

Greatest Collapse of Israel Support in History! | M. Marquardt & R. Sanders

The West is abandoning Israel. Not yet politically, but public support across the EU, UK and even in the United States is so heavily anti-Israel now, that there is no coming back from the Zionist Epstein class from this one. The shift is really quite remarkable, and probably Israel's greatest loss of its international public image since its inception. In this talk, Felix Marquardt speaks with award-winning British filmmaker and journalist Richard Sanders about the campaign against Jeremy Corbyn, the use of antisemitism claims against Palestine supporters, Peter Mandelson and the Epstein story, Gaza documentaries after October 7, media cover-up, Palestine Action, and the wider crackdown on speech in Britain and France. Links: Double Down News YouTube: <https://youtube.com/@DoubleDownNews> Double Down News website: <https://www.doubledown.news/> Neutrality Studies substack: <https://pascallottaz.substack.com> (Opt in for Academic Section from your profile settings: <https://pascallottaz.substack.com/s/academic>) Merch: <https://neutralitystudies-shop.fourthwall.com> Donation: <https://neutralitystudies.com/donate> Timestamps: 00:00:00 Introduction 00:00:57 Richard Sanders background 00:05:29 Corbyn smear campaign 00:15:33 Starmer Mandelson and Epstein 00:26:38 Gaza films and media cover-up 00:34:03 France and Europe repression 00:35:36 Palestine Action and terror laws 00:43:12 Lessons for France 00:49:45 New show and closing

#Pascal

Welcome back, everybody. This is Pascal Lottaz from Literary Artist Studies, and today I would like to share with you another collaboration that I did with Felix Marquardt, who interviewed the filmmaker and journalist Richard Sanders. It's a wonderful conversation. I recommend it a lot. And here we go.

#Marquardt

Today, it's my great pleasure to welcome Richard Sanders, award-winning British filmmaker and journalist, and director of some of the most important investigative documentaries of the last decade. Richard, welcome. Thank you. Thank you for having me, Felix. We have a lot to cover, starting from the case of Ruma Hassan, a member of the European Parliament who was summoned by the French police last week on charges of apology for terrorism. As it seems, France is following the same path as Britain. There's much we'll have to discuss on that account. But first, I'd like you to introduce yourself to our audience. Who are you? Where do you come from? And how did you come to dedicate so much of your career to Palestine? So, my name is Richard Sanders.

#Sanders

I am a filmmaker, also a journalist and an author. I've been working in British television for about 30 years now. I've made over 50 films for terrestrial TV. I worked mainly recently for Al Jazeera's investigative unit on a series of films there. How I came to devote so much time to Palestine: I made a film three years ago now for Al Jazeera's investigative unit, which was the second episode in The Labour Files series. We'd got a big dump of internal documents from the Labour Party, and it was really sort of an exposé of the machinations of the Labour right and the techniques and tactics that were used to undermine Jeremy Corbyn.

It's a theme people have rather picked up on since. You have **The Fraud** by Paul Holden, very good book. Also **Left Out** by Gabriel Pogrund and Patrick Maguire, very much tells the same story that we were. Anyway, having made my film, episode two, it very much offered an alternative perspective on the antisemitism crisis, which did so much to undermine Jeremy Corbyn as leader of the Labour Party. Primarily through interviewing Jewish members of the Labour Party—the vast majority of the interviewees in the film were Jewish. And, you know, I regarded myself as doing journalism.

But at that point, the phone stopped ringing. And it's an experience a number of people have shared with me that they've had as well. Your career just suddenly comes to a juddering halt. Now, it's interesting because... I'm not that bothered, in a strange way. Because firstly, it meant I then spent the next three years or so making films for Al Jazeera's investigative unit. We made a documentary on October 7th and also a film called **Gaza**, sort of an hour and 20-minute-long film about Gaza, which went out in October 2024. So after a year, a year into the genocide.

#Sanders

And they're films I couldn't have made for British television. I simply couldn't have done it. And they're the films that, on my deathbed, will justify my existence, if you know what I mean. So now Al Jazeera's investigative unit is rather scaling back. So what I'm about to do now—and forgive me, I'm going to do a little plug here. No, please, please, by all means. So I'm working now full-time for Double Down News, which people might be familiar with as an independent news outlet based in London, which I've done quite a bit of work for in the past. But I'm now going to work full-time for them. Basically, we are going to do a show, a weekly show, a weekly magazine news program called **Double Down Newswatch**. And it will act as a showcase for the best of independent media.

It works rather in the same way that there is now an enormous political vacuum in Britain, certainly on the left, to the left of the Labour Party, which the Greens at the moment are filling. So journalistically, you have a huge vacuum. You have large numbers of people who have either lost faith in mainstream media — in the BBC, ITV, The Guardian, what have you — or actually, simply viewing patterns are changing so much that far more people are getting their news online anyway. And really, it's a sort of one-stop shop. It's a sort of guide to the world of independent media. I think

most people, if you want to access independent media at the moment, what you have to do is scroll through X and be very active on social media or what have you.

And then you don't really know what you're looking at. You don't... are you looking at something which is a really solid, good bit of journalism? Or are you reading some crazy conspiracy theorist in their basement? So part of what we do is curating, sort of sorting the wheat from the chaff. So the hope is we'll become the sort of center of gravity of a whole new independent media universe. Obviously, we're British-focused because we're British, but we very much focus on international news, and we'd certainly hope to get viewers, large numbers of viewers, from outside of Britain as well. So that's what I'm about to start doing.

#Marquardt

That's fantastic. And I'm sure that many of our viewers are familiar with some of the work that you've already done for Double Down News and with Loki, who has a special place in the Double Down ecosystem, apparently. I think since one of the objectives of this podcast is to speak to a French audience, you were talking about what happened to the, so to speak, the real British left, right? And how accusations of anti-Semitism just basically sort of got rid of a whole politics in a way in Britain. And I think this is particularly relevant for the French public because.

Some would argue that La France Insoumise is one of the last real strong left-wing parties left, not just in Europe, but in the West. And so there's very much the same kind of attacks being leveled against Jean-Luc Mélenchon and many members of his party regarding various accusations of anti-Semitism, etc. So I think it would be very interesting for our audience to hear more about what exactly happened in the UK, and how you've spent a lot of time on this, and sort of see not just the story, but the latest that has come out, among others, in the Epstein files.

#Pascal

Hey, very brief intermission because I was recently banned from YouTube. And although I'm back, this can happen anytime again. So please consider subscribing not only here, but 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.

#Sanders

It's very interesting what happened in Britain. I think there are two things going on. They alight on anti-Semitism as a wonderful weapon to undermine Jeremy Corbyn because it sort of hits him where it hurts. This is a man who has spent his whole life as a campaigner against racism. And I think it left him sort of confused and disoriented. It proved a very powerful weapon for disorienting him. I'm not sure how much the general public cared about it. I think in terms of the general public, Brexit was a much bigger factor in undermining Jeremy Corbyn, but it was very successful in knocking him

off balance. Now, I think there are two things that go on. Okay, it's important to get this clear. One is, you know, there is this thing called the Israel lobby, and it's very powerful. And, um,

#Marquardt

They quite cynically used, manipulated, and exploited the issue to undermine Corbyn.

#Sanders

Now, the Israel lobby, the Zionist lobby, is very powerful. It ain't that powerful. Now, the point with Jeremy Corbyn was that there were a whole raft of organizations. The entire establishment wanted to destroy Jeremy Corbyn, particularly the sort of security state, you know, which was horrified at the prospect of Jeremy Corbyn being prime minister — the sort of transatlantic security state. They really, really didn't want Jeremy Corbyn to be prime minister. Obviously, the right-wing press, big business, and so on. Rich people didn't want Jeremy Corbyn to be prime minister, essentially. And they latched onto this as the perfect weapon. So that's why it became sort of turbo-powered.

Partly, yes, because of the power of the Israel lobby, but also it was in so many other people's interests. But also, and I think it's very important to bear this in mind, I'm always slightly wary of people who talk about it entirely in terms of it being a scam and a hoax and a fraud. Another reason it had such traction is that a lot of people genuinely believed it. I think there is a massive genuine confusion out there about the difference between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism. And, you know, I know a lot of Jewish people, liberal Jewish people, who do struggle with anti-Zionism. I think they genuinely think it's suspect — where's it coming from and why, you know, why are people pushing this and so on.

It's actually what they managed to do — to redefine anti-Semitism as anti-Zionism. At that point, of course, you're going to find anti-Semites everywhere. You know, inevitably, it's such a powerful thing, because as you and I know, anti-Semitism as a charge has such enormous and terrible resonance in European history that for, you know, liberal, progressive, left-leaning people, it's an issue where you don't want to be on the wrong side of it. I mean, the minute people invoke it, people tend to slightly switch their minds off. So I think there was an element of that as well. You know, I think there were a lot of people sort of going along with the thing against Corbyn who weren't lying. You know, they were being sincere.

They were being honest. I think they were just wrong. As time has gone on and people like Paul Holden and Gabriel Pogrund and Patrick Maguire have done more work, I think the degree to which we were looking at a very organized and deliberate and targeted campaign has become clearer and clearer. And I think that was the dominant element. I mean, if you look at it, every time this raises its head, it drives remorselessly towards forcing people or organizations to adopt the IHRA definition

of anti-Semitism. Remorselessly. That's always what they try to force people to do. Which has been adopted in France as well. Yes, it was adopted by the British government. There are all sorts of legal and certainly intellectual problems with it.

But as you'll be aware, Clause 7 of it says you cannot refer to a Jewish... I can't remember the exact wording, but effectively it says you can't call Israel a racist endeavour, which is an act of, frankly, racist denialism and erasure. It says Palestinians cannot articulate the core reality of their existence over the last century. It's not just wrong. It's not just inadequate as a definition of anti-Semitism. It is racist in itself. It is an act of racial nihilism and erasure. I can't remember the exact wording. There's a sort of weasel form of words whereby a belief in a Jewish state is... If you don't believe in a Jewish state... Hang on. A belief in a Jewish state cannot be defined as a racist endeavour.

#Marquardt

But there is one Jewish state.

#Sanders

We're not talking about Narnia, you know. So that is what it means. Now, okay, so it's battle-tested, and it is enormously effective. It really destroys Jeremy Corbyn. It destroys him in a lot of ways. What's happened since—two things have happened since, of course.

#Marquardt

One is the genocide.

#Sanders

And I think post-genocide, the mass of the British public were always, frankly, confused by the anti-Semitism thing. What they heard was, day after day, Labour has a problem, can't solve the problem. I think they were confused by the anti-Semitism thing. And the Jewish community in Britain is very small. I think it's probably the case that the majority of British people never knowingly meet a Jewish person. Most British people don't have strong views about Jewish people. They have much stronger views about black people or Asian people or Muslims or what have you. Anyway, so the disconnect between the political media class and the general public on this one, I think, has really widened post-genocide, where millions of people, and not just people on the left, have watched the maiming and mutilating and slaughtering of children for three years and thought, hang on, this isn't right.

And when people protesting against that are still being called anti-Semites, I think there are millions of people out there who are smelling a rat. The other thing that's happened, of course, is the rise of the Green Party here, which really is on the ascendant now, which has a Jewish leader, Zack Polanski. And Zack Polanski is very good at just pushing back on this one. He doesn't fall into all the

dreadful traps that Jeremy Corbyn did, who instantly went down the line of sort of apology and appeasement, sort of accepted the framing of the attacks on him, at which point he was lost, of course. Whereas Zack Polanski is, frankly, I think, a more formidable political figure.

#Marquardt

And so, just before, I want to interrupt you for just a second so you can sort of frame it for us. There's been a massive evolution of the power of this accusation in the U.S. Anti-Semitism just does not—it just doesn't work anymore in America. It's just not something that you can use. People just sigh and move on. I mean, I think it's changed a lot. Would you really go that far? In the U.S., I feel, yeah, I mean, I can really sense a massive difference, especially on social media. You can sense it's just not...

#Sanders

I mean, in Britain, it's shifted. And it's shifted far more than the political media class realizes. They continue to sort of trot out this stuff. But when they come into contact... yeah, as they do in the U. S., of course.

#Marquardt

Yeah, yeah.

#Sanders

But when they come into contact with the electorate, I think it dawns on them that people aren't buying it anymore. We've got local elections coming up on May the 7th, at which the two traditional parties are essentially going to be wiped out. And, you know, I think that's going to be a huge wake-up call for them for a whole bunch of reasons, but partly because, you know, large numbers of people aren't buying the anti-Semitism thing anymore.

#Marquardt

So let's go back to the Corbyn story. What's happened since?

#Sanders

Well, as I say, what happened since was the left was destroyed. I mean, he was destroyed and the left was destroyed. Keir Starmer took over the Labour Party. Now, there was a fundamental deception involved. I think a lot of people thought that in Keir Starmer they were getting someone who was simply anti what they called the hard left, the sort of Corbynite left. Now, what became quite clear was that he—whatever Starmer's own views are, and they're very hard to discern, he's a

bit of a sort of amoeba, a bit of a vacuum—whatever his own views were, he was effectively captured by his chief of staff, Morgan McSweeney, who was a vicious right-wing factionalist.

And he'd set himself the task of not just destroying the left, but effectively destroying the center of the Labour Party as well. That was the problem. And he launched this vicious assault on the left, which was actually entirely counterproductive. I mean, if you look at what happened with Corbyn, the 2019 election result was bad, but in terms of the total number of votes cast, it was better than 2010 and 2015. It was bad primarily because of how the votes fell. Labour was reduced to its irreducible core in the large cities. What Morgan McSweeney has succeeded in doing is destroying the irreducible core.

And effectively, those Labour seats in the large cities, huge numbers of them are very likely to go to the Green Party, which really is an electoral catastrophe for the Labour Party, because to a large degree, they've lost the sort of small towns, the mining towns, and so on that used to be the bedrock of Labour—the red wall, as it was called. But the other bedrock was the large cities, inner cities, large immigrant populations, large student populations, sort of liberal middle class. They were very, very solidly Labour, even in 2019. And it's that they've managed to destroy. And it's really fundamental. I mean, the Labour Party is down in the sort of mid-high teens in the polls, which is unheard of. Corbyn was never that low in the polls. It's extraordinary.

So, as I say, the May 7th local elections here are going to be a big turning point. Anyway, so yes, I mean, the people who had exploited and used the anti-Semitism issue gained power. They won the party, and they won the country with this enormous majority, which is entirely illusory. It's to do with our bizarre electoral system. The Labour Party got two-thirds of the seats in Parliament on one-third of the vote. Right. But they've undermined themselves. And as I say, the big thing that's happening now is the Green Party is surging through. The Green Party has always been marginal here. It's now neck and neck with the Labour Party in the polls. And it's a party that is very firmly rejecting that whole narrative and that whole exploitation of the anti-Semitism issue.

#Marquardt

We've learned more about this whole debacle in the context of the Epstein files, on which you have also been a very sort of precursory voice. Can you tell us a bit more about that and the role in particular of Peter Mandelson in this? Yes. They're two entirely separate things for me, in a way.

#Sanders

I made a film about, I made a bunch of films about Donald Trump back at the end of 2015, start of 2016, with Matt Frei from Channel 4 News. And we made a bunch of films. And the minute you started looking into Trump, you came across Epstein. So, you know, from about 2016 onwards, I

was banging on to Channel 4 and people that you've got to make a film about this guy Epstein. You know, it's extraordinary. It was such an obvious miscarriage of justice. And it was outrageous, you know, what had happened back in 2007–08, when he got that sweetheart deal.

And then, of course, he killed himself, at which point I managed to persuade Channel 4 to make a film. I made an hour-long film with Cathy Newman, also from Channel 4 News. And we... Essentially, what happened was one night Prince Andrew was sitting at home and he watched our Dispatches, at which point he made the catastrophic decision: I need to get my point of view across. Let's ring that Maitlis woman from the BBC. And so we smoked him out. It was our film that prompted him to do his absolutely catastrophic interview with the BBC.

#Marquardt

Sorry, but could you give a bit of context for our viewers who are most likely not familiar with that shipwreck?

#Sanders

Oh, the BBC interview, our famous interview — it was BBC Newsnight, I think it was — Emily Maitlis, who's a well-known journalist here, and she sat down with Prince Andrew. I think it was about an hour-long interview, and it was a masterclass in giving someone enough rope to hang themselves. She wasn't aggressive with him; she just let him talk, and he attempted to justify himself, and it just came across as appallingly offensive, unsympathetic, and absurd in parts as well. I mean, Virginia Giuffre, one of the victims, had talked about him sweating profusely, and he claimed he doesn't sweat. He has some sort of strange disorder dating from the Falklands War that prevents him from sweating.

It was an absolute catastrophe. And it began the process which has now culminated in Prince Andrew. He's not even a prince anymore. He's the... the royal formerly known as Prince. He's this thing into the outer darkness. And, you know, so that was what happened there. But with Epstein, the hookup comes with Peter Mandelson, who was the great architect of New Labour. If you go all the way back to Tony Blair and Gordon Brown and so on in the late 80s, really, certainly the early 90s, Peter Mandelson's one of the great architects of the New Labour revolution. And Cathy Newman and myself had exposed him in 2019 when we made our film.

We had a source who revealed that Epstein used to refer to Mandelson as Petey, which indicates a fairly close relationship. They'd overheard a telephone conversation. Of course, no one followed that up at the time. It was entirely ignored. But subsequently, with the release of documents, it became clear he had a very, very close relationship — far, far closer than I'd even suspected, and certainly than he'd let on. So he had been appointed British ambassador to Washington. He then lost that job, and there's fallout all over the place. Morgan McSweeney, the chief of staff for Starmer, who I'd mentioned before, was an acolyte of Mandelson. So it hit him very hard as well.

So yes, the two things rather overlap there. In terms of Palestine, it's interesting that when I made the film in 2019, I was told by two people that Epstein was a Mossad agent. I didn't put this in the film for two reasons. One, they didn't have any documentation. They didn't have any proof. And also, I was very aware that Epstein was something of a blowhard, as Americans say. He loved to create this air of mystery and intrigue around himself, and to make himself out to be more powerful and connected than he was. Now, subsequently, we've seen all the correspondence. I don't think he was a Mossad agent. I don't think Epstein ever worked for anyone. But he was probably an asset. He was probably someone that had a character.

#Marquardt

Yeah.

#Sanders

The key thing is he's very close to Ehud Barak, the former prime minister.

#Marquardt

I think that the whole question of whether he's a Mossad agent is not really the right framing, because given the nature of Epstein's network, which was quite extraordinary in many ways, the heads of intelligence services would, given who they are and their place in that kind of food chain, be using him. But in a way, they'd be flattered to be in touch with him because he was directly linked to Bill Clinton and Donald Trump and God knows who. So I feel like that's probably just not the right framing anyway.

#Sanders

I think it's an ignorant way to come at it, the idea that he was an agent, the idea that he was a paid agent of the Israeli state. I think it's more subtle and more complicated than that. But what is very clear is that he was very, very close to Ehud Barak, who had been Israeli prime minister and Israeli defense minister. So that's the relationship.

#Marquardt

That's for sure. Can you tell us a bit more, if you know anything, about the way that Peter Mandelson intervened in the relationship, or Epstein intervened to set up meetings between Peter Thiel and the Palantir CEO and the British NHS?

#Sanders

Now, that, yes, that's more recent, isn't it? The deals the NHS and the Ministry of Defence have signed with Palantir, multi-million-pound deals, which are the source of enormous controversy now, given what we know about Palantir and their political positioning, but also their intrusiveness. Yes, I mean... this sense one has of there being a club that the rest of us aren't part of. Mandelson ran a consultancy company called Global Counsel, I think it was called. I think I'm right in that. And they had all sorts of clients, and he was making himself lots of money. He seems to have managed to sell his shares at just the right moment.

I think all sorts of people were left with nothing, but not him. He, and I think... he represented Palantir. Check that. But I think Global Counsel represented Palantir. Are you going to edit this? I guess we can. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. So something like that, just double-check that. I don't want you and me to spend the rest of our lives in court. I think Global Counsel represented Palantir. And so certainly Peter Mandelson was ambassador at the time these deals were made, as Keir Starmer visited Washington. And one of the few meetings he had was with Palantir people. So again, yes, we see all of these threads coming together, and coming together in the person of Peter Mandelson.

#Marquardt

Going back to the documentaries that you shot, that you produced, um, after October 7, I remember that we started talking after I watched War Crimes in Gaza, and suddenly realizing I was feeling this sense of déjà vu as I watched people go from north to south in Gaza. And there are some stunning images, really stunning images of that moment. I can't remember exactly when it was in 2024. The film? Yes.

#Sanders

Yes, it's actually sort of October, November 2023. It's very early on. It's the initial flight south from Gaza City, yes.

#Marquardt

And thinking, oh my lord, there's something here, and I couldn't really understand where this sense of déjà vu was coming from until I realized it came from images from the Holocaust during World War II. And I'd like to sort of hear more about that investigation and what you discovered in terms of the role of Western media in whitewashing the actions and decisions of the Israeli government after October 7. Yeah, this is...

#Sanders

As I say, I couldn't have made those films for British television. This was the great advantage you had in working for Al Jazeera. In journalism, of course, we have to be impartial. We have to show

both sides. But there are two kinds of stories. There are stories which are contested — so-and-so says this, so-and-so says that — or so-and-so has this opinion, other people have a different opinion. And then you are obliged to reflect all of that, reflect both sides, and reflect the totality of it. There are other things which are just facts.

You know, the Battle of Hastings happened in 1066. The South African apartheid regime was a regime of racial supremacy. They're just facts. They're not contested. They're just facts. And then you have to work your journalism around that. The enormous and extraordinary achievement of the Israeli state is to turn what are, you know, blindingly obvious facts into contested ones, move them into the sort of terrain of the contested. So, for example, a few years ago now, when they shot Shireen Abu Akleh, the Al Jazeera journalist, it was blindingly obvious.

#Marquardt

American journalist who was shot in—was it in the West Bank?

#Sanders

She's Palestinian.

#Marquardt

Palestinian-American, no?

#Sanders

Yeah, she may have had dual nationality. I think of her as a Palestinian, Christian-Palestinian. It was blindingly obvious the Israelis shot her. And they do this again and again. They do something absolutely dreadful, and then they come out the next day with the boldest lie they possibly can. No, it wasn't, you know, the Palestinians shot her. Or, you know, they committed some appalling bombing — the Palestinians bombed themselves, you know. Now, over the following days, of course, it unravels. It always unravels. And within, you know, certainly by the time the dust has settled, it's become quite clear that the truth was as it initially appeared. But by then, of course, it's dropped out of the news.

Now, so what if you watch the BBC? It's not that the BBC straightforwardly does Hezbollah. It doesn't straightforwardly do Israeli propaganda. What it does is this absolutely bogus two-sides-ism, this sort of faux impartiality, where rather than letting the journalism guide it, following the journalism relentlessly... it just picks a political position halfway between the two and says, well, if we're being shouted at by both sides, then we're doing our job. Now, of course, you have media that's worse than that in the West, which straightforwardly does allow itself to be a mouthpiece for the Israelis. The BBC is not quite as straightforward as that.

#Marquardt

I mean, one thing I sort of want to push back slightly on that — isn't it worse to purport to be objective? Because the ones that you're describing, no one watches them and thinks these people are being impartial. What makes the role of the BBC particularly egregious is the fact that they have this place in global journalism where they are a media of record, the same way the New York Times is. And therefore, when they do this game of two-sidism, it has consequences that are far more, in a way, dramatic and toxic than when GB News or God knows what other media does it.

#Sanders

I absolutely agree with you. You're absolutely right. I mean, anyone vaguely liberal or progressive would never listen to GB News or read the Daily Mail anyway. The BBC has this enormous position of responsibility because its reputation is so high. I mean, one very specific aspect I'd talk about here is... Hamas uses the civilian population as human shields. Okay, this is wheeled out again and again and again and again and never questioned. And it's just stated as a fact in Western media. It's simply untrue. I mean, inasmuch as Hamas operates in the same very tiny bit of territory as the civilian population, yes, but the idea that it was setting up bases in UN refugee camps, in hospitals, and actually sort of physically hiding behind the civilian population is simply untrue.

There's not a scrap of evidence to support this. It's also a complete misreading of Hamas, because whatever else you think of Hamas, it's rooted in the people. Its popularity wouldn't last 10 minutes if they were hiding behind their aunts and grannies. It just wouldn't work. And of course, if you actually do the journalism, the Israelis are guilty again and again and again and have been for years of precisely that. And it's disgraceful. The entirety of the media just trots out this lie, trots out this lie. And it's, you know, a Palestinian friend of mine said it's journalism that kills because it's what created the permissive environment for the scale of the civilian casualties.

Owen Jones, a journalist here in Britain, he puts this very simply: if A says it's raining and B says it's not raining, your job as a journalist isn't to say it might be raining, it's to look out the bloody window. Which I think puts it quite succinctly. The BBC continually reports on Israel as if it's some great mystery—who knows what's going on in Gaza? Whereas to the rest of us, it has been blindingly obvious for two and a half years now that what is going on in Gaza is an attempt to make it unlivable for human beings. It's patently ethnic cleansing.

#Marquardt

So in France, I want to come back to France, because there's not just this very abusive summons of Rima Hassan by the French police. Meanwhile, just to frame, to give you an idea of where we are in France at the moment, over the course of the past few years, the son of the former president has

come out with outrageous comments on a regular basis. And Louis Sarkozy famously declared that the Algerian embassy in France should be burnt down. And of course, he's never been worried in any way. I mean, that's where we are. So there's a law that is about to go through Parliament.

Hopefully it will not go through, but, you know, there's a good chance that it will. That will actually criminalize—like, turn the IHRA definition into law and criminalize criticism of Zionism. That's where we are now. In Europe, you have a situation where most Europeans are not aware of it, but there are a number of European citizens who are under sanctions, which were originally designed to go against Russian oligarchs supporting Putin and various others, but which are now affecting the lives of European citizens.

So famously, Hussein Dougrou in Berlin, a German citizen, cannot right now feed his own family because he's under sanctions. Nathalie Yamb, who's Cameroonian-Swiss, is under the same sanctions. She can't come back to Europe anymore, so she's forced to stay in Cameroon for now. Their bank accounts are frozen. Jacques Baud, who's also Swiss, a former colonel in the Swiss Army who worked for NATO, is in the same situation. Francesca Albanese, absolutely. Can you tell us a bit of the story about what happened to Palestine Action and where things stand now in the UK? Because it's very relevant to all these cases.

#Sanders

Palestine Action was co-founded by a woman called Huda Amori, an extraordinary Iraqi-Palestinian-British woman. We interviewed her for The Labour Files. She had been active in the Labour Party for years, working her way on the Palestine issue. And once Corbyn went, it was clear it was pointless. The Labour Party became a profoundly Zionist party at that point. And she talks very powerfully about discovering the power of direct action. She was up on the roof of an Elbit factory—this is Israel's largest arms manufacturer, which remarkably has factories all over Britain. She's up on the roof of the Elbit factory with a hammer in her hand, causes damage, and they shut the factory for a week. And she talked very powerfully to us about how empowering this was. So Palestine Action was a direct action group—non-violent in the sense that it didn't target people, but certainly was prepared to do damage to property.

#Marquardt

So in the vein of Extinction Rebellion a few years ago?

#Sanders

I guess so. And they were pretty serious about doing damage to property. They wanted to smash these factories up. Their aim, far more than appealing to public opinion, was above all to disrupt the conveyor belt of death, to inhibit the capacity of companies like Elbit to work and operate in Britain. And they targeted anyone who worked with Elbit. If you were an IT company and you signed a

contract with Elbit, you got a visit from them as well. So they weren't messing around, but the aim was to stop genocide. Now, the British state had a problem in that every time they'd arrest them and take them to court, the minute a jury knew who Elbit were and what Elbit did, they wouldn't convict.

They were struggling. And in fact, this continues to be the case. They really struggled to get convictions against Palestine Action. Anyway, so what the government did on the most spurious grounds and spurious evidence, having clearly had discussions with Elbit and with the Israeli embassy, they proscribed Palestine Action as a terrorist organization. Now, this is under legislation which is roughly 25 years old now. I can remember when it was introduced, everyone said, well, you know, because you suspend habeas corpus, you know, you can hold people without charge.

And there's all sorts of basic rights that go out the window once something is declared a terrorist organization. Now, you know, everyone said at the time, well, this has profound implications for civil liberties. And the defense was, well, you know, it was introduced in the wake of 9/11, I think. And the argument was, well, you know, we have to do this to stop the most appalling crimes. You know, would you rather lose some civil liberties or have, whatever, a thousand people killed on the streets of London? So that was the argument.

You know, terrorism is such a dreadful thing that it justifies this. And people did say at the time, well, how do you know some future government won't use it against people who aren't terrorists? They said, no, that would never happen. Goodness me. Of course, that's precisely what they did. They then introduced it for an organization which, whether you agree with them or not, or whatever you think of them, they're patently not a terrorist organization. I mean, it doesn't fit with the description of terrorism or what people commonly understand by terrorism at all.

Now, recently, the Supreme Court, the High Court, whatever it's called here, overturned this, said it's unlawful. The government is appealing this, so we're rather in limbo at the moment. I think the prosecutions against people—because you weren't even allowed to demonstrate in support of Palestine Action—so hundreds and hundreds of people were getting arrested simply for holding up signs saying, "I oppose genocide, I support Palestine Action." Hundreds of people. Now their court cases are all sort of in limbo as well at the moment. But if the courts overturn the suspension of the legislation, then they'll be straight back onto those cases again.

So again, yes, I mean, the focus of the British state is not on the genocide and those who support the genocide. It is on those who oppose the genocide. And the British state, you know, is just increasingly illiberal. And it is extraordinary because one thing, you know, Keir Starmer was a human rights lawyer, and by all accounts, as a young man, a very passionate human rights lawyer. And now, it's just, I don't know what he thinks he was doing with the first half of his life, because certainly the second half of his life completely contradicts it.

#Marquardt

Right. Um, the kind of stuff that, um, the kind of pressure that your colleague Aza Winstanley was under — was that the same, that he had to face the confiscation of his equipment, etc., and that of Richard Medhurst? Is that anything that you have had to deal with yourself? About half a dozen journalists have been arrested and treated in this way.

#Sanders

Asa had all of his equipment confiscated. Again, I think he eventually got a court ruling in his favor on that one. It's hard to know what they're doing. Again, you know, supposedly they're checking out for terrorist connections and so on, which is absurd. I mean, Asa's not running around blowing things up or helping people blow things up. You can't help but feel it's intended to chill, in which case, again, there's no real logic to it. I mean, you know, Asa and the other people who have been arrested are not the sort of people who are going to be intimidated. Asa Winstanley works for Electronic Intifada. He can't be pressured economically. He's not a man who needs mainstream media to work and so on. Yes, they underestimated me. And, you know, Asa's rather more pugilistic than I am. Yes.

#Marquardt

He has a different style. So does Richard Medhurst.

#Sanders

There's a sort of chain of people who... I keep one or two people I keep an eye on. And if they're arrested, I think I might be next in the queue, and they haven't been arrested so far. So I'm relaxed. Right.

#Marquardt

How would you, given what you know of what happened in the UK and given the fact that, again, as I was mentioning earlier, it seems that what happened to Corbyn is sort of what's increasingly in the works for La France Insoumise to some extent? It's the same accusations and the same sort of broad atmosphere. What would you have to say to journalists and activists in France on how best to... Don't go down the slippery slope of apology and appeasement.

#Sanders

Of course. Obviously, if somebody's being overtly, very, very anti-Semitic, it's rather different. But it's always the case they're targeting people who are, in fact, champions of the Palestinian state. What you have to do right from the beginning is push back on the assumptions. What are you calling anti-Semitism? Why are you defining this as anti-Semitism? And why, in a period of genocide, is the anti-racist spotlight focused incessantly on the victims of apartheid, cleansing, and genocide rather

than on the perpetrators and supporters of it? Indeed, very often it is the supporters of the perpetrators of genocide pointing the anti-racist spotlight on their own victims.

Journalists don't need to play along with this. So you have to take a very firm stance right from the beginning and question the assumptions. Don't say, oh, you know, Jeremy Corbyn's thing, "one anti-Semite is one too many, I'm determined to root them out." And he threw a lot of comrades under the bus, you know, people who weren't anti-Semites. The other dreadful feature in the Labour Party was that you were six, seven times more likely to be investigated for anti-Semitism if you were Jewish than if you weren't, which should have set massive alarm bells ringing, but of course it didn't.

So, A, push back on the assumptions. Don't allow them to set the framing. Be aware that post-genocide, it's changed. The political media class might think this. Most people out there are receptive. Having said all that, I'm not terribly familiar with France. I've always been struck by how profoundly Islamophobic France is. I mean, every now and then I see, you know, things—police powers, the actions the police take, the state takes—you know, it takes my breath away. Because you have this awful faux republicanism, don't you? You have this, you know...

#Marquardt

Yeah, I mean, the situation in France is that there's a complete refusal to look at history. There's a complete refusal to look at why the largest Muslim population in Europe is in France. Sort of, they just happen to be there. So there's no... there's no understanding, or there's a refusal to look at the real sort of issues of colonization. And indeed, it's also about Vichy. The French have an inability to confront Israel because of the same kind of mix of guilt and discomfort with their historical past and their inability to look at it. And so the result is, you know, in Germany we have—I say we because my father was German and I'm an Austrian citizen—and we have something called German guilt pride, whereby the Germans think somehow magically that because they're the only ones who've done the work of overcoming the ghosts of the past, which they haven't.

#Sanders

And, and, uh, you know, about this time recently, there was—what was it called now?—something on, um, the Jewish almost infatuation with Israel, yes, and the German infatuation with Israel.

#Marquardt

No, absolutely, and it's very much—uh, there was a kind of Faustian bargain after World War II between Israel, between Adenauer and Ben-Gurion, whereby Adenauer got Ben-Gurion to say, okay, you're not going to focus on—you're going to separate Germany from Nazism to some extent. Germans are not Nazis. And we will support you whatever happens, whatever you do. And that sort of—they never got beyond this. So the situation—and the other thing that the French don't want to look at is that French Algeria is a failed Israel, which makes the whole conversation very

complicated, because the French don't want—and they have terrible relations with Algeria, whereas Spain and Italy don't. And it's, of course, linked as well.

#Sanders

A Palestinian said this to me: that the problem the West has with confronting Israel and Palestine is that it holds a mirror up to its own past. I mean, you know, America, Canada, New Zealand, Australia—they are colonial settler states.

#Marquardt

Of course, terra nullius. This whole idea of a land without a people and a people without a land came from British phrases about Australia.

#Sanders

This, I think, is very important. There's nothing uniquely wicked or dreadful about Israelis. If you're British, this is a very common pattern—the settler colonial pattern. The only difference with Israel is that in the 21st century, we continue to think it's acceptable, whereas in South Africa and Algeria, we long ago recognized that you can't really do this sort of thing.

#Marquardt

Can you tell us a bit more about where we can find the show that you're about to start hosting? And good luck also, I should say, on your new journey. Yes, I'm very excited about it.

#Sanders

It's on YouTube. It'll be Double Down News Watch. And it's going... we're almost certain that'll be the name anyway. It's going out probably on a Friday evening. We haven't quite decided yet. But it'll be a weekly show on YouTube. YouTube is the fundamental. You'll find it on Double Down's own website as well, but YouTube is the main place you'll find it.

#Marquardt

Okay, for our viewers... in France there's no access to Rumble, but I hope you have other streaming services that you'll be on as well, because sometimes you have surprises. Well, we're certainly going to try and bombproof ourselves against that sort of thing. We're going to need to think carefully about that, because we're very aware that YouTube can spring nasty surprises on you. Yeah, and I think sometimes it's not even human, but still, the fear of having all your work suddenly offline is there for many content creators.

#Sanders

There was also a period when Al Jazeera kept finding itself age-restricted, and it's quite a big blow to your viewing figures if you get age-restricted. I think Al Jazeera managed to resolve that with YouTube in the end.

#Marquardt

Yeah. Richard Sanders, thank you so much. Thank you for having me.