europeans? Let's just look at the numbers. The combined military spending of China, Russia and Iran, who are identified as the three principal security threats to the West, is under \$600 billion a year annually. Now, the official number for the United States alone is now approaching \$1 trillion. It's in excess of \$900 billion. A study was done by Vijay Prashad at the Tricontinental Institute, which showed that actual military spending in the United States is closer to \$1.6 trillion – 1.6 trillion. But let's take the official number, let's say it's \$900 billion. Add to that the military spending of all other NATO countries at current levels, and you have a number that's well in excess of \$1.2 trillion per year. So this is substantially more than twice what the principal security threats to the West are collectively spending every year. Why is this not adequate? Why do we need to increase our military budgets even more in order to have security? The reality here is that military spending is out of control. It is completely insane. We have effectively been hijacked by the military industrial complex. You know, Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1961, at the 11th hour of his two terms as president of the United States, gave an extraordinary speech in which he warned that the military industrial complex, a term that he coined, Eisenhower, a former general in the United States military, was at the precipice of taking control of US democracy. We did not heed his warning. And what has in fact happened is this cancer, the military industrial complex, has spread beyond the borders of the United States, in my opinion, and it is now effectively subverting democracy throughout the West, including in Canada where I'm currently situated. We're having the same discussion here without even asking the basic question, why isn't current military spending sufficient to secure our interests? I think it's time for people to wake up before we have no democracy left and before all the things that we need in order to have a decent life and provide for our children are deprived of us because we are spending obscene amounts of money on military contractors who profit from war. This is what's happened. It's truly a foundational question for the future of Western civilization. Are we going to rein in military spending or are we going to allow the process of being hijacked by military contractors to proceed?

ZR: Let us now look at Israel's assault in Gaza, where the death toll has surpassed 45,000 this month. In November Human Rights Watch published a report holding Israel responsible for

war crimes and crimes against humanity. And just yesterday, on December 19th, they updated their report and have now determined that Israel is committing the crime against humanity of extermination and committing acts of genocide. Tirana Hassan, Executive Director at Human Rights Watch, had the following to say, and let me quote her here: "Water is essential for human life, yet for over a year the Israeli government has deliberately denied Palestinians in Gaza the bare minimum they need to survive. This isn't just negligence, it is a calculated policy of deprivation that has led to the deaths of thousands from dehydration and disease that is nothing short of the crime against humanity of extermination and an act of genocide", unquote. This month Amnesty International came to a similar conclusion, and let me cite their General Secretary Agnès Callamard here: "Month after month Israel has treated Palestinians in Gaza as a subhuman group unworthy of human rights and dignity, demonstrating its intent to physically destroy them", unquote. End of November, the ICC, the International Criminal Court, issued arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, former Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, as well as Hamas military commander Mohammed Deif. Regarding the arrest warrants for Netanyahu and Gallant, the ICC stated that they are responsible for the war crime of using starvation as a method of warfare and are guilty of crimes against humanity through murder, persecution and other inhumane acts. When the ICC issued arrest warrants for Russian President Putin for the war crime of the illegal deportation and transfer of children during the Russian war in Ukraine, the US welcomed it. Now that the ICC has issued arrest warrants against an ally in Benjamin Netanyahu, the US is objecting, even though both the US and Germany rhetorically champion a rules-based order. Can you talk about this discrepancy as a lawyer for international law, and why the West is supporting one case and not the other?

DL: Because Western governments don't care about human rights and never did. This has always been about hegemony. This is a project of hegemony. So they'll selectively invoke human rights when it serves their purposes. For example, when the ICC indicts Vladimir Putin for removing children from a war zone, which is effectively what they indicted him for. But when the Israeli leadership openly declares that it is going to deprive the civilian population of Gaza of food, fuel and water, and major figures in the Israeli political landscape openly declare that there are no innocents in the Gaza Strip, that they're all guilty, including the 1 million children who reside there, you know, well, this is just self-defense. That's the argument from the West. So look, I used to believe that international law, although it was routinely violated by countries around the world with impunity, still operated as a sort of constraint. And governments, including Western governments, did make some effort to at least appear to be complying with international law. Those days are gone, Zain. I think we are entering an era that is extremely dangerous, where Western governments are not even pretending anymore, whatever their rhetoric may be, to be respecting international law and human rights. Israel has been effectively given a green light to commit any and all atrocities imaginable. There is literally nothing that Netanyahu's regime can do, apparently, which would cause Western governments to dramatically reduce or end altogether their military support for Israel. And this is going to come back to haunt us. We, ourselves, are going to be harmed; we in the West, ultimately, in the long run, there's going to be blowback for what we're allowing to be done to the Palestinian people, to the people of Lebanon, to the people of

Syria, for a complete destruction of even the appearance of complying with international law. Ultimately, citizens in the West need to take these matters much more seriously and demand much more from their governments. I've been to many protests. They seem to be dwindling in size, protests against our policy with respect to Israel. There has been, I believe, a normalization of the atrocities that are taking place there, even including things such as the destruction of hospitals, the targeting of medical workers. This has all been normalized. Well, if you don't care about Palestinian life, I happen to be somebody who cares very deeply about it, think about how this is ultimately going to come back and haunt your own society, because it will, I assure you. This is about the basic principles of human decency. We have a profound interest, not only as human beings, but a self-interest in bringing to an end to what is being done to the Palestinian people.

ZR: To my last question, we are currently in our crowdfunding campaign, and I wanted to ask you specifically, why do you think it is important to support independent media outlets like ours that don't take any money from corporations, governments, and believe in the principle of independence?

DL: Because you always pay the piper, Zain. So if your owner, your boss, has a particular agenda, you are going to act in accordance with your boss's agenda. It's just as simple as that. The people who control the corporate media in the West are extraordinarily wealthy people, and their objective is to maximize their own wealth and power. So they use these media organizations in order to manipulate public opinion in such a way as to advantage themselves. This is inevitable. The only media model that works, the only one that delivers true and honest journalism, is a not-for-profit model, and one that is free of the constraints imposed by wealthy capitalists and government bigwigs. So I commend people, organizations such as yours, which are doing such wonderful work, without independent media, we would truly be lost in this world today, because it is our one remaining source of the truth.

ZR: Dimitri Lascaris, independent journalist and lawyer, thank you so much for your time.

DL: Thank you very much, Zain.

ZR: And thank you for tuning in today. If you watched this video until the very end, please take a few moments and visit the description of this video to find out how you can support our crowdfunding campaign so that we can continue our journalism in 2025. Since this is our last video before Christmas, we wish all of our viewers happy holidays and Merry Christmas. I thank you for your support and for tuning in, I'm your host Zain Raza. See you next time.