

Zionism Is Terminating Freedom in the West | Ali Abunimah

How does a journalist get snatched off a quiet Zurich street by plainclothes officers? Why did a federal police chief allegedly break protocol to force his expulsion? And most chillingly, who were the mysterious agents attempting an illegal interrogation inside his prison cell? These aren't hypothetical scenarios from a spy thriller—they are the exact questions I had to ask Ali Abunimah. As the co-founder of The Electronic Intifada and a relentless voice for Palestinian human rights, Ali has faced decades of demonization, but his recent ordeal in my home country of Switzerland reveals a terrifying new low for Western democracies. We dive deep into the corruption exposed by his recent court victory, the shadowy figures involved, and the systemic collapse of free speech we are witnessing in real-time. Links: Electronic Intifada: <https://electronicintifada.net/> Ali's X (Twitter): <https://x.com/AliAbunimah> Neutrality Studies substack: <https://pascallottaz.substack.com> (Opt in for Academic Section from your profile settings: <https://pascallottaz.substack.com/s/academic>) Merch & Donations: <https://neutralitystudies-shop.fourthwall.com> Timestamps: 00:00:00 Introduction 00:00:54 The Arrest in Zurich 00:10:17 Political Corruption & FedPol 00:21:52 Prison Treatment & Secret Agents 00:31:11 Identifying the Interrogators 00:33:15 Compensation 00:36:12 Systemic Repression in the West 00:42:42 Public Opinion vs. Elites

#Pascal

Welcome back to Neutrality Studies. Today it's my great pleasure and honor to have with me, for the first time, Ali Abunimah. Ali is a co-founder of the news outlet The Electronic Intifada. He's a journalist and a human rights activist for the Palestinian cause. Ali, welcome.

#Ali Abunimah

Thank you, Pascal. I've enjoyed your always very thoughtful discussions and interviews for a couple of years now, so it's my honor to be on your program.

#Pascal

Thank you very much. I mean, that's a great honor to hear that. And, you know, you've been one of the people speaking out for a long time for the rights of Palestinians, but also for peace in West Asia. You've been demonized for that. I'd like to start with something I couldn't believe when it happened, when I read about it. I was actually in Switzerland at the same time you were, and you were arrested in Zurich on the street. You were dragged by plainclothes police officers into a van and disappeared for the entire weekend. You recently won quite an important court battle over this. Could you maybe give us the story in a nutshell and how it developed up to now?

#Ali Abunimah

Yeah, so this happened exactly a year ago. As we're recording this, it's January 21, but the saga began on January 24th, 2025. I'd been invited to Zurich by a group of Swiss citizens and residents to speak at an event they hold regularly to discuss, particularly, Palestine — they're activists and academics, not a major group. I suspect that if I had just gone, given my talk, and taken part in the discussion, very few people would have known about it. Maybe there would have been 30 or 40 people there. But instead, it turned into a strange international saga.

I arrived in Switzerland on January 24th, 2025, entering through Zurich Airport. There was a short delay that had nothing to do with Switzerland itself, but rather with the fact that I, along with other prominent Palestinian speakers and writers, had previously been banned from Germany after Germany forcibly canceled a conference on Palestine in Berlin. I hadn't tried to travel to Germany, but apparently there was an entry in the Schengen Information System with my name. The Swiss saw it, asked me a couple of questions, and after a brief delay, they let me enter Switzerland. There was no problem. I went to my hotel.

In Zurich, I had dinner with my hosts at a nearby restaurant. The plan was that the next morning one of my hosts, a Swiss man, would meet me at the hotel, and we'd walk together to the venue where we were going to have the event the next day, which was a Saturday. But already, things started happening that Friday night, the night I arrived in Switzerland. Very hostile articles appeared in one of the major newspapers there, the NZZ. And the school where we were supposed to have the event the next day canceled. I think the organizers were informed either late Friday or early Saturday that the school had withdrawn its permission to use its auditorium.

And so the organizers had to find an alternative venue, which they did. It was a sort of alternative space in Zurich where events are held. My host came in the morning, and it was quite an uncharacteristically warm January day, so we decided to walk—a very beautiful walk through Zurich. It all felt so normal. I mean, you couldn't have imagined that secret police were following us or tracking us. You wouldn't think anyone knew who we were; we were just people walking in the street. And then, at a certain point, as we were approaching the venue, somebody—a big man—just grabbed me by the neck. We were in a pedestrian underpass, so I thought I was being robbed, which has never happened to me before.

But that's what I thought, because this thuggish guy grabbed me by the neck. And then suddenly I felt pain—several more people were grabbing me. I started fighting, but not because I made some brave decision to fight; it was pure instinct. I'd never been in a situation like that. You're just like a cat trying to get free. They overpowered me, dragged me, and threw me into the back of an unmarked car. They sped off and left my host—he was just stunned. He couldn't believe what was

happening, nor could I. They drove off at high speed and took me to the Zurich prison, where I learned that I had been arrested. I was able to call a lawyer I had made arrangements with previously.

I mean, I'd been in contact with her just because of the issue with Germany. We were just concerned there might be some problem at the airport—never imagined anything like this would happen. She came to the prison, and there was some sort of strange hearing. I didn't really understand the proceedings very well, but what I did understand was that they told me several times, "You have violated Swiss law." And I kept asking them, "How have I violated Swiss law? Can you tell me what I've done?" And remember, at this point I'd only just arrived the night before. The only thing I'd done was have dinner with my host—a private dinner in a restaurant. I hadn't spoken publicly, I hadn't given any media interviews, and I'd entered the country legally.

They couldn't tell me anything about how I had violated Swiss law. What they did say was that there was a decision that if I were to speak in Switzerland—if I were to speak in Zurich—it could incite violence against Jews. That's what they told me. So it was this very incoherent story. On the one hand, it was preventive detention to stop me from potentially inciting violence against Jews, which is, of course, something I would never do. And on the other hand, I was told I'd broken the law, but I was never informed how I had broken it. What had I done? What was my crime? I never knew. They then told me I was going to be detained. I didn't understand for how long. And then they put me—well, to my shock—it was a very strange experience.

You know, after this so-called hearing, my lawyer had to leave. They took me and put me in a cell. They made me remove all my clothes and put on a prison outfit. Then they took me to a cell with a heavy metal door—no communication. I wasn't allowed to contact my family. I had come from Amman, in Jordan. The same day I left Jordan for Switzerland, I flew in the evening, first to Istanbul. That very evening, my mother—who has since passed away just a few months ago—was in the hospital. I was very worried about her. I almost canceled the trip to Switzerland because I didn't want to leave her, but my father said, "No, she's fine, they've let her go back home." And I told the prison guards, I said, "You know, can I at least just call my mother?"

They said it wasn't allowed, which is actually against the law, because it turns out I was entitled to that, but they denied those basic rights. And, you know, I was kept in the cell for three days. I wasn't permitted to leave at any time. I was held with a young man there who, you know, I suppose we kept each other company, but he slept most of the time. I wasn't allowed to contact my lawyer. And finally, after three days, I was taken to the airport in handcuffs, in a cage inside a van, put on a plane, and sent out of the country.

#Pascal

I had no idea. Yeah. Hey, very brief intermission—because I was recently banned from YouTube. And although I'm back, this could happen again anytime. So please consider subscribing not only

here, but also to my mailing list on Substack. That's pascallottaz.substack.com. The link's going to be in the description below. And now, back to the video. I can't believe that Switzerland did something like that. When I read about it, it was so utterly unimaginable to me that my country would do something like that to you. It makes my stomach turn—and it makes my stomach turn even more now. But were you ever given an explanation for why this happened? When they put you on a plane, did they at least tell you what was going on?

#Ali Abunimah

We were given—well, this gets into the legal aspect. So I'll tell you the recent decision, and then it'll become clear. What they did, apparently, after I entered Switzerland, was issue an entry ban after I had already entered, and then they issued an expulsion order. These were done by FEDPOL, which is the Federal Police Agency, but they were based on a request from the Zurich canton. I mean, you obviously know this, but for listeners, Switzerland is a federal system like the United States or Canada. You have the cantons, which are like the states in the US or the provinces in Canada, and then you have the federal government.

So the Zurich canton—because immigration and entry and exit are federal issues—the Zurich canton, two days before I arrived in Switzerland, had sent a request to FedPol, to the federal government, saying, "We've heard that Ali Abunimah is coming to Zurich to take part in these events, and we think this is very dangerous. We're asking FedPol to issue an entry ban and prevent him from entering Switzerland." That was two days before I arrived. The next day, FedPol responded to the Zurich canton, and they said—of course, I'm just summarizing what's in the documents.

They said, "We've examined your request, and there is no basis for an entry ban. Therefore, your request is denied." What FedPol said in those internal documents is that the views the Zurich canton objects to are protected by freedom of expression, number one. And number two, they couldn't find any reason to say that he's a threat to the internal or external security of Switzerland, which would be the legal basis for issuing an entry ban. Therefore, the request was denied. And notably—now, I know much more about these aspects of Swiss law than I ever thought I would.

But by law, before FedPol issues a decision, they have to consult with two other agencies: the National Intelligence Service, which I think is called the NDB by its German initials, and the Federal Migration Office. Both of them gave written assessments—which we have, of course, because through the legal process we obtained all these documents in discovery. The NDB said, "We have no information suggesting this person is a threat," and the Migration Office said the same. So you have FedPol, the National Intelligence Service, and the Migration Office all saying there's no basis to issue an entry ban.

#Pascal

So up until that point, it seems the system worked the way it was designed. You check with each other if you have any information, and then the freedom of a U.S. citizen to enter Switzerland is there—so no entry ban whatsoever. Correct.

#Ali Abunimah

And therefore, I entered Switzerland legally. It turns out that on the very day I entered, the entry ban was issued—after I entered. Now, what happened? We know this now in some detail from, first, the documents that we have, including some internal emails. I believe my lawyers are still trying to determine whether we have all the documents or if anything has been held back. But we have a lot. And the other thing is that in November there was a parliamentary committee—a special committee, I think it's called the Control Committee. It's an audit committee that reviews actions of the federal government. They also published a report on this case. And what we know is that after this decision by FedPol to reject the entry ban...

The next day, FedPol reversed that decision and issued the entry ban—but they did so without any new evidence. Nothing new came to light, and there were no records in the file explaining why the initial lawful and correct decision was reversed. What the parliamentary investigation found is that the head of FedPol at the time, a woman named Nicoletta de la Valle, made a phone call to the relevant deputy director in FedPol and essentially ordered him to reverse the decision without any basis. According to the parliamentary report, this intervention was completely improper, contrary to normal procedure, and done without any justification whatsoever.

What the parliamentary report says is that it raises the possibility of political interference—of improper political interference. And this is significant because de la Valle retired from FedPol a few days after this incident. Very quickly, she took a position with a hedge fund called Champel Capital, which is an Israeli hedge fund that invests heavily in the armaments industry. Its founder is a man named Amir Weitman, a member of Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud party, and he's been a very outspoken supporter of the genocide in Gaza and of the total expulsion of the Palestinian people from Gaza.

And another senior partner of Champel Capital is a former Israeli general named Giora Eiland, one of the architects of the so-called Generals' Plan—a plan prepared during this ongoing genocide for the total expulsion of the population from Gaza, including through starvation and by directly targeting the civilian population. This is the company that immediately hired Nicoletta de la Valle, and it created a scandal even in the Swiss press before her personal role in my arrest became known.

You know, even for the mainstream, quite conservative Swiss press, this was already worrying. Some people were raising the concern that, as a former senior federal official, Nicoletta de la Valle would have privileged information about Swiss security issues—potentially Swiss defense contracts and related matters—so there could be a conflict of interest, even aside from the political factors.

And in addition to that, Nicoletta de la Valle had publicly been very pro-Israel. So all of this has come out. Now, in terms of the court process—the legal process—we have filed a number of cases in Switzerland. The first one was against my detention as such, the fact that I was held in prison.

In December, the administrative court in Zurich ruled completely in our favor on every point. They found that my arrest and detention were invalid—illegal under Swiss law and unconstitutional under the Swiss constitution. It was an arbitrary deprivation of my liberty. I was never informed of the reasons for my arrest, and there was no lawful basis for it. Even more significantly, it was a violation of the European Convention on Human Rights. I hope this has a wider significance. In addition, we filed appeals in the federal court in Switzerland against the entry ban and the expulsion order, and those judgments could come at any time. We haven't received them yet—they could come any day.

And we have filed criminal charges against a number of individuals, including, most recently, Nicoletta de la Valle, for abuse of office in relation to the actions she took in the case. So that's where we stand now. For me, what does this come down to? It's not about me alone. It's about fighting back. Yes, it's about my rights, but it's also about resisting the growing censorship and repression across the West in general—and, in particular, against anyone who criticizes Israel or talks about the genocide and the complicity of all these governments, including, by the way, the Swiss government, in this genocide. We have to fight back against that and demand accountability if we're to preserve anything of our so-called democracies, and if we're to preserve the space to have even these kinds of conversations we're having now.

#Pascal

Yeah, no, you're absolutely right. And I must thank you—really thank you—for picking up that fight after, A, what Switzerland did to you, and B, what this means for the entire system. Because what we're learning through your case, and why this was so unbelievable to me, is that it's actually possible to do that. I thought it wouldn't be. You know, when you tell me that in another country, where I don't know how the system works, somebody can be arbitrarily detained, I would believe that, OK, maybe some people are able to abuse the system, or they're able, through corruption or whatever, to go around it.

I thought that was not the case for Switzerland—that, you know, the proper way of doing things, according to the administrative and legal process, was followed. Your case shows, no, it's not. It also shows that, okay, legally you were in the right, you had the right to be there, and the state should have protected that right. What some criminal individuals managed to do was circumvent that, and through direct phone calls and probably abuse of office, have others—who should have known better—go along and commit this kind of horrible abuse against you. I mean, I still need to understand how four or five police officers could think it's okay to grab somebody by the neck and throw them into a van.

I mean... what were they told you were doing? What were they told about who they were dealing with? I mean, that sounds like what you'd do for the worst types of drug dealers or whatever—people you'd think might try to stab them or something. But this kind of abuse of the system is possible. And, very worryingly, there seem to be very close connections to a foreign government, and that becomes a motivation for this person—even De La Valle—to then get a new job. I don't want to accuse anyone of anything, especially since this case is still ongoing, but it's extremely worrisome what money can do.

#Ali Abunimah

From what we know, it's very worrisome. I've said what I know and how things appear to me, but I would like the Swiss justice system to investigate fairly and determine the facts. Maybe that's the good news here—that the court in Zurich delivered a very good judgment, and the parliamentary audit committee produced a very thorough report. That gives me some confidence that there's still a system in Switzerland that can get to the truth. That's all I ask for; I don't ask for anything more than that. But one aspect I want to mention, which I think adds to the worrying part of the story, is that—because you asked what they were told about who I was, who they were dealing with—

I felt like they thought they were dealing with a very dangerous person. During my detention in the prison, as I mentioned, I wasn't allowed out of the cell. I learned only afterwards that we were supposed to have one hour a day of exercise outside, but we were never given that. So we were in the cell 24 hours a day. The morning after I spent the first night in prison, they came to the cell, opened the little window in the big metal door, and said, "You have a meeting with the police. We have to take you there." I asked what it was about and whether my lawyer would be there. They said, "We don't know. We just have to take you."

You know, they were just the prison wardens. They said, "You can ask them." I said, "Okay, I'll go with you." So we went, and we got to this office. I thought, okay, if there's an interview with the police, they have to call my lawyer to come, right? That's a basic right. So I thought, at least now I'll be able to see my lawyer, because I'd been asking and they wouldn't let me. So I went with them, and we reached an office where a man greeted me in Arabic. I thought he was the interpreter—and I'll tell you why I thought that, which gives you another little insight into how things are in Switzerland and in Europe more generally.

On the first day when I was—well, going back to the first day when I was arrested—I was allowed to have my lawyer present for the hearing. They said, by law, we have to conduct the proceeding in German, so we need an interpreter. "Do you prefer English or Arabic?" they asked. I said, "I don't mind, you can have either." They said, "Okay, good, because it's the weekend and it's much easier for us to get an Arabic interpreter." Really? It turns out the reason for that is that practically everyone in the prison is either Arab or African, so they have a large pool of professional interpreters available. But it turned out that on the first day they got an English interpreter.

The next morning, when they took me to this meeting, there was an Arab man. I thought, okay, it's the weekend—they must have only found an Arabic interpreter who was on call. He greeted me in Arabic, and I said, "Are you the interpreter?" He said, "No, please come in, we'll explain." There were two men there: one Swiss, a Swiss-German interpreter, and the Arabic-speaking man, who spoke Egyptian dialect. They were being very nice to me. They had bottles of San Pellegrino—or maybe some fine Swiss mineral water—on the table, and they asked, "Do you want tea?"

"Do you want coffee?" they asked. I told them, "I don't want anything. I'd like to see my lawyer. Is she on her way?" They said, "No, this doesn't involve your lawyer." I said, "What do you mean it doesn't involve my lawyer?" They said, "Well, we're not from the police. We're from the Swiss Defense Ministry." "What?" I said. "Yeah." And I asked, "What do you have to do with anything?" They said, "Well, we just want to come and talk to you, see if we can help you." I said, "Well, if you want to help me, you can release me, because I don't know why I'm here." They said, "No, we just want to talk to you. Maybe we can solve the problem and help you." I said, "I don't know what the problem is. I don't know why I'm here."

I'm a political prisoner. And they said, "Well, we just want to ask you questions about why you're in Switzerland." They were trying to extract information from me. Yeah—without my lawyer. So I kept insisting, "I'm not going to talk to you without my lawyer. I have a right to have a lawyer present." And they said, "Well, this doesn't involve your lawyer. We just want to talk to you." They kept saying it like that. And I said, "Are you going to call my lawyer or not?" They said, "No." I said, "Well, take me back to the cell." I mean, in short, I was more angry than that. But when they took me back to the cell, that was the moment I really thought about Julian Assange. I literally thought about him.

I thought, they want to find something to accuse me of, because the day before they said that if I speak, I'm going to incite violence against Jews, I'm going to incite extremism. I was really afraid they were going to invent something to accuse me of. They told me the day before, "You violated the law," without telling me what my violation was. I interpreted this meeting as them wanting to find a pretext—to extract something from me so they could say, "Aha, he admitted to something." Did they ever tell you their names? The Swiss man introduced himself as Hoffman. The Egyptian man—or the Arabic-speaking man—if he gave me his name, I don't remember it. I only remember Hoffman. This is so bizarre.

This is so bizarre. I learned later—I didn't know this at the time—but after my release, when I spoke to the lawyers and so on, I found out that the Swiss intelligence service—by the way, the same one that two days earlier said they had no information about me—actually falls under the Swiss Defense Ministry. Yes, it does. Yes, it does. So our assumption is that these men were from Swiss intelligence. But, you know, I didn't agree to talk to them, so I don't know what their angle was. I was afraid at that point that they wanted to invent some pretext to detain me or charge me with a crime, because they had told me I'd violated the law without saying what I'd done.

#Pascal

And you never got the documents? Because since this happened inside the prison, there must be records about it—who these people are—because they obviously need to register all of that. And you're right.

#Ali Abunimah

To my knowledge, I don't think we've received the documents related to that. I don't want to misspeak, but I believe my lawyers are still taking steps to determine whether we have or haven't received all of the documents.

#Pascal

I can second your suspicion. These people were probably working for the Nachrichtendienst—our spy agency. I had a friend who used to work for them, and she told me they were instructed to identify only as working for the ministry, period. So that would make a lot of sense. That's extremely worrying. Now, though, the courts are saying you were in the right and that your rights were violated. Have you been given any compensation for what happened to you so far?

#Ali Abunimah

Not yet. Well, yes, the Zurich Administrative Court ordered the canton to pay my legal costs, which is, I think, about 9,500 Swiss francs. My understanding is that the decision will become final after 30 days, because that's the period in which the canton could appeal if they want to. Once it's final, then we can apply for compensation. So that will come. I mean, the compensation is not—these are, from what I understand, relatively symbolic amounts of money—which I will donate directly to support people in Gaza. But it's the principle. And, you know, we will pursue that process.

#Pascal

What worries me so much is that all of this seems so coordinated—so, I mean, so prepared. Also, the articles. I remember reading them, either on Sunday when you were in prison or on Monday when they had to release you—these articles, including interviews with the head of, what was he at the time, the head of the Canton of Zurich's Ministry of Justice? Mario Fehr. Mario Fehr. He's still in that role, yeah. That guy is from my party, the Social Democratic Party, of which I'm a paying member, and I'm so mad at these people.

#Ali Abunimah

I think now he's officially independent, but he used to be a member of that party. And the files show he played a role. He was so gleeful.

#Pascal

He was so gleeful about your arrest in that NZZ article I read. It's just insane.

#Ali Abunimah

Yeah, the files show—and this has already been published—that he played a role. I don't want to speculate more than that, because that will hopefully come out through the process. Again, it would be, I think, for the citizens of Zurich—at least for some of them, the ones who care about democratic rights—very worrying if the head of security in Zurich can effectively act as a law unto himself. And that will have to be thoroughly investigated.

#Pascal

And that it's possible within the Swiss system for certain people in high-ranking offices to call each other and just circumvent the entire system, having the police crack down on little guys and little girls. I mean, that's something that should not be possible. But can we maybe take it to a bigger level? Because it tells us something about the genocide. This genocide isn't just the Israelis dropping U.S.-made bombs on the houses of Palestinians in Gaza. It's an entire system in which the West, and the different parts of the West, are very well integrated. And what happened to you, to me, is just one part of that system that, at the other end, produces the genocide—because what it tries to do is silence, intimidate, and get rid of prominent voices.

#Ali Abunimah

Yeah, and it has to be seen in the context of what's happening in the UK with Palestine Action and journalists who have been questioned—journalists and prominent politicians, you know, outside the mainstream—who have been stopped and questioned under the Terrorism Act. My own colleague, Asa Winstanley, at the Electronic Intifada, who lives in London—the police raided his home and confiscated his laptop and his phones. He went to court, and he actually won; the warrant for that search was illegal. That's still in the courts. He could be charged. Activists have been charged.

That's in the UK. We see that across Europe—in Germany, for example. You know, I was banned. Dr. Hassan Abou Sitta, the prominent surgeon who was in Gaza during the first weeks of the genocide, performing emergency surgeries on children torn apart by Israeli bombs, was banned from Germany. Later on, the Germans issued an order—what did they call it? Betätigungsverbot—against me, saying that if I addressed an audience in Germany via YouTube, in other words, from the United States but speaking to an audience on Zoom in Germany, I would be subject to a fine and up to one year in prison.

#Pascal

Yeah, they did the same thing to Yanis Varoufakis.

#Ali Abunimah

Yes, it's insane. It's insane. And then in France, of course, you have demonstrations being banned, you have associations being raided. On January 7th this year, a feminist bookstore in Paris—this was published in the French press, in **Le Monde**—was raided by armed, masked police and prosecutors looking for a children's coloring book about Palestine because its title is **From the River to the Sea**. So that's the context. You know, my story is my experience of what is a much broader phenomenon across the West and, of course, the United States, the head of the empire, where there is very extreme censorship. It's done in a different way.

Well, now it's done by the government, because it's being carried out very directly against non-citizens—permanent residents, people like Mahmoud Khalil, who was imprisoned, and students who are being deported. Not quite yet against citizens, but that may be coming. This government makes it clear that they want to do that if they can find a way to get away with it. But the censorship in the United States—because we have the First Amendment, and it's a very strong constitutional protection—has to be done through other, indirect means. So it's done through university administrations, through corporations, through media, who punish speech by firing academics, suspending students, and so on. So the censorship is as extreme in the United States; it's just carried out through a slightly different mechanism.

#Pascal

I mean, it tells us, though, that this kind of very heavy-handed repression, even in Switzerland, is actually necessary to keep the genocide going, right? If it weren't for these mechanisms, you wouldn't have support on the ground. You know, you have 60 or 70 percent of people who do not want this level of destruction—even the ones who think that October 7th excuses anything that comes after it. I mean, there's just... I mean, the protests in the United States have been massive. In Europe, too, actually. And we've seen how, in certain countries like Spain and Ireland—well, Ireland first and foremost—the mood changed immediately toward opposition to the genocide, right?

#Ali Abunimah

And even in the United States, we have a historic shift. I've been watching these things very closely for 30 years. For the first time, consistently since October 7th, we see majorities of the entire American population opposed to Israel. That's unprecedented. You know, in the last decade—or a bit more—we saw shifts where certain sub-sectors of the population became very pro-Palestinian. But now we have the population overall, a majority expressing negative views about Israel, expressing horror at what it's doing.

And those sorts of criticisms were traditionally associated with the left-liberal side of American politics. Now they're making very strong inroads into the right—to the point where it's a major division within the so-called MAGA movement and the Republican Party. These are historic shifts that are happening. And that's the U.S. In Europe, it's even more uniform. Even in Switzerland, I've received nothing but support from Swiss people who are just utterly horrified. So that gives you a sense of how detached the ruling elites are from where people stand.

#Pascal

Yeah. Is this maybe—well, you know, as a hopeless optimist, I always look for silver linings. Is this one of them? That actually, you know, the situation has been so appalling, so bad, and so publicly, like, openly bad—with a Zionist regime that even says, "We want to exterminate these people and get rid of them, and the more we kill, the better." I mean, they say that. It's on record. It's not hidden anywhere. Is it at the point where, really, like... it's so unignorable that it will lead to a shift in one way or another?

#Ali Abunimah

You know, the optimistic side—which I share—is that I think global public opinion, you know, was already there in what you might call the Global South, or the Third World, or whatever. Now the so-called First World, or the West, or whatever you want to call it, has joined the rest of the world in terms of public opinion—in utter horror at Israel's crimes and other crimes that the West has perpetrated. You know, the endless wars, the invasions, and so on, which are not stopping, by the way. Yeah. The depressing part is: what is the mechanism to translate that into an actual change, into an actual transformation? Because all of this is happening when, like, you know, we know elections don't change policies. You can vote for your social democratic party or your conservative party or whatever it is—whether it's in Germany, or Switzerland, or the UK, or anywhere in Europe, or in the U.S.—it doesn't change the policies.

I mean, well, in the U.S., you could say we have some kind of radical break, but it's not that radical. If you take the example of the recent regime change attempt in Iran—the latest one—you saw that all these Democrats who are night and day against Donald Trump totally aligned with him when it came to Iran. They totally aligned with demonizing the so-called regime, as they call it, spreading the narrative that this is just a popular revolution of oppressed people, and totally ignoring the open role of Israel, U.S. intelligence, and European intelligence in fomenting a crisis in Iran, and so on. So they're all on the same side. And now you see, in this crisis over Greenland—which is just exposing everything—that Donald Trump is doing us a favor by exposing these text messages from the European leaders.

And they're saying, look, we're aligned with you when it comes to Venezuela, Iran, Syria, or whatever it is. We just don't want you to do that to us. You had Mark Rutte, the NATO chief, saying,

you know, we support you on Gaza—which means we support the genocide. We have Emmanuel Macron, the French president, saying, I'm with you on Syria. You're doing great things in Syria, great things in Ukraine. It's just Greenland. So they're saying, you know, we're fine, we're happy, we want to be with you in exploiting, oppressing, and subverting the rest of the world. But, you know, you can't do that to us. Yes, we will support sanctions that destroy the lives of Syrians and Iranians, that starve Gazans, that starve Yemen. But how dare you put tariffs on us for political purposes?

#Pascal

Tens of millions of people. And, you know, the death of millions is acceptable to them. They even put it into a text message saying, "This is fine." It's almost ironic that it takes a Donald Trump to actually unmask that. I still don't understand the thinking process. I guess he wants to humiliate these people, but in the process he exposes the entire thought process of this colonial system—still colonial, like a 19th-century colonial type of mindset that still rules supreme all over the West. It's quite mind-boggling.

#Ali Abunimah

Yeah, and the thing is, what do we do with all that? All of this is in the open, but what mechanisms do we, as ordinary citizens in all these countries, actually have? I think that's the challenge that faces us all, and we don't have good answers, because the past 30 years have meant the dismantling of the mechanisms through which people generally organized collectively—trade unions, mass-based political parties—rather than these professional, corporate-like parties. None of that exists anymore in the West. And so, you know, we're left tweeting about it on social media. I don't want to be totally pessimistic; we do see some mobilizations in the United States in response to the raids by ICE, the immigration police, the gross abuses, and so on. But is it at the scale of the crisis?

#Pascal

I don't think so. The question is always one of political instruments. I mean, one instrument we do have in Switzerland is a public referendum. We could demand one. We could actually propose an article for the Swiss Constitution that forbids any kind of economic interaction with Israel. That would be on the cards in Switzerland, but most countries don't have such direct democratic rights. Which then boils down to mass protests. That's the only thing that can sway government policy—when things get so bad that even the elites have to change their approach.

#Ali Abunimah

Yeah, and I think that, you know, to go back to your earlier point—the repression, the sort of naked repression—which, I mean, the marketing of the so-called West was always like, well, you can complain, maybe we're not perfect, but the one thing that for us is absolutely sacred is free speech, your democratic rights. That's what distinguishes us from everyone else. That's our strength. Well,

when that's gone, what is there? And I mean, it's even worse now, with the EU imposing sanctions on individual journalists and citizens like Jacques Baud, the Swiss former intelligence officer who gives very critical and excellent analysis. I listen to his analysis all the time.

Hossein Daru, a journalist in Germany, can't feed his family because Ursula von der Leyen issued a decree basically taking away all his rights, imposing personal sanctions on him. So now we have this model where you don't just sanction an entire country or territory—you sanction individuals. You sanction Iran, Venezuela, Gaza, Iraq, Syria, and now it's applied to people, so you can become an individual Gaza Strip or an individual Venezuela. Your accounts are blocked, your ability to do business is blocked. The U.S. has been doing that for many years, and now the EU is doing it too, with apparently no legal recourse. So what's left of the façade of democracy if that's gone? That's it.

#Pascal

I mean, we don't need Vladimir Putin or Xi Jinping to come and take away democracy—we're doing it ourselves. We're doing it ourselves in the name of defending democracy. And the people who shout it the loudest are the ones who take it away the most. But it really takes cases like yours, and brave voices, and people like you to actually talk about this and not be intimidated. So, Ali, I thank you from the bottom of my heart, as a Swiss, that you go through the Swiss system and fight that, because we need it. So, thank you.

#Ali Abunimah

Well, I mean, I think we have to—you know, I have the opportunity and the responsibility to do it, I feel, for a greater cause. As I said, it's not just about my own personal rights, but I think we're fighting a collective battle to defend our freedom. And, you know, you look at channels like yours, publications like mine, The Electronic Intifada, and our channel on YouTube, and, you know, other social media. This is where I'm turning to channels like yours and others who are in this space of independent media and thought as the only places where I can actually get engaged discussion and uncensored analysis.

And you know, the main so-called mainstream media is garbage now—it's propaganda. I mean, yes, it always was, but I'm old enough to remember that it was never quite this bad. And even that, you know, is under threat. I mean, I know your own channel was briefly—apparently due to a... I mean, your channel, if I may say, but you were public about it—it was taken down briefly by YouTube. It might have been, you can say more, a mistake. In other words, the AI did it by mistake, thinking this was inauthentic content or something. But in a way, that's just scary.

#Pascal

It is. It is. I've talked about this elsewhere. I still think it's a glitch, but even the glitch reveals problems in the political process, right? A multi-hundred-billion-dollar company like Google should be

able to address that. But anyway, we need to defend these spaces. And the thing about a society is, it only works together. We actually need each other to—so again, I'd like to thank you, Ali. And for people who want to follow you and your work, they should, of course, go to your homepage, The Electronic Intifada, and to your X account to follow you there. Is there another place where people should read or listen to you?

#Ali Abunimah

That's it. Only when people like you invite me to speak—that's where you'll find me. You won't find me in any mainstream media.

#Pascal

We'll certainly have you back on here. And I do hope there comes a time when you're in the mainstream media again—that'll be the proof that things are getting better. Ali Abunimah, thank you very much for your time today.

#Ali Abunimah

Thank you so much, Pascal Lottaz.