

# Amb. Chas Freeman: US Influence Crumbling? Middle East Power Shift

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## #Nima

What has happened in Israel with the case of the political activists and the people who were trying to help Gazan Palestinian people, who were detained by Israelis? We had a shocking video. And who published that video? Ben-Gvir. Ben-Gvir published that video showing how they're treating these people. And here is the footage that Ben-Gvir published.

## #Guest

Yeah, we have one of these people who was among those, you know, people of Filastin who were detained by Israelis. Here is what she said.

## #Speaker 03

By Israel, like 425 other people, we all were in detention, and they put handcuffs on my hands and on my feet. They dragged me, and when I couldn't walk anymore, they dragged me on the ground. They hit me. They hurt all of us a lot. They put the handcuffs so tight that my hands at some point lost feeling, and they laughed all the time. These people were super sadistic. They abused us. They mistreated and hit us, and they took pictures of us. They took off my shirt, and then they just kept on mistreating us all night long. My message to the world is: shame on you. Shame on all of you.

Shame on everyone who is silent about this. Shame on every government that keeps on trading with Israel, including my own government. They keep on trading with Israel. Israel is committing genocide. My government is complicit. The whole of Europe is complicit. The whole world is complicit. So my message to all governments is: shame on you. And to all people: please stand up. Stand up and make noise for Palestine, for all genocides around the world. Because if we don't do it, no one else will do it. Like, if we don't go on the flotilla, the government won't solve it. No one will solve it. Only the people can solve it.

## #Nima

Yeah, I think so. Ambassador, there were some sort of repercussions in the Israeli media as well. We had Benjamin Netanyahu, we had the foreign minister of Israel attacking Ben-Gvir, not because of the way he was treating these people, but because he published the video. That was the main problem. Go ahead.

## **#Chas**

That's the usual reaction. You think about the video some months ago of the Palestinian male prisoners being sodomized in prison. The repercussion of that was not that the perpetrators of the rape were punished. They were actually made into heroes. But the woman, the prosecutor who allowed the video to get out, was harassed and dismissed from office and driven to contemplate suicide. So the obsession in Israel—Israel has always regarded the manipulation of its image as a key instrument of foreign policy and a key to its survival. And that makes sense because Israel, in many ways, is in the position of the two Crusader kingdoms that were established in Palestine 800 or so years ago. And both of them depended, like Israel, on external support.

And when they lost their external support, they collapsed. So basically, Israel has an obsession with sustaining its support abroad, mainly in the United States, but also in Europe. Most of the people in the flotilla were European rather than American. There were some Americans, some Canadians also. And they report that they were tortured, basically. We've seen photographs of people arriving in Istanbul with what looked like cigarette burns all over them. We've been told that people have had broken bones. We've seen people badly beaten. The young lady who just spoke in that clip mentioned her shirt was taken off. There are reports of rapes of members of the flotilla by the Israelis. So they fully deserve the description she gave of them as utterly sadistic.

Israel now symbolizes a level of sadism that no other country can begin to match. And that is not good for Israel. So there was a huge reaction abroad from the countries whose citizens were mistreated. Demands were made of their governments that they intervene. Foreign ministers were called into action. So far, however, it's just words. Again, there is talk of actually cutting trade with Israel, not renewing agreements, and so forth. But we'll have to wait and see whether that happens, because the record suggests that Europeans are really good at complaining and not any good at doing anything. So I don't know how this all plays out. It certainly has greatly weakened support for Israel abroad, and it will fuel the boycott, divest, and sanction movement—the BDS movement—everywhere.

## **#Nima**

I think that was shown in Kentucky against Thomas Massie. They had to spend a lot altogether going against Thomas Massie to beat him.

## **#Chas**

That's actually a terrible comment on the state of American democracy, because here we have money equated with free speech by order of the Supreme Court. Here we have money deployed not to advance a cause, but to punish people. So the people who are giving them money have no aspiration to improve things. They just want to punish someone who disagrees with them. And our politics is entirely coercive and intimidating, not uplifting, not idealistic, not aspirational. That is a break with the American past that is fundamental.

And whether you agree with Thomas Massie or not, Thomas Massie has some really strange ideas in addition to some very solid ones. He is a victim, and I think this will actually boomerang against the Zionist lobby that took him down. The \$37 million in a seat primary—I mean, this is unprecedented. But there have been previous illustrations of similar efforts, successful, to punish politicians who were critical of Israel. And that is clearly why Massie was taken down. Donald Trump wanted him gone, but the money came from the Zionist lobby.

## **#Nima**

Laura Loomer tweeted after beating Thomas Massie that it's time for Rand Paul next. You know, oh sure, there's a whole agenda here of hateful actions. She is one of the most despicable characters in American politics, widely regarded as such. She has an inside relationship of some sort with Donald Trump, and she is vicious, totally inhumane, more Israeli than American. I mean, she reminds you of people like Ben-Gurion and Smotrich, who have no regard for human beings other than those who are aligned with them, religiously or otherwise.

## **#Nima**

Yeah. Ambassador, the case of the Middle East and the war between Iran and the United States basically is bringing Axios' report that there is a difference between Donald Trump and Benjamin Netanyahu, because Donald Trump is trying to do something else, somehow putting an end to the war. Benjamin Netanyahu wants the continuation of the war because this is the single moment that, for him, if he cannot achieve it right now, there would be no other time in history for his administration, because he's at the end of his position, at the end of his career right now in Israel. That's why he wants to continue this war. And Donald Trump doesn't feel that way, it seems, in this report from Axios. What is your understanding of that?

## **#Chas**

Well, Axios, this Barak Ravid report, who is both a Mossad agent and a journalist—the two roles are not incompatible in Israeli practice—reported that there was a three-hour angry discussion between Benjamin Netanyahu and Donald Trump, where Benjamin Netanyahu was pressing Trump to resume the war. I think there are several reasons that Donald Trump does not want to resume the war. He himself has cited alleged requests from Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates not to restart the war. I don't think that has any credibility at all. I wouldn't doubt for a moment that the

Saudis and Qataris have pressed Donald Trump not to start the war, but the Emirates take a very different position. And this suggests that this is another one of Donald Trump's made-up stories, and it is not the reality.

The reason he does not want to restart the war is several reasons, actually. One is that the Pentagon has apparently told him that Iran has greatly enhanced its air defenses, and that going back to doing more of the same would be very costly in terms of casualties and aircraft. And so that would not be a good show. It would not enable him to declare victory. So he wants to declare victory and leave, basically. And the other reason, I think, is domestic politics. He's aware that his own position in American politics is rapidly eroding. The summer driving season is upon us. Gas prices are now well over \$4.50 nationally and well over \$6 in California. So, you know, there's backlash, political backlash. And he knows the war is unpopular. He wants to end it.

You know, I've been thinking about this, and my conclusion is that he can't get out of this war except in one way, and that is if Congress overrides his desire for the war and pulls the plug on it—which they almost did, by the way, the day before yesterday. They were about to vote in the House of Representatives against Donald Trump's war. The Speaker of the House, Mr. Johnson, then canceled the vote because he couldn't hold the Republican Party behind Donald Trump. That's serious. So there is a serious rebellion of Republicans against Donald Trump, in part on this issue, in part on the issue of what's been called the felon slush fund—meaning this \$1.8 billion giveaway fund to all of the cronies of Donald Trump and supporters who assaulted the Capitol and killed police on January 6th.

Anyway, there's a lot of backlash. So I think really the only way he can get out of this war with his reputation somewhat intact is to allow Congress to push him out and claim that he was betrayed by Congress, that we were on the verge of victory, which he's been claiming all along. And if Congress and the Democrats had not opposed him, we would have had a great victory. I can just hear him saying that. This is the typical stab-in-the-back approach to defeat. It's what the French did when they were thrown out of Algeria. What they said—there's precedent for it. It's not pretty, but I can just see Donald Trump doing that as an act of desperation because he has no other way out of this war.

He cannot attack Iran effectively militarily. Iran has the wherewithal to do huge damage to Israel and to the Gulf Arabs who assist, any Gulf Arab countries that participate in an attack on Iran. And there is no diplomacy. And that's the final point I would like to make. There's essentially a complete deadlock, and there is no discussion of any of the issues that Donald Trump keeps raising. There will be no export to another country of the uranium hexafluoride, the 60% enriched uranium. That happened under the JCPOA, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action of 2015. It's not going to happen now. The regime in Iran is not going to change to be more conciliatory. It's moving in the other direction. The blockade of the Strait is slowly eroding.

The U.S. continues to blockade the Strait, not very effectively, but Chinese ships and Korean ships and other ships are getting through. And Iran is in active discussion with Oman about how to implement the toll gate that it has imposed to mutual advantage. The UAE is left out of that because the UAE remains wedded to the Israeli position and supportive of American action against Iran. So Iran is suffering—yes, it has suffered terribly in this war—but it seems to be prepared to accept more suffering, and it certainly can inflict a great deal more suffering on the Gulf Arabs and the Israelis if the war resumes. So for all these reasons, I don't know whether Donald Trump has come up with the idea of just letting Congress force him out of the war, as I mentioned, but for all these reasons, he does not want to resume the war.

And Benjamin Netanyahu is determined to do that for the reasons you mentioned. That is, he has nowhere to go. His objective was to destroy the Iranian state, if possible, fracture Iran into smaller countries, if not, at least destroy or intimidate it to the level where it could not pose a threat, eliminate its nuclear deterrent option, and so forth and so on. None of that's going to happen. So Netanyahu faces jail time for his corruption, the end of his political career, and terrible damage to the state of Israel by his mistaken policy. It's not clear that Israel can survive. It certainly cannot survive if American and European support go away, which Ben-Gvir seems to be working very hard to achieve. And it can't survive if it's unable to defend itself and unwilling to practice diplomacy. There is no such thing as Israeli diplomacy.

There is a Ministry of Strategic Affairs, which manipulates public opinion in the United States and elsewhere to Israel's advantage. There are ferocious defenders of Israel in lobbies in other countries like France, the UK, and the United States. There is German guilt about the Holocaust, which paralyzes Germany in this regard. But beneath the surface, publics everywhere, including Jewish publics, have turned against Israel. So Netanyahu has taken Israel down a dead-end street. There's no way out. And Donald Trump is stuck in a dead end as well. So nothing's happening. That means that unless the Congress acts to end the war, we're probably going to have another round of fighting, which will be even more disastrous for the United States and Israel than the first round, and very damaging to Iran.

## **#Nima**

From what we've seen so far, they're not even capable of defending themselves against FPV drones from Hezbollah. Hezbollah is hitting these Iron Dome batteries right and left, and that's the problem right now for them. I don't know how long they can continue this, because it's not easy to reproduce or increase the stockpile of these batteries in Israel because of what's going on in the war.

## **#Chas**

Hezbollah is using fiber-optic guided drones, which is something that the Ukrainians and the Russians pioneered. And they're very effective. You can't deflect them, and they're taking quite a toll

on the Israeli forces in southern Lebanon. But Hezbollah is also firing, as you said, into Israel and striking military installations there. So again, we come back to the fact that the alleged ceasefires that have been declared really don't exist. There is no ceasefire in Lebanon. There's no ceasefire in Gaza. The Israelis continue to conduct genocide there. They do it more slowly.

The sadism that was evident in the treatment of the people in the flotilla is typical. So you can single out Ben-Gurion, but Ben-Gurion really represents Israeli society as a whole. It is very sadistic. It is a psychotic mentality that really the world should not tolerate. You know, it has very little to do with Judaism, if anything. I don't think it has any real religious backing, although there are rabbis in Israel who back it. But this is not the Judaism that we observe in your country or mine. You know, these are indecent people hiding behind the banner of Judaism.