

# Seyed M. Marandi: Israel Refuses to Withdraw as Hezbollah CRUSHES the Buffer Zone

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## #Nima

Hi, everybody. Today is Tuesday, June 16, 2026, and our dear friend Professor Seyed M. Marandi is here with us. Welcome back. Thank you for inviting me. Nima, thank you very much. It's always a pleasure. I want to start with the statement of Hezbollah yesterday, because it was so important. Many people were arguing that Iran, by making this or agreeing on this MOU, is somehow betraying Hezbollah, betraying Lebanon, and all of this nonsense that is coming out, in my opinion.

But from the statement of Hezbollah, they said that Hezbollah specifically commended Iran's Supreme Leader, President, government, armed forces, and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard, the IRGC. And what is important in this statement, in my opinion, is the way they were talking about how Iran is bringing the acts of resistance together. Iran is supporting the acts of resistance and the ongoing fight, and the fight is not over — it's ongoing. And with the case of Lebanon, as we know, the main problem is in Lebanon itself. And that's why they said in this statement, Hezbollah argues that Lebanon should use the current international and regional support to strengthen its sovereignty.

And it says it urges the Lebanese government and political factions to adopt a unified national position. This is the moment, I think, for Lebanon to understand that as time goes by, the main agenda on the part of Israel is to create some sort of civil war in Lebanon. And right now with the MOU, nobody knows what's going on with the MOU. But at least Iran is trying to put pressure on the United States government, in the case of Lebanon, to withdraw from Lebanon. What do we know on that front, and how serious is that? Because to respond to these people who are arguing that Iran is not backing Lebanon, is not backing Hezbollah, I think it's better to start with what is the nature, what is the reality of the relationship between Iran and Hezbollah, for many of our audience who don't understand that?

## #Seyed

I think the criticisms of Iran and Hezbollah, both online and offline, can be divided perhaps into three groups. One are the bots, and they are controlled by different countries, whether they're Arab family regimes in the Persian Gulf or other dictatorships in the American camp, or they are Israeli dictatorships, or they are controlled by the MEK. You're always going to have a large number of these accounts that are going to attack Iran as well, no matter what they do. So if they fire back, they'll be attacked for firing back. If they hold their fire, they'll be attacked for holding their fire. If they carry out a ceasefire, they'll be attacked for carrying out a ceasefire. If they fight again, they'll be attacked for violating the ceasefire.

So no matter what happens, this group—and they're, of course, controlled by forces and players in the region who are either Western, who support the genocide, or Western-funded, which would only do what the West wants—or they are from our region and funded by these Arab regimes that do nothing for the people of Palestine, for the people of Lebanon, and for the region. They're just regimes that are in the American camp. So we shouldn't take them too seriously. The second group is people across the world who are passionate about Palestine and Lebanon and who are very eager to see Iran and Hezbollah punish the Israeli regime and punish the empire. But they also have to take into account that the axis of evil is very powerful, and the axis of resistance is Iran, Yemen, Hezbollah, and the resistance in Iraq.

So this axis of evil that's controlled by the empire is—it's literally the entire region. The region has either been directly involved in war against Iran, or they're silently cooperating with the United States, such as the regime in Azerbaijan. And of course, the fact that Turkey allows the United States to use its territory against us—its radar installations, as well as NATO jets to monitor our movements. And of course, the Kurdish areas in northern Iraq and so on. So this is a very difficult fight for the Iranians and Hezbollah. The sacrifices made by the resistance in Lebanon are enormous, and the sacrifices made by the Iranians are huge over the years, and in particular during the last year.

Right now we're during the anniversary—this is the anniversary of the 12-day war. And it was today when I was in Iranian Radio and Television, in the building where you and I met once, I think, when they bombed Iranian Radio and Television. So this is a tough war that's been going on. Iran has made many sacrifices along the way, and Iran is doing whatever it can to help the people of Gaza, to help the people of Lebanon, and to help all of its friends and allies. But Iran is one country under maximum pressure sanctions, so the expectations should not be beyond what is possible. The third issue, the third, are Iranians. There is a significant segment of Iranian society that is opposed to the agreement.

And they believe that we should get a better deal and that the United States is completely untrustworthy, which is true. And there are, of course, things in the deal that I'm not happy about. But I think ultimately, taking into consideration the reality on the ground, it was a good deal. You can't get everything you want when you're facing this huge coalition of evil. Iran won the war, and it

won the siege warfare. And at the negotiating table, it has the upper hand, but the enemy has not been swept away. And the supporters of Zionism and genocide haven't disappeared. And their regional proxies are still their regional proxies. So those Iranians in Iran who are angry, and sometimes when they meet me on the streets, they express their anger at me, even though I'm not a negotiator.

But they do express their anger at me. I've had an interesting couple of days, but I think that in general, what has come out of this agreement is good. Does that mean that this agreement is going to be implemented? No, no one says that. And if the United States does not carry out its side of the bargain, the agreement will fail. We don't trust Americans at all. We're not naive, and we're not going to repeat the mistakes that we've made before, for example, with regard to the nuclear deal, the JCPOA, or other agreements we've had with the United States. This time around, Iran is going to use its leverage, and it's going to be very assertive in using that leverage.

So we are at the beginning of this process, but the people of Lebanon have, from what I know, they're happy that we're moving towards a potential end to this phase of the conflict. And we expect the Israeli regime to do whatever it can to disrupt the deal, to destroy the deal. And Iran will do whatever it can to make sure that the Israeli regime fails in whatever it does. It is a fluid situation. But we have to remember that right now, the reality on the ground is that Iran, after the war, remained standing. And it wasn't that Iran survived, because during the war, a lot of people were saying that for Iran to win, for Iran to survive, it means Iran wins. It wasn't like that, in fact. In the war, Iran hit hard day and night until the end of the war.

It wasn't just like a boxer who was being... I haven't watched boxing in decades. I only watched Muhammad Ali, but that was when I was a kid. But it's not like a boxer who's being punched all the time and they fail to knock him out or knock him down. No, Iran hit back as hard, if not harder. Iran bombed the Israeli regime regularly. Iran bombed and destroyed all those U.S. bases in the region, or badly damaged them. And Iran destroyed the assets of those regimes that participated in the attack on Iran, who facilitated the war whenever Iran's oil and gas or critical infrastructure was targeted. And the damage done to those who stood against Iran, in my opinion, is greater than the damage that was done to Iran.

And the damage that was done to Iran, except for the damage to Iran's critical infrastructure like petrochemical plants, steel factories or steel mills, or pharmaceutical plants, which are soft targets, or the Iranian gas industry—if you look at the Iranian military, very little damage was done. The Iranian Air Force was, for the most part, hidden away. Iranian anti-aircraft systems were hidden away. The Iranian missile bases are all intact. Their drone bases, their factories are all intact. They had very little success in that regard, whereas Iran had enormous success. So it wasn't just that Iran survived; Iran won the war. And then the Americans carried out their siege warfare.

They failed. That's why when Netanyahu made the foolish mistake of bombing Beirut and Iran was about to retaliate in a heavy-handed way, Trump gave those concessions and we had a deal because

we were at a stalemate. Contrary to what Trump was saying and what the Pakistani prime minister was saying, we didn't have a final text. And you know this. We were stuck on a number of issues, including on Lebanon and including on ending the siege on Iranian ports from day one, because they wanted to do it from the second month. And so after Netanyahu's strike and Iran's beginning, when Iran was preparing to strike back, Trump immediately went and ordered his people to give the concessions.

And that's why we are where we are. So Iran is in a strong position, but again, we have to be realistic. The enemy has not been vanquished. This empire is still there. And my expectation is that people who support the resistance and the axis of resistance have to put pressure on their governments, wherever they may be on this planet, to change policy. If it's regional governments, they have to put pressure to change policy on Palestine and with regards to the United States. And if they're beyond the region, they have to do whatever they can peacefully in order to force their governments to tilt further away from the Israeli regime and these forces of genocide.

## **#Nima**

In the statement of Hezbollah, they're basically mentioning four goals. One of them is complete liberation of Lebanese territory. The second is return of Lebanese prisoners. And they want to see the return of displaced residents to their homes in the south, which has been happening since the announcement of the MOU. We've seen many footages coming out from Lebanon showing that people are getting back to their homes in the southern part of Lebanon, and reconstruction of areas damaged during the conflict. These are the goals. I think the last two ones — residents getting back to their homes and reconstruction of the damaged areas — depend on the acts of resistance and how they're planning as time goes by. But the main issue, the complete liberation of Lebanese territory — how do you see that?

## **#Seyed**

Well, the Iranians will continue to put pressure on the United States. And Iran has leverage. The Israeli regime has to withdraw.

## **#Nima**

Professor Marandi, sorry for interrupting you. Here we have the Iranian foreign minister just moments ago saying any military attack by the Zionist regime against Lebanon and the continuation of the occupation constitutes a violation of the memorandum of understanding. Without the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the territories they occupied in this war, the war will not fully end. Yeah, the war will not fully end, yeah.

## **#Seyed**

Yeah, so without a doubt, the Iranians will continue to use their leverage. This is not over. We are dealing with the enemy. It's not as if we are entering a phase of peace and everything is over. Of course not. The issue of Palestine has not gone away, and Gaza has not been removed from the agenda either. And if we reach the space of negotiations with the United States, the issue of Gaza, the issue of Palestine will be central. No doubt. It is in this MOU. When it says Lebanon and the entire region, it includes Gaza. But of course, Gaza — the problem with Gaza, as I said, I think before — is that already the regimes in the region, Sisi, Abdullah in Jordan, Erdogan, the regimes in the Persian Gulf, and others came together with Trump, collaborated with Trump, to impose an ugly ceasefire against the Palestinians in Gaza and to whitewash Trump's genocide.

They gathered in Egypt, and so they helped Trump impose an unjust ceasefire on Gaza, on Hamas, on Palestinian Islamic Jihad. And ever since then, ever since the ceasefire, the Trumpian ceasefire, almost a thousand Palestinians have been murdered in Gaza. Almost a thousand have been murdered since the ceasefire. And the Israeli regime has been moving forward. None of these countries that gathered in Egypt for that signing ceremony and were—I don't want to use nasty words—but who were kissing the hand of Trump, none of them have done anything about it. So it's only Iran and Hezbollah and Ansarullah, Yemen, and the resistance in Iraq that are willing to do anything about it.

So that Gaza is not off the agenda, and Iran will push to at least have this unfair, unjust ceasefire that regional regimes, including—well, anyway, there are many others; people can look up their names who participated. But Iran will at least try to push to have that unjust ceasefire implemented because it's not being implemented. But what's happening in Lebanon is that the Israeli regime is in trouble. And there are differences between Netanyahu and Trump. Now, some may say that this is all for show and they're all on the same page, but I don't think that's totally correct.

I think there are indeed real differences emerging. And the reason is that the shutting of the Strait of Hormuz and the defeat of the United States on the battlefield and the defeat of the United States in siege warfare has made the economic situation quite dangerous. And as you know better than I, the oil experts, energy experts are saying that we're on the verge of a crisis, a major crisis, and that the shortages will begin to show in the coming weeks and by the end of June and during the month of July. So Trump is in a rush. I think the reason why Trump gave those concessions to Iran at the last moment when we were in a stalemate was that he was afraid that if Iran fired missiles at the Israeli regime, the Israeli regime would respond and Iran would strike back. And this would go on for a day or two or three or four days until Israelis would be forced to back down. But that would delay this process for another week or two weeks or three weeks, and it would be perhaps too late. In other words, the crisis will hit. That's my belief. I'm not saying it's absolutely correct, but I think that there was a reason why Trump was so urgent and why he gave those concessions. And the concessions had to do with Lebanon. There were other concessions, but they had to do with Lebanon. That's why Iran, the foreign minister, made that statement that you just said, because that's in the agreement.

The Americans wanted to leave Lebanon out or to use vague language. They were forced to change. So this is a process. Just like during the war, people were saying, you know, people wanted Iran to hit harder. There are calculations. Iran was preparing for a very long war. So it wasn't going to fire off, you know, it was firing missiles and drones in a way in which it could continue firing them with the same numbers for another year. So everything is based on calculations. In the siege warfare, Iran outlasted the Americans. The Iranians tried to conduct their affairs in a way in which they could resist more so that the global crisis, the energy crisis, would hit the Americans first.

Iran succeeded. And at the negotiating table, even when the Pakistani Prime Minister and Trump were saying, "We have a final text," Iran did not budge. They said, "No, these issues have to be resolved." True, Iran gave some concessions. That's how it is at the negotiating table. It wasn't absolute surrender from the other side, but it was still a victory for Iran. So the deal is, people across the world who have read elements of the deal know that it was a failure for the United States, another defeat, something that Trump had to accept. But then some will say, well, they're not going to carry it out. We know that that's a probability, not a possibility.

It's quite probable. It's probable that that'll be the case. But we have our leverage, and we are preparing for further war. As you and I speak, Iran is preparing for war. Iran has gained a lot of knowledge about U.S. military capabilities, and it will use that knowledge in the future. And of course, Iran is trying to prepare itself, its people, and its economy for further warfare if the need arises. So it's not as if Iran is just sitting back and is naive and going to the negotiating table thinking that all is well and that this is over. No, Iran is preparing itself and is negotiating from strength, and it will continue to move forward with great caution.

## **#Nima**

What is the understanding on the part of Iranians when it comes to an Israeli attack on Iran? Many of us, we are talking about this every time, that we know that without the help of the United States, they're not going to be able to hit Iran because they have to refuel their fighter jets. And is that going to be mentioned in the agreement? Because without the United States, Israel is not going to be able to attack Iran in a significant way. That's the main point. And how is that going to be reflected in the memorandum of understanding or any sort of agreement that is coming down the road?

## **#Seyed**

Well, the memorandum of understanding, the first phase is the easy part. And the easy part, we're not sure if it's going to be smooth sailing. In fact, I would be very surprised if the next two months were smooth sailing. I'd be shocked. The real issues have to do with the second phase — the U.S. presence in the region, the Israeli threats, Gaza, Lebanon, the nuclear program, sanctions. All of these will have to be dealt with. All of them. And Iran is not going to accept — I mean, the second phase is not about Iran's nuclear program. The West keeps saying that. The Americans keep saying

that. The Western media keeps saying that. It's about many things, including the sanctions on Iran. The Americans are not going to get any concessions unless they give even bigger concessions. And those concessions have to do with the future stability of our region and, of course, the situation in Palestine, the situation in Lebanon. All of these are factors that will have to be dealt with.

## **#Nima**

The other point, Professor Marandi, is that I don't know if it was mentioned in the agreement, in the MOU, that if Israel attacks again — Beirut or Dahiya — Iran would definitely respond to Israel, because Iran backed down, decided not to attack Israel because of the MOU and the concessions that you mentioned on the part of the United States. How is that going to be treated if Israel attacks again, Dahiya or Beirut?

## **#Seyed**

The red line is there. We were, as you rightly point out, about to strike, but then they gave the concessions. The concessions had to do with Lebanon. They had to do with Lebanon itself. So we could fire a few missiles, and then the Americans could withdraw those concessions. And then we could have another month of them destroying different parts of Lebanon. And of course, the resistance would fight back and hit them. But the calculation was that now that they've agreed to end the war and leave, that would be a defeat for the Israeli regime. And if Netanyahu obeys Trump, he's broken. If he disobeys Trump, it's bad news for him, and Trump is humiliated. So they've been put in this checkmate in this respect.

If the Israeli regime prevents the deal from moving forward, then the world is going to blame the regime not only for being genocidal, not only for starting this crisis, not only for creating this energy crisis, but for refusing to stop. So the regime and the Hebrew press, it's obvious that they're not happy at all. They're very unhappy. And so I think that Iran had decided to fire those missiles. It didn't back down. That is why Trump made those concessions, because he knew that Iran was going to attack. And then he made the concessions that filled the gap between the Iranian position and the American position, which a big part of it was linked to Lebanon.

## **#Nima**

There is a report on Axis based on what they have received from the CIA, and the head of the CIA says that Iran is not honest in the way that it's negotiating with the United States. They're telling us something, and behind the scenes their argument is totally different. What is the position of Iran on the nuclear program, and what's in it for Iran to not be honest in the way that they're negotiating? Is Iran going to benefit from that? And I think the Iranian nuclear program has been a huge issue for such a long time for the West. For Iranians, they know what they want. They know what their capabilities are, what the outcome of that is. And they have been, you know, we had the fatwa in Iran with the Supreme Leader of Iran. And with the new Supreme Leader of Iran, I think that fatwa

still exists. Your understanding of that, because it seems that one of the main important points right now is the Iranian nuclear program, which it is, as Donald Trump is pointing out.

## **#Seyed**

Axios is a tool, and it is a tool used by the White House. And so it is going to say whatever needs to be said to strengthen the hand of the White House. We've seen over the last few months how Axios manipulated markets so that they could make a lot of money.

## **#Seyed**

It's clear.

## **#Seyed**

Remember how peace was imminent between, or a deal was imminent between Iran and the United States? They did that on multiple occasions. And once they really created a huge shift in the energy market, at a time when nothing was happening—absolutely nothing—they just made it up. So we shouldn't take anything Axios says as credible, but Axios is a mouthpiece. And so when they put that material on Axios, they want to put pressure on Iran. It's not going to change anything. Iran's nuclear program was scrutinized very carefully by the International Atomic Energy Agency, unfairly, for many years.

And Joe Kahn, in his resignation letter, said very openly that Iran was not developing a nuclear weapon. So I think that for the CIA, or anyone in the CIA, or whoever it was that told this to Axios, to speak about dishonesty reminds me of a former CIA chief who once said, we lie, we cheat, we steal. So Pompeo, I think, best reflects the reality of the CIA and of the whole political regime in Washington. They lie, they cheat, and they steal. And they carry out genocide at that.

## **#Nima**

How is the situation between Iran and GCC countries as time goes by, with the MOU and with the new sort of move on the part of Iran and the United States? Because after all, when it comes to the region, I think that is of particular importance. The way that Iran sees GCC countries, the way GCC countries see the new sort of situation in West Asia, considering the Strait of Hormuz—and is that going to bring some sort of sanity to the region?

## **#Seyed**

You know, I was hoping that we'd talk about the football match between Iran and New Zealand, but you insist on talking about death and destruction. By the way, that was amazing. Did you see how many fans Iran had at the stadium? Yeah, how many people supported Iran across the world. You

know, a friend of mine today—he told me not to say who—he did an interview with a major world leader, a very important person, and you know that person's name. You know that person's name. Not like a local leader, a major person whose name is on the map. And that person was saying, he or she, that they are rooting for Iran on, you know, on everything. I have the sentence, like, “I am so much a fan of Iran.” And maybe offline I'll tell you, but because he told me, he asked me not to say who it was. But in any case, yeah, it was quite extraordinary.

It was quite interesting to see how, inside the United States, Iran has so many fans. And interestingly, the monarchists called for protests against the Iranian team, and they were like 12 in number when the team arrived in the United States for the match. Even though the United States is treating the Iranian team very poorly—they have to leave on the day of the match. They come in on the day of the match and then they leave on the same day. And a couple of the Iranian players, they cannot go back in for now. It's not clear what will happen. But in any case, the point is that Iran played well. But the point is that Iran has such support inside the United States, and it just shows to me how Western media and the Western empire are losing their control over the narrative.

## **#Nima**

Yeah, yeah. But yeah, you were going to say something. Yeah, the point was the situation between Iran and GCC countries. Then you moved—yeah, I was about to answer that. I thought you were going to add something to the game. But with regards to the football—so, well, Iran is in negotiations with all five of these countries. The reason I'm asking this is because right now Donald Trump is meeting the Qatari government, the head of the Qatari government. The UAE, the head of the UAE, is talking about the deal, how the situation is moving forward. That's why I'm asking this. I want to know Iran's position on that.

## **#Seyed**

Well, first of all, another thing that Trump said was that Israel should leave Lebanon and let Syria deal with it. Exactly.

## **#Nima**

Yeah.

## **#Seyed**

And that shows, and for all those people out there who supported the Al-Qaeda and ISIS elements over the years and who lied to people that these were just ordinary Syrians who were standing up against the previous regime—those on the Qatari payroll, the Saudi payroll, the Emirati payroll, Erdogan's payroll, the payroll of Western governments, those who lied about chemical weapons in Syria—the real chemical weapons were used against us and not in Syria. Those were fake attacks, as

people like Aaron Maté and many others have rightly pointed out, and the whistleblowers who went to Syria and saw the discrepancies in the accusations that were made. So yeah, it says a lot about Jolani, who, by the way, tried desperately, as hard as he could, to block the border between Syria and Lebanon so that Iran could not smuggle anything in to support Hezbollah.

So Jolani, the government in Lebanon, the president and the prime minister, the Israeli regime, Trump, all of them collaborated with Western embassies, Western NGOs, and these Arab regimes in the Persian Gulf through their proxies in Lebanon. They all collaborated to strangle the refugees and to strangle the resistance. But anyway, they failed, and history will remember that. But what Hezbollah did and what the resistance did, and what their supporters—which include Sunnis, Shias, Christians, and Druze—the family of the resistance in Lebanon is a big one, and the tent is very broad. But in any case, the Jolani government will fail. I mean, if they attempt anything, missiles will come into his palace, will strike his palace, and drones will destroy his army, and the Iraqi resistance will overthrow him.

So I doubt Jolani will be stupid enough to do such a thing. But the negotiations between Iran and these countries are ongoing, and there has been some progress. And there's been progress with Saudi Arabia. And what all Iran wants is for these countries to distance themselves and not to trust the United States. The United States does not care about them. They've paid the Americans trillions of dollars. They've given trillions of dollars to the Americans. And what happened when they allowed the United States to use their territory against Iran? The United States couldn't protect them, didn't even care to protect them. They were, of course, a partner in this crime.

But they didn't think that the Americans would be so weak, and that the Americans would be so indifferent, and that the Americans would prioritize the life of a single Zionist over the entire population of the Arabian Peninsula. But I think that has made them more realistic. So the Iranians are trying to convince them to change course and to establish a better relationship with Iran, and to strengthen it, which would weaken the Israeli regime. If the region came together and the tensions declined, and countries would be sovereign instead of being proxies of a vampire, it would be to their benefit. It would be to the benefit of their people, and it would be to the detriment of the Israeli regime. But some progress has been made. And as I said, they're not speaking to them collectively. These are one-on-one negotiations going on.

## **#Nima**

I think the reason that many people in the West fail to understand what's going on in the case of Iran is that they see Iran, in the new outcome of the war, as though Iran wants to dominate the region as some sort of imperial force, to invade or impose pressure on others. This is not the attitude. Please clarify that, because it's important to understand that Iran doesn't seek any sort of territorial ambitions or any sort of pressure on their economy in order to achieve something. It's something beyond that. It's something they have to understand. They cannot be used against Iran. They cannot be used, because for such a long time... We had the Iranian leadership 30 years ago, if

I'm not mistaken, arguing that these bases in your country are going to be used against us and to protect Israel, not to protect you. And what is the new calculation on the part of Iran, if there is something new? Because I think the Iranian position was always the same.

## **#Seyed**

Yes, you're absolutely correct. The Iranians do not want tensions with these countries. Iran has no ambitions in these countries. Iran doesn't have a single military base outside of its borders anywhere. You don't see the Iranian flag in Iraq or Yemen or back in the years before in Syria or Lebanon. No, Iran doesn't have any flags anywhere except for in embassies and within Iran's borders. And these very same regimes that assisted the Americans in war against Iran, they also assisted Saddam Hussein in 1980. They gave him hundreds of billions of dollars to kill Iranians. They and the West back then were also helping Iran's enemies.

The West gave Saddam chemical weapons, prevented Iran from even purchasing gas masks, and these countries provided hundreds of billions of dollars in aid. But after Saddam invaded Kuwait, these countries accepted or moved towards rapprochement with Iran, and Iran accepted. And the relationships began to improve quite rapidly, even though they had lots of Iranian blood on their hands back then in an unprovoked war, another unprovoked war. The Americans wanted revenge on Iran, so they encouraged Saddam. They gave him chemical weapons, and the irony is they destroyed Iraq in the name of those very same chemical weapons that they gave to Saddam.

So back then, Iran forgave these regimes. And the Iranians know that ordinary people, even in these countries, supported Iran in the war. We know that. And people across the world know that. That even people in not just Bahrain, but elsewhere, they were cheering on, they were rooting for Iran. I've had messages from people who I've never met from these countries who said, we're on your side. And it's because of the United States. It's because of the U.S. attack. Otherwise, if these countries, these governments move away from the United States, become more, become sovereign... Can you hear me, Nima? I can't hear you. I can hear you. It's okay. Okay, go ahead.

## **#Nima**

Okay.

## **#Seyed**

Because I lost your picture. I thought maybe I was... No. My connection went down. So, if these governments tilt away from the United States, have an independent foreign policy, Iran has no problem with them. Iran has no problem with them having excellent relations with Washington. Excellent relations with—except for with Israel—Iran has no problem with any of that. But they just don't want the Persian Gulf region to be used as a platform to attack Iran, to undermine Iran. That's it. Look at the relationship between Iran and Oman right now. It's excellent. Has Oman done us any

great favors? No. But Oman did not participate in hostility against Iran, so that makes Oman a friend. And all these countries could have that sort of status if they choose to move in a different direction. So no, Iran has no ambitions. Iran does not want to destroy these countries. If Iran's critical infrastructure is destroyed by the United States, Iran will retaliate.

I've said that on multiple occasions. When the Americans were making those threats, I said people should leave these countries immediately. And so it happened. But if these countries move away from the United States and do not allow third parties to use their territory against Iran, not only would the situation get better, it would be much better because the trade and business potential that exists between these countries and Iran and Iraq and Oman, all of these countries together, is enormous. And it would change the balance of power in West Asia. And right now the United States is weaker. I think these countries, if they really wanted to, they could assert their independence from the West if they really wanted to.

## **#Nima**

You know, Donald Trump was asked if the agenda of this attack on Iran was regime change. He said no, that has never been the agenda.

## **#Seyed**

Of course not. Come on. He never meant to overthrow Iran. Unconditional surrender was just a joke. Lay down your arms. He was just joking—obliterating Iran. I mean, he wanted to obliterate Iran. He wanted to take us back to the Stone Age. It wasn't about regime change. It was just about wiping out a civilization.

## **#Nima**

But we know how Israel tried to manipulate Iranian society—what they did in Iran, what they did regarding the Kurds, the Iraqi Kurdistan—they did everything. And it doesn't seem that there would be any sort of change in Israel. Let's assume Benjamin Netanyahu goes away and there's new leadership in Israel; they're going to have the same agenda. Here is what Naftali Bennett said about his agenda regarding Iran.

## **#Seyed**

Be a new government. Hopefully, I'll lead that new government. And I want to tell the Iranian regime from here, the regime, I'm going to be your worst nightmare ever. I won't relent until we free your people and ensure you don't have a nuclear weapon. So you've got no hope. We won't let up on this effort because it's a fight for our freedom, for our security, and for the benefit of the entire Middle East.

## **#Nima**

Yeah, he's talking to the Iranian people.

## **#Seyed**

My heart is hurting. I have chest pain. Well, you know, Naftali Bennett, he's a genocidal monster, just like Netanyahu. I mean, it's a genocidal regime. It's a genocidal population. Israelis are an evil people, according to their own poll, not according to anything anyone else said. They support genocide—the overwhelming majority. It's not like 52%. It's not like 55%. It's not like 60%. It goes way beyond that. So there's no difference. But the Israeli regime has been hit very hard, and it's clear that in any one-on-one exchange with Iran, they're going to be on the losing end.

We've already seen that. And we're about to see it for the third time when Trump basically gave those concessions. But Americans are beginning—ordinary Americans are beginning—to see how they're being manipulated and controlled by the Zionists. That is not good for the regime. And this monster, just a while back, he sort of made this implicit threat that, you know, there could be another 9/11 in the United States. What was that all about? I don't know if you saw that interview.

## **#Nima**

Yeah.

## **#Seyed**

Basically, you know, it seemed more like a threat to me than anything else. I mean, the previous 9/11, I'm particularly, I'm quite certain that the Israelis had a hand in it using al-Qaeda proxies. But in any case, I mean, the dancing guys on the streets of—you know, the Israelis were dancing in New York. But anyway, the point is that the animosity that exists between Iran and the Israeli regime is still very much in place. Nothing has changed. And we will work against them until ethno-supremacism comes to an end.

And we'll continue to support the people of Gaza and the people of the West Bank, and the exiles and the refugees, and those who live in Palestine, or Palestinians who still remain in Palestine as second-class citizens. But we're obviously going to be very careful. This is not over, and it's not just Israel—it's the United States. The United States is not our friend. The U.S. government is our enemy, and it will continue to be our enemy. And that is why the region has to converge, and that is why Iran wants the countries in the region to tilt away from the United States—to create a better future for the region and to weaken the empire. And it's doable, but we'll have to see what happens in the weeks and months ahead.

## **#Nima**

Is the blockade by the United States in the Persian Gulf over? And what is the situation with Iran's control of the Strait of Hormuz?

**#Seyed**

The blockade is over at the moment. The Iranians will only allow certain ships to pass through the Strait. And Iran will continue to control the Strait of Hormuz permanently. And after two months, Iran will begin receiving fees for environmental protection, insurance, safety, and that sort of thing.

**#Nima**

And that's in coordination with Oman, in my opinion, because there were some talks that Iran is going to coordinate with Oman. These two countries basically control the Strait of Hormuz, and we had some sort of arguments that maybe GCC countries are going to have some sort of talks among the countries in the Persian Gulf. What is that?

**#Seyed**

Well, negotiations and cooperation are all fine and good, and that's what Iran is seeking. But if you mean controlling the Strait of Hormuz, no. It's not for them to control. It's Iranian and Omani territorial waters, but Iran is proposing and pushing for greater dialogue with other countries in the Persian Gulf region.

**#Nima**

Which country was the most influential mediator in the talks between Iran and the United States? Was it Pakistan or Qatar? Because recently we've seen Qatar come to Iran twice, talking with Iranians while negotiations or messages were going on.

**#Seyed**

They both played a constructive role, but at the end of the day, Nima, unless there is a will for the United States to solve a problem—for whatever reason, not for benign intentions, but because of their own problems—if there is the will, then there will be progress. If there is no will, nothing that the Qataris or the Pakistanis or anyone else does is going to have any impact. It's only when the Americans recognize that Iran is strong and Iran is not intimidated that they give concessions. And the Iranians are going to continue showing strength when it comes to the United States at the negotiating table, because they only understand strength. They only understand power.

And Iran is not shy about it. I mean, before, Iran was always cautious. Iran was always trying to refrain from escalation. And people like myself, like me, some were very critical. Some people like me, on certain occasions, were critical that they were being too soft. But after the war was imposed

on Iran—not last year's war, this war—the Iranians have become much more assertive. And that is going to remain the case. The enemy has given it its best shot. It did its best to destroy us, and it failed. And so from now on, we know that they don't have anything more up their sleeves. They can continue war. They can kill more Iranians and more Lebanese and more Palestinians.

That's possible, but they can't win. And so the Iranians are going to be much tougher for now because they pushed us into this new situation. The region has changed. The world has changed. The status of the Strait of Hormuz has changed. And Iran will make sure that that is reflected at the negotiating table and in whatever comes from the negotiations. But that doesn't mean that we're going to have a deal. This is just an MOU, and it could crash next week. It could crash next month, and we could reach a stalemate in two months, and we could have war. In weeks and months, everything is possible. Iran is preparing for all those scenarios.

## **#Nima**

Is there any sort of talks or negotiations with the Iraqi government regarding their air defense system or the way they can control their airspace? Because their airspace was used against Iran during the war, and it has been used over and over to attack Iran. What can Iran do to improve that, to reduce the risk of Iraqi airspace being used against Iran?

## **#Seyed**

The Iraqi government has to break the hold that the Americans have over them. Thanks to Saddam Hussein and his stupidity and his perpetual wars against Iran and Kuwait, the Americans were able to invade the country. But also, the Americans have a stranglehold over Iraqi money that comes as a result of the selling of oil. The food-for-oil program and the sanctions that they imposed on Iraq have caused the Iraqis never to be able to gain independence. So whenever the Iraqis do something that the Americans don't like, the Americans put pressure on them by withholding Iraqi money that's in American banks. They withhold it. Iraq cannot just take its money from the United States—the money that it gets from selling oil. It goes through those banks, and the Americans decide how much they get. That's the situation in Iraq. That has to be broken.

And the Iraqis have to think. The problem is that the United States, NATO, the Arab regimes, and Turkey have their people in Iraq, and they're, of course, in the American camp. So whenever the majority in parliament that supports the resistance moves to weaken the U.S. position, all of these groups—the Kurdish groups and other groups that are linked to these countries—they all try to undermine the government. So the West has powerful tools in Iraq to keep this extraordinary colonial hold over the Iraqi people. That has to be dealt with. That's the real issue in Iraq. That is the real problem. And I think ultimately it will be dealt with because the empire is declining, and there will be ways. I mean, the Iraqis have to start selling some of their oil in Iran. They have to start thinking of different ways of doing business because this is not sustainable. Yeah.

## **#Nima**

Just before wrapping up, Professor Marandi, again, I want to come back to the case of Gaza and the West Bank. Without Gaza and the West Bank, you don't have the situation the way it is in Lebanon. We wouldn't have the war against Yemen. We wouldn't have the war against Iran. This is the whole calculation in the region. And we know how this war put... And we wouldn't have had a dirty war in Syria. Yeah, exactly. And this war is, you know, Gaza is the root of all the problems in the region—Gaza, West Bank, and Palestine.

And do you think that the region is going to understand it—GCC countries, Turkey, Iran, Pakistan—because they have to understand that you all can prosper, you can get better, you can improve, or all of you go down together. There is no other way for that, because the war against Iran has shown the GCC countries there is no way to participate or cooperate with the Israelis against Iran and benefit from that. That's the outcome of this war. I would say the same thing for Palestine. They have to do something about Palestine and the West Bank and Gaza all together.

## **#Seyed**

Well, that's... Abdullah and Erdogan and Aliyev and Sisi and the leaders of these regimes in the Persian Gulf were not on the right side of history. If they were not on the wrong side of history, we wouldn't be where we are today. And they are, you know, it's interesting, Iran and Yemen are the two countries that are not really under any direct threat from the Israeli regime. The Greater Israel project includes Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia. It doesn't include Yemen. It doesn't include Iran. It includes Turkey. None of these countries are willing to make a move to do anything against it. They all collaborate. All of these countries collaborate. During the time of genocide, some are smarter, like Erdogan. He speaks a lot and pretends that he's pro-Palestine, but that's just propaganda to feed his supporters who still, in their imagination, think that their government supports Palestine.

But none of them do. But if, as the U.S. empire weakens, I think it will be easier to convince some of these governments, at least for their own self-preservation, to change their policies. Because their populations—the populations of all of these countries—support Palestine. In Turkey, the opposition and its supporters all support Palestine. In Egypt, everyone supports Palestine. In Jordan and elsewhere. So even if they were to take a neutral stance, if these countries, instead of choosing to continue down the road that they have chosen already, or in the past, that they have been going down until now, if they just choose to be neutral, tilt away from the United States, not cooperate with the Israeli regime, the Israeli regime would be badly weakened.

## **#Nima**

Yeah. Thank you so much, Professor Marandi, for being with us today. Great pleasure, as always.

**#Seyed**

Thank you very much for having me, Nima. It's always a pleasure.