

# Max Blumenthal: Israel's Defeat Begins: Zionist Power Structure FALLING APART in the US

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## #Nima

Everybody, today is Tuesday, April 21st, 2026, and our dear friend, our brother, Max Blumenthal, is here with us. Welcome back, Max.

## #Guest

Good to see you, Nima.

## #Nima

Let me start, Max, with the latest sort of move on the part of the United States and Iran. In Iran, they're saying that as long as they have this American blockade, they're not gonna go to Islamabad to talk with the Americans. And not only the blockade, but the whole atmosphere of the negotiations — they don't see anything positive coming out of these negotiations. On the part of the United States, they're prepared. We've learned from CNN and the New York Times that J.D. Vance is prepared to go there, but he doesn't see that Iran is prepared to be there. That's why somehow they're doubtful about whether the trip is going to happen or not. What is your understanding of the current situation?

## #Guest

Well, it doesn't matter whether J.D. Vance goes or not. He would just be a sort of supplement to the dual-use negotiators Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner, who serve Israel and the U.S., but are effectively supplementing Israeli power and have no technical wherewithal or knowledge. Steve Witkoff, actually, in one interview in Washington in February, referred to the Strait of Hormuz, the central node of strategic tension right now, as the Gulf of Hormuz. These are not bunglers because

they know exactly what they're doing, but they're idiots, and they are also subjects of influence by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, which are effectively in line with Israel at this point in seeking the destruction of the Islamic Republic, especially the United Arab Emirates.

The UAE's sovereign wealth fund and the Saudi sovereign wealth fund have contributed billions of dollars to Jared Kushner. And this goes totally unreported in U.S. media whenever Kushner's name comes up as a negotiator. The UAE now is pushing for a ground invasion of Iran because its own economy and the Dubai model, in which wealthy foreigners can live there tax-free, is being destroyed before our eyes. And this is what's guiding Jared Kushner ultimately, which means that the U.S. negotiating team is a Trojan horse for more war, that negotiations are essentially cover for another surprise Israeli-U.S. attack. Why would Iran agree to this kind of farce?

We'll talk about J.D. Vance in a second. But Iran would be setting itself up once again for the U.S. to accuse it of rejecting a deal. And Trump's threat was very clear: if you reject a deal, we will totally destroy your country. He said this last week on Fox News. Why would Iran submit to those kinds of threats? Why would you negotiate with Iran with thousands of cruise missiles pointed at your head and at the heads of the children of your country? You can't do it. It's been pretty clear from the beginning that this war was sort of baked into the cake of the Zionist axis and its agenda for Iran for a long time, and that the only way out of this is not a superiority of force, but a superior strategy.

And Iran has done that so far, and that's put Trump in a very difficult situation along with his Gulf allies. Donald Trump has publicly contradicted his own Energy Secretary, Chris Wright, who comes from the energy industry—he's basically an energy lobbyist—who said that this year there's no way we're going to have lower than \$3 a gallon of regular gas in the United States, which is a big deal for American consumers, American voters. It basically is a way of saying we are going to get clobbered in the midterm elections coming up in November as long as Donald Trump continues this policy, continues his blockade of Iranian ports. And so Donald Trump said, no, my own Energy Secretary is a liar. Today, Scott Besant, the Treasury Secretary, who is taking an increasingly active role in Iran policy for obvious reasons, suggested that the U.S. would provide a massive loan to the United Arab Emirates.

It was scandalous enough that he provided \$20 billion to prop up the failing economy of Iran. Javier Milei's Argentina, who, by the way, was just in Israel paying homage to Netanyahu as a member of the Chabad cult. But now, as the U.S. economy is faltering and Americans are getting crushed at the gas pump and paying enormous amounts of their salaries for groceries that they can't afford, they're going to actually underwrite loans to one of the wealthiest countries in the world because it had gone all in on the war on Iran and been destroyed. So the political writing on the wall for Donald Trump is ominous. And it would seem to cut against him going into phase two of a devastating assault on Iran to try to finish the unfinished business from phase one, which was supposed to have been worked out after just a few decapitation strikes.

The Republican leadership in Congress, they don't like this war anymore. Because there are still a few swing seats in Congress they might be able to hold on to, but they're going to get crushed if the war continues and the economy continues as it is. Brent crude right now is surging again to \$100 a barrel. But Donald Trump just keeps going ahead with it and making these terrorist threats. And his family or someone close to him, we don't know who, is making billions of dollars off trades like the trades that were made by, I think, 16 insiders on April 7th, right before the announcement of the ceasefire, which I think were oil shorts, which led to massive profits. It's almost as if Donald Trump doesn't care at this point.

Now, I said I'd talk about J.D. Vance really quickly. J.D. Vance is someone who was marketed to the public as a restrainer, as a skeptic of the Iran war. He wasn't tied to the kind of neoconservative Israel First faction of the GOP. He didn't have the same backers as Marco Rubio, for example, who was a creation of the two top Israel First donors of the Republican Party, Miriam Adelson and Paul Singer. He was backed by Palantir chairman Peter Thiel, who's someone who's very involved with Israel and helps provide them with assassination targeting systems and so on. But Vance was presented as a more independent voice in the administration.

Now it's become clear that J.D. Vance is seeking to cultivate his own political future as Donald Trump's successor as the finance chair for the Republican National Committee. And in doing so, he's been traveling around the country holding private fundraisers with Paul Singer and Miriam Adelson, and they've grown very close, according to a report, I think five days ago in the New York Times. And this helps explain how Netanyahu was able to call J.D. Vance in Islamabad during the last hoax round of negotiations, as J.D. Vance was leaning towards trying to make a deal with the Iranian delegation. Netanyahu calls him up. We don't know what was said, but then J.D. Vance immediately wraps up the talks after 21 hours and leaves.

Now we know there's all this leverage that can be exerted on J.D. Vance through Miriam Adelson and Paul Singer, who hold the keys to J.D. Vance and the Republican Party being viable in the future going toward 2028. When you think about Miriam Adelson, she's a very active investor in the Republican Party. When I say active, she actually makes threats internally, and she makes threats on behalf of Israel — that if Donald Trump doesn't get rid of Tucker Carlson, or if Tucker Carlson's son, who worked for J.D. Vance until this week, is not fired, she will not contribute a certain amount of money to the next congressional election.

That's the power she has. And I don't know if J.D. Vance—sorry, Tucker Carlson's son, Buckley—was fired, but he left this week. And Tucker Carlson today said that he deeply regrets ever supporting Trump and that it haunts him that he did this. So that's sort of the domestic situation that is... that's the domestic situation that's coloring these negotiations. The question is whether Trump cares at all, and to the extent that he does, whether that overrides what appears to be increasingly his own narcissistic self-image as either an instrument of God or some kind of Christ-like figure whose job is to rid humanity of evil.

## **#Nima**

You mentioned the financial bailout of the UAE. They're running out of cash, and that's why they put pressure on Donald Trump, saying they're going to somehow use the yuan instead of the dollar because they're short of U.S. dollars. And Donald Trump finally has decided to go along with this financial bailout for the UAE. But looking at it, I think there is a lot to be said about the domestic policies and what's going on in the United States, and how that is going to influence Donald Trump. And we have the latest poll in the United States that shows 64% of the people who participated in this poll said no to the war against Iran in the Middle East.

And this is one side of the story. The other side is what CNN reported on the military front. They say the United States is at risk of running out of missiles if another war breaks out after depleting its stockpile in Iran operations. And you see this side, and Israel saying that they're prepared, they're totally prepared to fight again. And who's going to provide Israel with weapons? I don't know. They're short of interceptors. There is no viable radar in the region to communicate with the air defense system. How do you see the domestic policy in the United States considering all of these shortages?

## **#Guest**

Well, Americans aren't aware of the shortages necessarily. And Trump does have the ability to still destroy, if he orders it, Iranian infrastructure. And the U.S. can reallocate resources from Asia, as it's done so with JASSM missiles, as the standoff capacity dwindled. Leading up to April 7th, which I think was a factor in the ceasefire, Trump needed to move around a lot of U.S. military assets. The naval assets are crumbling. The aircraft carriers have become sort of a forum for viral internet humor, as we see the kind of meals that are being served on the USS Gerald Ford, for example, where it looks like they're eating something that even public high school students in a U.S. cafeteria would be revolted by.

The U.S. Navy published what appeared to be, or might have been, AI posts showing sailors eating what were supposed to be delicious meals to counter the leaks of the food that they were actually eating. There have been more, quote-unquote, laundry fires on YouTube on these aircraft carriers, which are supposed to be the basis of U.S. imperial power or power projection. But that doesn't mean the U.S. can't do enormous amounts of damage to Iran. By April 7th, the U.S. had stopped even attempting—it didn't seem like there was an attempt to really intercept Iranian attacks on sites around Saudi Arabia, Saudi oil fields. You would see Shahed drones and ballistic missile hits without any interceptions. I think those areas have been essentially abandoned, and Israel remains protected.

The F-35s remain at Nevatim Air Base. We don't know what's happened there. They're under strict censorship. It does take a long time to produce exquisite standoff missiles like the JASSM and Tomahawk missile. And so you're starting to see Trump tout another up-and-coming weapons

company called Anduril, which is very tied into his family and his inner circle and is essentially a nepotism ring run by a sociopathic character named Palmer Luckey, who claims that he can produce cruise missiles in a much more rapid fashion by converting auto factories in the U.S., like General Motors auto factories, into missile plants. And so Trump has actually called for converting auto factories into missile plants, signaling plans for permanent war, but also playing into the Anduril business model.

And Anduril has been given major contracts in recent months to do this, but it still hasn't been implemented. It speaks to one of the weaknesses of the U.S. defense industrial base, which is to produce standoff weapons at a rate rapid enough to wage war on a large country like Iran without sending in aircraft like the F-15s and the F-35s, which can be taken down by Iran's passive infrared Majid system, for example. It all speaks to the danger of Trump reentering the war. I just assumed, whether the pilot was recovered or not after this F-15 went down south of Isfahan, that there would be a new crisis soon if Trump didn't enact a ceasefire. And now there's a ceasefire.

So I think the best option for Trump is to continue the naval blockade for as long as he can, which isn't very long because the U.S. Navy is getting exhausted. The sailors are demoralized. It's very expensive, and it's hurting the global economy enormously. It's also harming U.S. relations with China, as Trump wants to enact a major trade deal with China coming up in, like, the next three weeks. The U.S. Navy just hijacked a—I guess it's an Iranian ship or a sanctioned tanker—in what they call the Indo-Pacific realm of responsibility, as though they have the responsibility to commit piracy. This contained two million barrels of oil worth \$200 million heading to China.

So they're basically stealing Chinese oil on the same day that Xi called for opening the Strait of Hormuz because China's tapping into its strategic reserves. So I think Trump can continue the naval blockade and then maybe just kind of take his foot off the gas and let it just kind of fade away. Maybe he'll declare victory. The bootlickers that remain within the MAGA base will celebrate victory. And he could maybe try to change the subject with a few months before midterms and hold on to a few seats. But I don't know if he's going to do that, given his insane social media activity, the disturbing messages that we're seeing from the White House, and the amount of Israeli control and determination by the Israelis to continue this war movement by some means.

And one of the most disturbing, more disturbing things I'm seeing is—and I'm going to go down there after this interview—is Trump reading from the Bible today before a crowd of fanatical end-time Christian right fanatics at the Museum of the Bible in Washington, D.C. And he's reading from a section of the Bible, Chronicles chapter seven, verse eleven, which positions him as King Solomon, who has been instructed by God to heal the land if the people will turn away from their sin. And therefore, Trump becomes a wise king who is an instrument of divine use. But it's also a passage from the Bible about King Solomon constructing his father David's blueprint for the temple, where sacrifices will be made to God.

And that echoes the cult-like apocalyptic beliefs of the Third Temple movement in Israel, which is represented by the fanatical Israeli security minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, who believes that the Al-Aqsa compound should be blown up in order to make space for the construction of a Third Temple where animal sacrifice will be carried out according to religious traditions. So this is what Trump is going to be engaged in at 6 p.m. today in front of a— I mean, it will be telecast; he won't be there live— but for a meeting of truly fanatical admirers who see him as an instrument of God, even though he himself has said that he's not a Christian and knows nothing about the Bible. So can this person make a rational decision vis-à-vis Iran or Lebanon? Are they capable of balancing their domestic and economic considerations with this war in which U.S. military assets have been completely encircling Iran? I really don't think so. And so I think we should prepare for the irrational.

## **#Nima**

Max, looking at the war since the start of this war, since the beginning of this war, they basically said regime change, then the nuclear program will be on right now. Nobody knows what the strategy is on the part of the Trump administration. Every time he's talking about it, he's like, the only problem I have is the nuclear program—no nuclear bombs, no nuclear. But is there any sort of, you know, basis for their strategy? What do they want? Because since they won, in the case of the Strait of Hormuz, in the case of what is happening with the war on the ground and with the case of the ceasefire, I haven't seen anything being laid out by the Trump administration or somehow drawn by the administration to show the public what is the objective. What are the objectives, if it's more than one? What is that, in your opinion?

## **#Guest**

Trump doesn't care. He never cared. And those around Trump knew that the objectives were— the rational figures who would be in the Pentagon brass, for example, seemed to understand that the objectives were unachievable, which is why Dan Cain, CENTCOM chief, lobbied Trump against this war and also understood what we talked about before: the procurement issues and the potential to run out of cruise missiles and interceptors. The Strait of Hormuz issue was never discussed, I think. And it's unclear if Donald Trump actually would have understood it. But the Strait of Hormuz issue was never discussed. Trump was simply told this war would be handled and resolved through a series of decapitation strikes and that the Iranian people would rise up and overthrow the Islamic Republic.

And he went in. And when he was told that in meetings with Netanyahu, where Netanyahu assumed the head of the table, as reported in The New York Times, something that didn't surprise me and echoed a report that we published at The Grayzone a year before about how Trump was kind of manipulated around the 12-Day War. Netanyahu sits at the head of the table in the White House Situation Room with the director of the Mossad behind him on a kind of live stream, David Barnea. And he tells Donald Trump that this can all be easily achieved through a quick series of

assassinations. They have the coordinates of Iran's leader. He's going to be at his office on February 28th. Initiate this now. We can do this, and then it'll all be over.

Netanyahu knew that by enacting that assassination and just getting Trump to say yes initially, it would drag the U.S. into a long-term conflict that would benefit Israel, whose goal is the destruction of the Iranian state, but also the direction of U.S. force into a regional focal point and away from Asia and other deeper priorities. And so he got that out of Trump. But in this report, Marco Rubio, even John Ratcliffe, a very pro-Israel CIA director, and everyone except Pete Hegseth—I think Dan Cain as well—all said what Netanyahu is saying is complete hogwash. It's all a lie. I think Marco Rubio called it absolute bullshit. But none of them stood up to Donald Trump. And Donald Trump made the decision on his own to authorize that strike and set himself on this crazy train to economic and political ruin. And now here we are.

## **#Nima**

I think what Donald Trump is trying—because many people were arguing that Netanyahu is—I actually, I did this many times. I said Netanyahu is running the show in Washington. But Donald Trump is not helping himself. Every time he comes out and says that there is no difference between Donald Trump and Benjamin Netanyahu. And at this particular moment, how do you see the administration? Is there any sort of difference between the Trump administration and the Netanyahu administration?

## **#Guest**

I think there is an anxiety among political operatives who are directing Trump's operation about the perception within the Republican base that Netanyahu is in charge. And the collapse of—there's a new poll, a Pew Research poll—showing that, is this Pew? Yeah, it's Pew Research, showing that American men under 50 now have a negative 47% net favorability of Israel. Negative 47, which means a 23-point drop from 2020. American men under 50—that's pretty much Donald Trump's base. Well, that's a part of Donald Trump's base, white men. And they are disgusted by Donald Trump's submission and prostration before Netanyahu's agenda. That's what this is about. I mean, there's a meme in American social media of guys being in traffic screaming, like, "Why, Netanyahu?" or like, "Netanyahu, stop the traffic! Open up this lane, Netanyahu!"

They're basically saying Netanyahu controls everything because they see him controlling Donald Trump to the point where Donald Trump is utterly destroying himself and alienating not just his followers, but his closest America First co-conspirators. Tucker Carlson being one example, who today said there's nothing he regrets more than supporting Donald Trump. He's haunted by it. The collapse of support for Israel among the future generation of the Republican Party is definitely frightening these operatives. And they just want this war to go away. But it won't. And it can't. Because of the hold that Israel has over Donald Trump. How does Donald Trump find an off-ramp? Which way can he—how can he extricate himself from this war without allowing Iran to declare

victory and to have, like, remixes of Majid al-Tazami's Khorramshahr suite playing in the streets of Tehran? I don't think there's a way.

## **#Nima**

Yeah. That's a trap. It's unbelievable what he has done to himself. But, Max, how has the war changed the Middle East with all these big, beautiful U.S. bases in these GCC countries for such a long time? They have been paying for everything there, everything. And what is the problem, the outcome of the war so far for the United States? Together, I don't know—how do you find the perception of the GCC countries, on their part, and how they perceive the whole situation with the war as time goes by? Because their economies have been, as you've mentioned with the case of the UAE, facing huge challenges right now. It's the same for Qatar. It's the same for Saudi Arabia. Kuwait is unbelievably devastated. Bahrain is the same. What is happening to the GCC countries, in your opinion?

## **#Guest**

Yeah, it's sad. I know people who have left the UAE for obvious reasons. Their children didn't like the bombing, for example. And that's many people. I know other people who are still staying there and other people around the region. One thing they all seem to have in common is they're afraid to talk to me about what's actually going on because they're afraid of those governments, because those governments are hacking into or able to surveil everyone's WhatsApp exchanges. They're spying on everyone. They have locked up someone, a journalist I've known for many years, Ahmed Shihab-Eldin in Kuwait, who is an American citizen, an American-Kuwaiti citizen, who filmed or published footage of the downing of one of the F-15s by a Kuwaiti aircraft, which is a very strange incident.

Like, how do you down three American F-15s by accident? And he's now been locked away, essentially disappeared, and faces a tribunal. Bahraini citizens have been tortured to death for protesting. The level of repression is so extreme in these countries because they are facing the brink of extinction of not just their economic model but their very existence. And if Trump goes back into another round of conflict at a time of extremely hot weather, when everyone needs air conditioning, when you need more water in these regions, then that's going to be the end, because all Iran has to do is strike the desalination plants, strike some oil infrastructure, energy infrastructure, and there will be a mass exodus.

And why would anyone come back? Dubai's entire model is based on tax-free living for extremely wealthy foreigners. Well, they're not going to be able to provide that anymore because it will not be economically viable to do so. I mean, I'm hearing that hundreds of hotels are closing in Dubai and Abu Dhabi. So that's the legacy of this war. That's what Donald Trump decided to do after the Emiratis and Saudis paid Jared Kushner billions of dollars and paid Trump.

I think Trump walked away with himself and his family with nearly a billion dollars after his last trip to the Gulf. And what did they get? What did they get in exchange for that? And that's the decision they made too, and they deserve the consequences of that decision because they made that decision instead of making peace with the largest regional power, Iran, and finding a form of regional accommodation. The U.S. bases, I can't imagine them coming back. It's going to cost too much, and I don't know how they're going to be able to— I just don't know how they're going to be able to build them back, which means the extortion racket—sorry, the protection racket—that has governed U.S. relations with countries like Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait for so many decades is over.

There's no one to protect your oil fields. And those bases were also there to protect those hated dictatorships from their own populations. So they're going to have to deal with their own populations in a different way. And I don't think the Al Khalifa family has any answer for that. And then if there's another phase of this war, we'll see more power projected from Israel, which is now proposing to actually host U.S. bases directly on its soil as an alternative to, for example, the Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar or the Al Salem Base in Kuwait. Or we could even see Azerbaijan used more aggressively to attack Iran.

And then there's another factor here, though, regionally, that I think is worth mentioning, which is the constant threats from influential figures within the Israeli military intelligence apparatus and the political sphere to attack Turkey after the war on Iran is over, which is a message to another major regional power, a mid-level power that has a population that is deeply sympathetic to Palestine, deeply anti-Israel, and which is held back by Erdogan using clever, intense anti-Israel rhetoric while shipping gas through Azerbaijan to Israel, becoming Israel's second-largest gas supplier while remaining a member of NATO and maintaining a NATO listening station on his soil directed at Iran.

Turkey has been trying to kind of play—Turkey under AKP leadership has been trying to mollify the anger and indignation of the public after watching the Gaza genocide, while currying the favor of its imperial masters to prevent the collapse of an economy that is deeply tied into the Western financial structure. And Israel is threatening to smash that contradiction down into bits and force the anger of the Turkish public to the surface. And so it's really forcing it. It's time for Turkey to decide at this point, because the writing is on the wall. If Israel achieves its objective in Iran, they will be next. And NATO has been rendered meaningless by Trump, so Turkey must realize NATO and Article 5 will not matter in the face of an Israeli threat.

## **#Nima**

Here is what the Iranian foreign minister tweeted moments ago on X: "Blocking Iranian ports is an act of war and thus a violation of the ceasefire. Striking a commercial vessel and taking its crew hostage is an even greater violation. Iran knows how to neutralize restrictions, how to defend its interests, and how to resist bullying." I think, Max, what is happening with the case of Donald Trump is that he has gone too far with the war, with the devastation of the radars in the region. As you've mentioned, Israel is asking for a new base in Israel because they're short of radars.

And without communication with these radars, air defense systems are not going to work properly. And not only that, they're short of interceptors, and there are many reports from Israel. We don't see that much footage coming out of Israel showing how this has influenced or devastated some parts of Israel. But it seems that the reports show that Israel has to spend a lot of money to rebuild what has been devastated so far. And making new radars, making new bases is not gonna be something overnight. It's gonna take time. That's why I think Donald Trump is in a very bad, desperate situation, because he has to make a deal.

He has to make some sort of agreement. If not, he has to continue the war. As these reports on CNN and various outlets are telling us, the United States is short of cruise missiles. Because looking at the offensive capability and the defensive capability, and the case of radars, and Donald Trump achieving some sort of agreement with the current situation in the Strait of Hormuz and the nuclear program of Iran, it's too difficult, in my opinion, for Donald Trump to get out of what he has made for himself and still be capable of saying that he's winning, somehow he's winning. How do you see the chaos that he has made for himself?

## **#Guest**

Well, I think I've been explaining how I see that throughout this conversation. I don't have that much to add there. I would say there are different possibilities here. While I would suspect that Donald Trump's blockading of Iranian ports, attacks on Iranian shipping, the fact that there are Iranian ships with 160 million barrels already at sea, which will allow Iran to continue exporting oil through July, which is probably past the point where Donald Trump can continue the blockade politically and economically, would lead me to believe that Donald Trump is going to authorize military action again. And it will be terrorist military action attacking civilian infrastructure because the military objectives have all failed or petered out.

They have this mantra inside the Beltway of tactical victory, strategic failure — that the U.S. and Israel have achieved a tactical victory but a strategic failure. What is the tactical victory? I don't even know what that means. I don't know what tactics have—what have they done? Destroyed some part of Iran's conventional navy? Okay. Why is the Strait of Hormuz closed? Because the IRGC has a navy and you haven't destroyed it. And the navy can be concealed in mountain bases. They're small boats. They can still attack shipping. They can attack your destroyers with cruise missiles. So where's even the tactical victory?

The only thing they have left is terrorist destruction, but that kind of hints at another scenario, which is, you know, the "leave regime change for another day." Destroy Iran's steel plants. Destroy as much of Iran's infrastructure as possible. And try to render it poor and place it under harsh sanctions like Syria after the dirty war — the 12-year dirty war — and the imposition of the Caesar sanctions, which put 90% of the Syrian population below the poverty line. And eventually, the Syrian state sort of collapsed, and Jabhat al-Nusra just walked right into Damascus. I wonder if, by the way, Ahmed

Shara regrets that today, after he had to sit through, like, a basketball halftime show featuring a Missy Elliott song.

It was like watching—I don't know if you saw that video of Al-Shara—but it was like the perfect punishment for him. Anyway, this kind of Syria scenario lingers. And I think that's been discussed by the Mossad director too, or hinted at by the Mossad director, David Barnea, when he declared this week that the Mossad was moving towards phase three, which was kind of a frozen conflict in which the Mossad would intensify its sabotage operations, its attempt to arm so-called protesters, regime change rioters, and promote instability and economic destruction and ruin inside Iran. The U.S. is also playing Globocop. It arrested an Iranian citizen in Panama and accused him of violating U.S. export licenses.

So it's basically taking Iranians hostage around the globe to use as leverage against Iran in negotiations. But the one difference between Syria and Iran is, again, the Strait of Hormuz. I mean, there are many differences, of course. Iran's like a major regional power, an industrial power. It's not facing an internal civil war. But the Strait of Hormuz, as long as Iran maintains control there, it can extract revenue, which it can use for reconstruction, which would effectively defeat the Syria strategy. So, again, I don't see a way around another attempted round of conflict here for Donald Trump unless he simply is willing to listen to reason and do what his base and what the American public wants, but that's not who he's been listening to throughout this war.

## **#Nima**

The case of Lebanon is important, Max, because before this first round of negotiations, it was a precondition on the part of the Iranians just to put it out. And if we go after some sort of ceasefire, it's going to be on all fronts, on all fronts. They were talking about Lebanon. And as we know today, there is some sort of ceasefire between Israel and Lebanon, while Israel is defining a yellow line in the southern part of Lebanon the way they did in Gaza yesterday. And how do you see the situation in Lebanon? I don't see Iran letting that happen, because right now, with the escalation that has happened so far, I think those red lines are all removed from the calculation on the part of Tehran and Tel Aviv. And the case of Lebanon is so important for the Iranians.

## **#Guest**

Well, Iran stopped the... After the Black Wednesday massacre, in which over 350 Lebanese civilians were killed, Iran at least applied its deterrence to guarantee that that wouldn't happen again in the near future. But we don't have... It's obviously not a real ceasefire if Israel's imposing a yellow line, imposing the Gaza model, destroying entire towns. You can see the footage that the Israeli military published from Aitaroun, where their soldiers are burning homes and burning shops and torching the entire city in order to make it uninhabitable and impose this kind of buffer zone.

They've destroyed Bint Jbeil, or large sections of Bint Jbeil, after failing to capture it, and are destroying Christian villages all across southern Lebanon, leading to these images of the desecration of Jesus Christ by an Israeli soldier, which has caused an international incident. This is not a ceasefire. It's not a ceasefire that's being enforced by Europe or by the U.S. No one is doing anything to stop Israel from illegally occupying Lebanon and carrying out societal destruction.

And when I say no one, that includes the Lebanese president, Joseph Aoun, who plans to send a delegation this Thursday to Washington to meet with Israeli Ambassador Yaakov Leiter, a former member of the terrorist Jewish Defense League and settler activist, as well as State Department representatives, to negotiate Lebanon's submission. They're going to negotiate extending the ceasefire, which means extending Israel's illegal occupation of southern Lebanon. And at the same time, Lebanon will be providing a green light for further violence as they call for the disarmament of the one group that had defended southern Lebanon from this kind of terrorism and religious warfare, which is Hezbollah.

**#Nima**

Yeah. Just to wrap up this session, Max, you had Spain, Slovenia, and Ireland?

**#Guest**

I actually have to go now. Okay.

**#Nima**

Okay, great. Thank you so much, Max, for being with us today. A great pleasure, as always.

**#Guest**

Thanks a lot, Nima.