

# Israel ignores MOU - Max on the Iran "deal"

Max Blumenthal joins Mario Nawfal to discuss the fallout from Trump's MOU with Iran

## #Mario Nawfal

Max, absolute pleasure to see you again. It's been too long. And before I ask you the first question, actually, you said something before we started going online, and I'm like, we've got to go live immediately because it's a very accurate statement. Can you say it again and maybe expand on it—what you mean by it? I really like that statement.

## #Max

Well, I was asking you how many live streams a day you were doing because you're interviewing like eight people a day, ten people a day, and, you know... I said you're not going to get out of this because we're in a sort of cycle of warfare in which there will be periods of escalation and de-escalation until one side just completely capitulates. It's sort of like a fight to the finish. It's an existential war, and we just hear about these operations, various operations, which are named usually by Israel or the U.S. We had the first joint U.S.-Israeli operation, which I call Operation Epstein Fury.

Others call it Epic Fury. It was a complete failure. Even Wikipedia, which is sort of a NATO narrative management machine, which has... I mean, if you look at The Grayzone page or my page, it's just a collection of distortions, half-truths, smears, and lies. It obviously exists to manage the narrative for one power faction. It has declared that the 2026 Iran war was a victory for Iran and a strategic defeat for the U.S.-Israeli coalition. But when I say one side has to capitulate here, I think in many ways the U.S. has capitulated. The U.S. has its own interests, which are independent from Israel's.

And so really this is a fight between Israel, or I should say Zionism, the ideology underpinning the so-called self-proclaimed Jewish state, which is this borderless, anachronistic entity armed to the teeth, and the resistance—any element that resists it in the region. And so that's where we are, and the U.S. wants to step away. This isn't just Trump or J.D. Vance; it's essentially the U.S. establishment, parts of the U.S. establishment that are not ideologically wedded to Zionism for personal identitarian reasons, wanting to step away because they ran up against the hard rocks of reality.

We can talk about that. I think if you listen to the words that J.D. Vance is using, he's actually saying something in public that U.S. presidents have previously said in private. For example, Bill Clinton storming out of a meeting with Benjamin Netanyahu during the late 1990s, declaring, "Who's the

fucking superpower here?" J.D. Vance is saying this publicly, and he keeps using the word "reality." And that's the operative word in this conversation about the M.O.U. and where the U.S.-Israeli relationship is now, historically. Reality. Reality is normal international relations.

Reality is concern for the state of the global economy. Reality is domestic political considerations for Donald Trump and Republican congressional candidates running in swing districts in the midterms. Reality is American working-class consumers trying to get to work or driving Uber. Reality is something that millions of people from Asia to Africa have been experiencing as the Strait of Hormuz has been closed and they're getting ready for bread riots.

Reality is something that most people—99% of the people in the world, maybe 99.78% of people in the world—have a sort of shared vision about. There's like a baseline reality that they experience, and nations are experiencing this reality through the framework of international relations, whether you interpret it as realpolitik or the realist perspective on IR that John Mearsheimer puts forward, where international relations is determined by clashes and conflicts and relationships between great powers, powerful states, or you interpret it through the, you know, the liberal Brussels transatlanticist perspective on international relations, where a superpower enforces a rules-based order in order to guarantee the growth of liberal democracy and their vision, no matter how you interpret it.

There is a general shared reality that has to represent basic concerns for the global majority, or things just descend into complete chaos. And then there's a group that exists outside that reality, and they are called Zionists. And that small group enjoys an outsized influence in the United States and throughout the West and has been able to impose their influence and, in doing so, impose a Zionist logic on American leadership to the point where they actually compelled Donald Trump to wage a war on Iran—supposedly a joint war with Israel—on February 28th, launching Operation Epic Fury, as they called it, what I call Epstein Fury.

And it completely failed because Zionist logic ran up against the hard rocks of reality—the reality of international relations and just basic global economics. And that failure has now pried a large part of the United States establishment away, or is prying it away, from the grip of the Zionist movement and their institutional Israel lobbying organizations. And that's why we're seeing J.D. Vance making these statements. So now Israel is in an existential fight to continue to impose Zionist logic against the reality that almost everyone in the world exists in, by dragging the United States back into this war.

Because as J.D. Vance correctly said, and Donald Trump said, Israel cannot exist. This anachronistic colonial state cannot exist without United States power backing it to the hilt. And Iran has proven that it's able to defend itself against the most powerful military force ever assembled in history and against the most powerful military force in the region. So what can be done? What can Israel do?

What can they do? That's what we're going to see. And it's going to, I think, accelerate this downward spiral of Zionism and continue to widen the gulf between not just the US public, but elements of the US establishment and Zionism.

## **#Mario Nawfal**

Man, you haven't been on the show for a few weeks, but what a comeback. As you spoke, I came up with a lot of questions, and then you answered a lot of them. For example, I wanted to ask what you meant by existential. You said we're going to see an existential escalation, de-escalation. I think you clarified it's existential to Israeli foreign policy, to Zionism. Is that what you meant? Yes. Yes. Okay. And based on the way you've explained what's happening right now, I think it's very important to get your opinion on this because you've been covering it for so long.

You think the shift we're seeing by Trump and J.D. Vance, the statements they're making—Trump justifying Iran's ballistic missile program, J.D. Vance saying the quiet part out loud, what Bill Clinton said about Israel, Trump, I think, saying Israel wouldn't exist without the U.S., Mike Huckabee said the U.S. wouldn't exist without Israel, and the U.S. ambassador said that—but all these statements, do you think this is a fundamental shift? Are Trump and J.D. Vance and his administration actually breaking away from Israel? Because my last guest was telling me, "Mario, be careful. The rhetoric could be as far as they go, but actions are what matter." And he was a bit skeptical we'll see any change in action.

## **#Max**

Yeah, I don't know if I would be skeptical about this being a fundamental, material shift in U.S. policy. Right now, all we have is rhetoric, but the rhetoric signals something about where the political culture of the United States is. The polling shows that not only do over 90% of Democratic voters under the age of, I think, 45 oppose sending weapons and large amounts of aid to Israel, but that most Republicans under the age of 35 favor that same policy. And there's a new poll—I don't know if it was a Pew poll—it was reported by the Jewish Daily Forward. It shows that, and this is a Jewish Daily Forward headline, you can even pull it up, close to 50% of American Jews under the age of 35 are functionally anti-Zionist. What does that mean?

That close to 50%, or maybe more than 50%—it was like right around the 50% mark—of American Jews under the age of 35 declared their support for a single state in Israel-Palestine, one state where everyone enjoys equal rights under the law. A state sort of like the United States under the Constitution, rather than an ethno-supremacist state, which is what Israel represents and which informs the Zionist ideology. A plurality support, like a fairly large number support, a two-state solution, and only a minority support the solution that Ben Shapiro put forward when he was a young, sort of neocon child actor writing for Town Hall, which was, I think, connected to the Heritage Foundation, when he called for the full ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian population.

So, I mean, you might want to start shifting your rhetoric if you're someone like J.D. Vance and you might want to run for president in 2028. Donald Trump and Marco Rubio have been too cowardly to make the case for the MOU in public. I think they understand that they may actually be planning to sabotage it. They have been subjects of Israeli influence in a much more substantial way than J.D. Vance has, although Vance has capitulated again and again. I don't know what it's like to be vice president, so Vance has to go out there and be the salesman of this MOU. And I think this is the best moment that J.D. Vance has had during a fairly mediocre, lackluster vice presidency. This is like his comeback tour.

The youth like this. And Marco Rubio suddenly looks diminished. After J.D. Vance—remember, he was sent out to Islamabad for the humiliation of Israel calling him and telling him, no, you're not allowed to make a deal—now he's kind of flexing. And this is just the reality of politics in the United States. I mean, we've seen too many images of murdered children. People are starting to understand what Zionist logic really means in practice. And it's something that just doesn't... it can't be accepted by humanity. So the rhetoric has its guide. One of the finest political analysts today, Sean Strickland of the UFC, said it correctly: this rhetoric is tailored for the midterms by Trump.

But that says something positive about our culture. And then you can kind of get the sense from the Israel-firsters who were in Trump's coalition, who are basically astroturfed figures. They're either like these influencers who are getting 7,000 a post or a few hundred a post from Bridges Partners, which is an Israeli organization, a foreign ministry front group that pays influencers, or they're, you know, people like the three Marks—Mark Levin, Mark Thiessen, and Mark Dubowitz—who are the three key Israel-first figures pushing Trump to war with Iran. And they sent Trump into a complete imbroglio, one of the worst military defeats, maybe the worst military defeat the United States has suffered.

I say, period, maybe since like the Civil War, which was just a defeat for the South and a sort of spiritual defeat for the American public because so many Americans killed each other. I left out Vietnam because the economic damage of Vietnam was contained. This was a defeat for the U.S. empire that the U.S. will never recover from, and will ultimately lead to the erosion of the power of the petrodollar. The Strait of Hormuz is still not open. The three Marks helped lead Donald Trump into this, and now they stand exposed. And the sort of MAGA influencers who exist out of their loyalty to Trump and are just there to put forward whatever message Donald Trump wants them to put forward—there's actually a gap between the Israel-firsters and the sort of MAGA loyalist paid influencers right now.

You can see it with Mark Levin attacking Trump and attacking everyone. He's even attacking Israeli opposition figures, like a Jewish American being more Israeli than Yair Lapid. They look crazy. And what they say doesn't make sense to the American public. You're going to see it reflected in these comments—that the commenters are going to say that what I'm saying makes a lot more sense than what Mark Dubowitz was saying last week. I watched that interview you had with him, and he seemed like he was in full panic mode.

And nothing was adding up because his entire vision of what was going to happen in Iran, and everything that he and the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies, his Israeli cutout think tank in Washington, gave to Trump—the blueprint they put forward for this war—it completely failed because it represented Zionist logic. So, you know, why does one Jewish commentator make more sense than the other Jewish commentator? I'm not a Zionist. That's why the commenters are going to be saying, this actually reflects the reality that I live in more than this other guy who's just trying to spin to get Trump back into the war. And here's another problem that Zionists face right now: people just don't want to see more killing.

They don't want to see another Minab school strike—168 people killed, teachers, over 130 schoolgirls on the first day of the war. Zionists had no problem with that. And Pete Hegseth had no problem with that. That was horrifying to everyone. And, you know, they killed female volleyball players in Lamard, Iran, on that same day, testing a new missile for Lockheed Martin. What's happening right now in Lebanon? Four Israeli soldiers were killed yesterday. And how did Israel retaliate? Over 150 airstrikes, killing 48 people and wounding 96, according to Lebanese Ministry of Health statistics right now. That's how they respond. People can't take this anymore. But Zionists want more of it. They're pushing Trump for more of it.

And they're in full panic mode that they won't have this. It's like they're addicted to killing. It's like they see force and bombing apartment buildings as a goal in itself. Even Trump has said Netanyahu would get on the phone with me every day and tell me which apartment buildings to bring down, and I found this a little bit strange. So they stand exposed right now, and the United States public is responding positively to the rhetoric of J.D. Vance. And just one other point: I think if this war had succeeded, obviously we wouldn't be hearing this rhetoric from Vance. Vance would be completely diminished because he was considered one of the restrainers, and Marco Rubio would be out there celebrating Israel.

He'd be joining in with this festival of Israeli hegemony and demanding more killing. Let's send the troops into Tehran. I don't know what they'd be doing right now if this war had somehow succeeded. It was a regime change war. But it failed. And it failed because we have to acknowledge this. It's not that the United States establishment naturally opposes these wars. They're just looking at the failure and the economic consequences and saying, Zionist logic doesn't correspond with ours. We have to acknowledge why it failed. It failed because of the wisdom of figures like Hassan Tehrani Moghaddam and Ali Hajizadeh, who are former IRGC generals who basically designed Iran's strategy. For years, they were preparing for this.

Both are dead. Moghaddam was killed in 2013 while testing a new ballistic missile, and Hajizadeh was killed during the 12-day war. I think on the first day, he was assassinated. What did they do? Moghaddam designed Iran's ballistic missile program. I got a chance to take a look at it a month before the 12-day war last year at Iran's Aerospace Expo Park outside Tehran, and they show the

entire evolution of this ballistic missile program, which is completely legal under international law. They're allowed to do it. It is essential to Iran's deterrence. But they weren't going to be able to get the parts for a sophisticated aircraft the way Israel does. So this is their substitute for an air force.

And it has worked. It gave them the ability to basically remove U.S. bases from the region. I think many of the U.S. bases in the Gulf states will not come back. The ballistic missiles also pruned the Gulf leadership away from this oil protection racket, where they would basically pay to have U.S. bases there to protect their infrastructure. Now they realize there is no protection, and they have to have normal relations with their neighbor, Iran. Hajizadeh designed the Operation True Promise responses to Israeli terrorism and aggression, which ultimately became a response to U.S.-Israeli aggression. And you could see the progression from True Promise 1 to 3 and 4 — how much more sophisticated the targeting became, how much better the coordination between drones and ballistic missiles became, the pacing of the ballistic missiles, how much more clever it was, and then the designing of the missile cities.

These were very controversial in Iran, and you had Iran International and a lot of these Israeli or Saudi or CIA-backed outlets that are designed to kind of promote regime change in Iran. They would always point to the missile cities as this waste of money, that the IRGC was wasting money that could have been used on the Iranian public, or like them giving money to their allies in Hezbollah. The missile cities proved to be durable and resilient. I mean, there was that one smaller missile city in Yazd that just kept getting hammered day after day by U.S. and Israeli bombs, and it kept launching. The launches kept coming. So the missile cities protected the firing capacity.

And then the investment in just a cheap Shahed drone program, which was so effective that the U.S. reverse-engineered the Shahed drone into the Lucas drone. And then finally, the willingness, the ability, and also the small fast boats. We kept hearing, oh, operational success, operational success. The U.S. has destroyed Iran's Navy. And Trump was being told this lie again and again — the Navy's been destroyed. Well, then why were they able to keep the Strait of Hormuz closed? Because the Navy wasn't destroyed. There were naval bases around the Strait of Hormuz that were fortified, kind of like the missile cities, which would allow for launching of drones and these small fast boats. So more wisdom from them, which allowed the Strait of Hormuz to be closed.

And we're still at a point where Iran has more cards to lay on the table. Bab al-Mandeb to the Red Sea could still be closed by Iran and its allies in Yemen. So this is reality. This is the military reality. The U.S. and Israel lost. This isn't the Gulf War anymore where smart bombs and F-15s are going to be able to just demolish some worn-out, post-colonial Arab-Baathist army that's armed by the Soviet Union. This is a more sophisticated beast you're talking about that has mastered asymmetrical warfare. And there's nothing that can be done about that reality. If U.S. force cannot triumph over that reality, then Zionist logic cannot be imposed and it will be discredited. So we have to acknowledge the military reality along with the political one.

**#Mario Nawfal**

So how does the regional reality look like now? Um, I made a post a few weeks ago that for regional peace to exist, Iran has to recognize Israel's right to exist, and Israel has to stop their foreign policy approach to regime change in Iran. Both have to change their approach to one another. But my question is broader than that. What about Hezbollah? I don't think – I don't like Hezbollah. I think we've had a discussion before. But I think – but I've agreed – I was born there. But I've agreed – I understand reality.

Now my position is Hezbollah will be there to stay. I think as long as Ayatollah Khamenei wants Hezbollah to remain, it will remain. I don't think a military solution is the right solution. It has to be diplomatic. But what happens to Hezbollah? What happens in Syria? What happens to the Gulf? There's talk about an alliance between Turkey, Qatar, Saudi, Egypt, Pakistan, and maybe even Iran. What does the UAE do? The UAE has already improved relations again with Iran. There have been multiple visits. So how does the region look like post this war?

### **#Max**

You said that Iran has to recognize Israel's right to exist. And I think that's a key point. I mean, a right to exist is what? Because the Palestine Liberation Organization under Yasser Arafat in 1988 recognized Israel's right to exist. Did you know that? What does that mean? Right to exist is what?

### **#Mario Nawfal**

I'll just clarify it very quickly. I know that's kind of a vague term that people throw around. Tucker did a great job questioning what that term even means. I think it's—I'll rephrase it to: Iran has to change its approach to Israel. Stop talking about wiping out the Israeli state. They can disagree with Israeli foreign policy. They can clash when it comes to Palestinian issues, Hezbollah. But I think there has to be improved relations for the sake of Lebanon, for the sake of Syria, for the sake of Yemen. But then it comes down to the Palestine issue, which I have no idea how we can solve. So that could be the core issue. And without solving that, everything else won't be solved either. So that's kind of—I'm countering my own point.

### **#Max**

Okay, well, this speaks to the point that I've been making throughout this entire conversation. What does Israel's right to exist mean, and what does Iran have to accept? I think Iran would accept an Israel that would not be aggressive, right? I think Iran would accept an Israel that went along with the Arab Peace Initiative of 2002, put forward by, I think, King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia. And it was introduced through Thomas Friedman's column at the New York Times. Not a particularly radical proposal for a Palestinian state. That's what Saudi Arabia still demands as a condition of normalization. They can't have it. Nobody can have that. Palestinians certainly can't have that.

Why not? Zionist logic. We have to interrogate Zionism to understand one of the central crises of humanity today, which is that there's this tiny little nation that exists outside the realm of international law, normal international relations, and basic human decency and morality because it is an officially ethno-supremacist state which must be, in order to maintain its national identity, a so-called Jewish state, although it can't exactly define what Jewish is. It feels like Mike Huckabee, this Christian evangelical, gets treated like a better Jew than I would by the Israeli Interior Ministry that might not even let me in. I don't even know if that guy had a bris.

Definitely didn't have a bar mitzvah, but he had a meeting with Israeli spymaster Jonathan Pollard. So that means that Israel has to violently, demographically engineer this reality by maintaining itself as a borderless, colonialist entity that is constantly expanding settlements to establish Lebensraum. And it's moving into Syria, into the Golan. It has now established a long-term presence in southern Lebanon. And it does have expansionist intentions there. It is annexing parts of the West Bank de facto through settler terror and military presence. And Netanyahu has boasted that he has taken 60% of the Gaza Strip, which is now just mostly destroyed and is effectively a death camp, and that he will take more and move to 70%.

That corresponds directly with Netanyahu's own expression of Zionist logic, in which Israel cannot exist as a Jewish state unless there are 70% Jews and 30% non-Jews, i.e., indigenous Palestinians, on any piece of land. And if Palestinians maintain more of their population on that land, then it cannot be part of the Jewish state. That's a mandate for ethnic cleansing, and it corresponds directly with what Israel is doing with the yellow line in the Gaza Strip. So this is why no one can recognize Israel in the region, and why Israel is in this permanent state of war because of the anachronistic character of how it defines itself as a state.

It cannot be a state of all its citizens or all its people. And so that's also why you have Hezbollah. You think, what? Hezbollah? They're like this group of Shia ideologues who exist just to destroy Israel and fight Israel. No. Why was Israel in Lebanon in the 1980s? Why did it invade Lebanon? It was supposedly to push back not Hezbollah, not the Shia population, but the Palestine Liberation Organization, the PLO, who were composed of refugees in Lebanon who had been pushed out of what was Palestine from 1948 on. There was a massive wave of refugees in 1967 as well, in order to establish the so-called Jewish state.

There wouldn't have been refugees in Lebanon. Lebanon wouldn't be in this crisis had Israel not been established along the guidelines of Zionism and ethno-supremacism. So Israel goes in, brings its military into Lebanon, and they initially were told that the Shia population would support them and throw candy at them. But they couldn't resist abusing the Shia population in the south and abusing the Lebanese population in general as they quickly marched to Beirut, caused massive war crimes, formed alliances with the most odious elements, the Lebanese Falange, which carried out the Sabra and Shatila massacre with Israeli guidance, and so on.

So Hezbollah was created to defend Lebanon's population, and particularly the Shia population of the south, against this force that actually aimed to essentially occupy Lebanon, either by proxy through the South Lebanese Army or through the Lebanese Falange, which the Lebanese Forces today remain an ally of Israel, and to push that population out. So Hezbollah exists to defend Lebanon against this aggressive force. Hezbollah would not have existed if Israel had not established itself as an exclusively Jewish state. So that's my point. Hezbollah is a reflection of the toxic effect of Zionist logic on the region. And you say, oh, well, what can we do about them? You don't like them. There's a reality there, a political reality, Mario, that you have to recognize, which is that Hezbollah is the largest parliamentary faction in Lebanon.

And that this war that Israel's waging is also an excuse for Joseph Aoun and Samir Geagea and all of these corrupt forces that have no clear mandate to rule to actually remove the largest parliamentary faction, their enemy, by proxy through Israeli force because they can't do it by politics alone. They can't do it with the consent of the Lebanese public. And in order to do that, what else do they have to do? Something that is absolutely criminal, that is not being sufficiently condemned, which is the ethnic cleansing of the Shia population of Lebanese citizens in the south. They're being ethnically cleansed. It's a war on the Shia community because Hezbollah can't be defeated on the battlefield or at the ballot box.

## **#Mario Nawfal**

The Hezbollah issue is really tricky. So I had a great conversation with Yaakov earlier today — first time we spoke — from the Jerusalem Post.

## **#Max**

And then Yaakov cuts.

## **#Mario Nawfal**

And he was actually really good at explaining things, because I struggled to understand how Israel could have people like Smotrich, Katz, and Ben-Gvir in their government making such statements. You don't see that in any other country in the civilized world. And just trying to understand really how Israelis see what's happening in Lebanon, what's happening in... We didn't talk about Palestine because that's a whole other episode by itself, but mainly focused on Lebanon and Iran. And he started to explain to me the Hezbollah situation. Hezbollah does act, and the reason I'm not a fan of Hezbollah... I understand reality. Also, the Lebanese government has voted to disarm Hezbollah. I understand the reality.

There's also the fact that there is no state that could really flourish when it has a state within a state. Now, the counter-argument to that is there should be a deterrent for Israeli aggression, and the Lebanese military is too weak, which is a very valid point as well. The Lebanese military needs to

be empowered and needs to be armed. And then there's the chicken-and-egg problem. If we disarm Hezbollah... do you really trust Israeli intent, especially when you see them level villages in southern Lebanon? And the Israelis are like, if we pull out of southern Lebanon, and there's a new resolution for Hezbollah to pull out of southern Lebanon as well, to have a buffer zone where the Lebanese could go back home, despite what stupid quotes are saying.

The Lebanese people can go back home, but Hezbollah does not return to Israel's border. Israel does see Hezbollah as a threat, and rightly so. So what people in Israel say, Mario, is how do we know this resolution will be applied? Because last time we trusted it to be applied, Hezbollah did return to the south. So my question to you is, what is a logical solution to that problem there? Because again, I don't think disarming Hezbollah is a solution in the short term. Iran would not allow that to happen. So then what is another option? How do you achieve what the Israelis want for their own security, what the Lebanese want by getting their land back, and what Iran wants, which is keeping Hezbollah?

## **#Max**

Well, that's a Zionist solution. I mean, it's not a legitimate solution. The legitimate solution is that Israel should be disarmed. The IDF should be disarmed. They're the aggressor in the region. The United States should suspend weapons to Israel and then begin a process of peace and reconciliation where the ethno-supremacist apartheid system is peacefully dismantled. That's the solution. We're just not allowed to talk about it. You get called an anti-Semite if you talk about it. The solution isn't to ethnically cleanse the Lebanese population or to disarm those who are defending themselves against the country that has invaded them again and again and again.

And this whole proposal, by the way, was cooked up by the U.S., by the Pentagon and the CIA, and Saudi Arabia to push Lebanon into civil war once again. There's just no force internally that can do it. The Lebanese army is basically a neocolonial joke that was set up by the United States to not defend Lebanon's borders against the main force that's constantly invading it — the United States. And it looks as if Joseph Aoun has greenlit some Israeli assassinations of Lebanese army commanders because they weren't interested in going to war with fellow Lebanese citizens who happened to be Shia living in the south.

So I'm not going to go along with some, you know, Zionist solution about how we can guarantee the security of an ethno-supremacist state that is illegally occupying 70% of the Gaza Strip, most of the occupied West Bank, and the Golan Heights, and then is responsible for genocide in which over 20,000 children have been killed since October 7th, which is continuing to push an eight-front war in which the eighth front is the United States. And according to the Defense Intelligence Agency of the Pentagon, Israeli spying on American officials and Americans is now at a critical level. I'm supposed to be concerned with their security? No, I'm concerned for the security of the one million people who have been ethnically cleansed in southern Lebanon who can't come back.

Go back to their homes. These homes are being destroyed. Hezbollah's not going into Israel and blowing up entire villages with D9 operators getting paid per house that they destroy. That's what Israel's doing. It's doing it in broad daylight. It's proud of the fact that last night it massacred 50 civilians. It's proud of the triple and quadruple-tap strikes it wages on first responders in southern Lebanon because it puts them on the IDF's X account. It's proud of that. Hezbollah's not doing that. They're showing footage of themselves hitting Israeli soldiers. How many Israeli civilians have been killed versus Israeli soldiers?

How many Lebanese civilians have been killed? Close to 4,000, since Israel began this assault after violating the ceasefire over a thousand times. Between November 2024 and March of this year, Hezbollah wasn't violating the ceasefire. Israel was. Israel's violating the ceasefire in Gaza every day. Every day. They don't care about a ceasefire. Their presence in Lebanon is now a violation of the MOU. So let's talk first about the security issues. And there won't need to be a Hezbollah or an IRGC ballistic missile program or Iran having nuclear breakout capacity if you don't have this nuclearized ethno-supremacist state existing along apartheid lines.

So let's start that discussion. And let's also just consider what happened to Iran. I mean, put yourself in Joseph Aoun's shoes, as if this guy has some real popular mandate, as if the Lebanese public wants to normalize with Israel. Poll the Lebanese public on normalization with Israel, including the Sunni public. They're not down with that. What would happen to Joseph Aoun if he resisted this whole program of assaulting and ethnically cleansing the Shia community and disarming Hezbollah with some imaginary force? Consider what happened to Saad Hariri in 2017 when Mohammed bin Salman got worried that Hariri didn't want to confront Iran.

He wasn't interested in this confrontation that Aoun is playing out right now. They brought him to Saudi Arabia, and they basically tortured him like Suge Knight hung Vanilla Ice over a balcony by his ankles. It was like that. And they humiliated him on national TV and then sent him back. And they were like, you're our bitch. So the idea that Hezbollah is this Iranian force that doesn't represent anything and is a state within a state, and then the government in Beirut, the authorities, that they're not controlled by some outside force, is a complete fantasy. Joseph Aoun's mandate is not to the Lebanese public.

It's to Saudi Arabia and the CIA. And same with Nawaf Salam. That guy doesn't even have a party, the prime minister. Who is he? What constituent base does he have? He was at the ICJ basically doing nothing about Israel's genocide charges, and then suddenly he's just shifted into this position as Lebanese PM. He's a technocrat. So let's stop operating along—let's not have to—we don't have to view the world through the lens of Israeli defense establishment stenographer Yaakov Katz. Let's look at it through the perspective of the people on the front lines of this war of ethnic cleansing and give them security first.

**#Mario Nawfal**

So I don't disagree with you. So that's my stance after I saw the villages being leveled in southern Lebanon. I'm like, asking Hezbollah to disarm when Israel is committing what it's committing in southern Lebanon is no longer a logical solution, because there's no more deterrent against what seems to be a lot more sinister ambitions on the Israeli side. Leveling villages is not getting rid of Hezbollah. So that's the argument I was making earlier today. Just to understand your position, if Israel pulls out of South Lebanon and Hezbollah pulls out of South Lebanon, and there's a ceasefire, and South Lebanon will have no Hezbollah presence whatsoever, do you think that's a pragmatic step forward for peace in the region or between those two countries?

## **#Max**

That's the thing. Israel will not pull out unless there is a massive Hezbollah presence, because the apartheid state of Israel only understands force. We have to look at the West Bank as an example. From 2005 through 2007, Israel was engaged in this process of sort of mopping up the Second Intifada, which guaranteed Palestinians control over the Gaza Strip without settler presence. And they gained that through force. That was how they got the Israeli settlers out of the Gaza Strip. Hamas did it. Fatah did have the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade participating on some level in the Second Intifada.

And it's much harder for them to—it was much harder to wage a kind of guerrilla campaign in the West Bank because of the deeply embedded presence of Israeli military bases and settlements, the terrain, etc. But by 2007, there was this sort of Dayton plan, General Keith Dayton counterinsurgency plan. The final iterations of Palestinian resistance were destroyed in the Balata refugee camp in Nablus by the Palestinian Authority. The Palestinian Authority security forces trained by Keith Dayton and DynCorp, this mercenary firm, and Tony Blair was hanging out at the American Colony Hotel milking the so-called peace process.

Mahmoud Abbas comes in and promises some kind of economic peace with Israel. He gets what I would call the golden occupation, or the five-star occupation. He gets Ramallah and Area A, these cities in the West Bank where it feels like you're in the Arab world and you don't usually have Israeli soldiers all the time. But once you get out of there, you're surrounded by, for example, this massive Qalandia checkpoint. There are settlers. Settlements continue to expand. Israel deepens its control over the West Bank, steals all the water in the Jordan Valley. And if Palestinians resist or throw rocks, they are arrested, they are tortured, they are shot if they do anything more.

And the Palestinian Authority has to arrest Palestinians during the day, and then the IDF comes at night and breaks down doors, arresting children in their beds in villages like Nabi Saleh or Bil'in or Na'alim, which tried to mount an unarmed resistance against the apartheid wall that cut deep into the West Bank. This giant wall—it wasn't built along the '67 borders. So why am I giving you this whole history and telling you what I've personally witnessed in the West Bank? That's what will

happen to southern Lebanon if there is no Hezbollah. That's what will happen if Joseph Aoun's plan goes forward, which is basically the Israeli and U.S. plan for Lebanon. That's what will happen with normalization.

And that Shia population of Lebanon, which has elected the largest parliamentary bloc in Lebanon, will start to become homeless, and they will become permanently ethnically cleansed. And so it's up to this so-called international community, which allowed the Holocaust of our time to just occur in Gaza. It's up to them to try to prevent that. And they won't do it. That's why Hezbollah exists. Someone has to step into the breach and control this monster in Tel Aviv. So that's my point. No Hezbollah, then South Lebanon becomes de facto the West Bank. No Assad in Syria with his allies in the IRGC and so on. Look at what happened to the Golan in Syria under Jolani, a.k.a. al-Jolani. Israel is just there. They're skiing on Mount Hermon, the highest point in Syria.

## **#Mario Nawfal**

Yeah. Now, I'm very critical of Israeli foreign policy in Syria, and that was a question I asked Katz earlier today, the journalist. And he agreed. He said, Mario, our policy should be to give Syria a chance to pull out of Syria and try to improve relations with al-Sharaa. So that was his position. So I think we'd all agree that's the right position with Syria. And with Lebanon, I agree with you. I'm just saying the solution—there has to be a pragmatic solution. When you say something like disarming the state of Israel—actually, I'll ask you the question. One of my guests asked me the question, so I'll ask you the same question. What do you think—hold on—FDD's CEO asked you that question. What do you think would happen to Israel if it is disarmed right now?

## **#Max**

Well, it depends on how it's done. I mean, first of all, why don't we have a global summit on Israel's nuclear program and a national campaign against a nuclear Israel? Why was there a massive campaign against a nuclear Iran?

## **#Mario Nawfal**

I agree.

## **#Max**

Obviously run by Israel's cutouts in the U.S., like this guy Jason Brodsky, who's just like an Israeli operative posing as this American guy. Why? Iran didn't even have an active nuclear program. We can't talk about Israel's nuclear weapons when it's just... when clearly it's the one that can't be trusted with nuclear weapons. Was anyone fearing over the last several months that Iran was going to deploy, for example, a tactical nuclear weapon or had done so?

## **#Mario Nawfal**

No. Everyone on my show, I would ask them that question throughout the war. The most common answer—the people that were worried—they were worried about Israel deploying a nuke on Iran. But that's also because Iran did not have a nuke. So let's just be fair here.

## **#Max**

So it's not my job in my position. It never has been. I defined my job for myself, which was to put forward ideas that I thought were logical and sane and moral and ethical, and that might not align with the current consensus, which accepts genocide, which accepts occupation, which accepts permanent war and profits from it, and accepts insider trading on war. I'm putting forward a different idea that might infuriate Zionists right now and seem insane, but it's the same idea that led to the dismantlement of South African apartheid—which, I mean, I've had some serious problems with how that was done, including by the African National Congress—but it led to that. These are the same ideas that influenced the dismantlement of the English occupation, the British occupation of Northern Ireland, and a kind of cold peace in Northern Ireland.

And we have to put forward these ideas because this is the only way out of this crisis, which is one of the central crises afflicting humanity, and not operate along the cold, dead, zombified path—logic, I would say, poisonous, toxic, cancerous logic—of Zionism, which is put forward by pretty much everyone aligned with Israel. And I've been putting forward these concepts ever since I started speaking out about this issue in 2009. It got me run out of a lot of jobs in journalism and led me to kind of go independent with The Grayzone. And obviously, these ideas are falling on fertile soil because we're pretty popular at The Grayzone, and a lot of those places that ran me out, like The Nation magazine, for example—I mean, who even reads that anymore? I never heard of it.

## **#Mario Nawfal**

But isn't there another solution away from that extreme? The status quo is unacceptable. Things in the region, the way Israel conducts its foreign policy, I'm staunchly against. The other extreme of disarming Israel, I find it also to be just not practical. Wouldn't there be a middle ground where, for example, the U.S., as we're seeing right now—hopefully action follows—the U.S. and the international community genuinely start to pressure Israel? Because when you remove that kind of bubble of impunity that we've offered Israel, then Israel has to find a different solution to Iran, to Hezbollah, to Syria, rather than trying to deal with everything through military force.

## **#Max**

Well, Israel's not going to disarm. Look at Itamar Ben-Gvir, the security minister, who said we have to kill thousands of Lebanese mothers for every Israeli soldier killed. That's the linchpin of Netanyahu's coalition. And he's going to be in New York on July 7th for a United Nations conference

called, I think, like Investing in Peace or Enforcing Peace. And it's a conference of police chiefs. Ben-Gvir will, and he needs to be held accountable for that. He's personally responsible for the torture and murder and rape of thousands of Palestinian prisoners. He recently put himself on video torturing and abusing humanitarian flotilla activists who are the heroes of our time.

He's proud of torture. He's a torture fetishist. And he is the Nazi of the 21st century. And he's coming to New York. But he represents the id. He's like the soul of the Israeli government right now. He's like their true spokesman. And his party, Otzma Yehudit, they're gaining a lot of popularity among Jewish-Israeli youth. So yeah, they're not going to give up their weapons. They're not going to end the genocide in Gaza if we keep giving them tons of aid. I think there's a nice way to go about it, where the United States, we start electing leadership that will just end all aid to Israel until they start to act like human beings instead of barbarian child killers and torture fetishists and, you know... rapists by canine proxy.

But, you know, there's a nice way to do that. And we should support those kinds of leaders. And we should not vote for those who propose giving one penny, even though I guess the Fed, the Treasury, isn't printing pennies anymore — so one nickel to Israel. And, you know, when we talk about responsibility to protect, this doctrine that the United States used, for example, to destroy Yugoslavia, it was enacted to bomb Syria, including on the basis of obvious deceptions like the one in Douma. We always hear about it. It's just basically a ruse to attack countries that are official enemies. We have a responsibility to protect the Palestinians.

With military force, if Israel continues with this genocidal policy in which they've now established cranes and towers to fire into the tents of people whose homes were bombed in the Gaza Strip. A journalist from Gaza just sent me some photos and video of a tournament he just filmed. His name is Mohammed El Saif, a great journalist on the ground, of girl amputees — 12-year-old girls who are amputees — who are having a sports tournament of amputees. That's the reality that these people live in. They are the Holocaust victims of our time, and we have a responsibility to protect them.

And we need to support candidates in the United States who also would be willing to use the U.S. military to protect that population. That's something that might seem absurd, but there was actually a proposal similar to that put forward by the Colombian President Gustavo Petro at the UN last year to intervene on behalf of the genocide victims in Gaza. There was just no force willing to do it. But that doesn't mean we can't change the politics here and actually elect candidates that are willing to do that if Israel refuses to disarm its Holocaust regime. It might not be now, but people might look at this interview in 50 years and say, well, yeah, he called it.

## **#Mario Nawfal**

The last thing I want to ask you—and I wanted to ask you this early on, glad I didn't forget—there's something that, so Tucker, in the last week alone, Tucker mentioned it to me, Marjorie Taylor Greene and Joe Kent all talked about or mentioned they were concerned about the president

possibly being under duress. And they all linked it to—I asked them the question, especially Marjorie—when she started seeing that shift, and they all pointed to Butler, the assassination attempt. I've never asked you that question. I've never heard you talk about it. Do you think there could be any truth to it, that the president could feel threatened—whether himself, his family, whether it's his life, or something less sinister, maybe legal threats, economic threats, or just political threats?

Is that a possibility in what's guiding his decisions? Because the Iran war is just such a stupid war. You were talking earlier about how the Strait of Hormuz, the Iranians succeeded with the Strait of Hormuz, with their underground missile facilities. But everyone knew that. Everyone knew about their missile facilities deep underground. With U.S. intelligence, I'm sure they knew how deep it was. Everyone knew Iran would close the Strait of Hormuz. They could easily strike Gulf infrastructure. So you didn't need to be an intelligence analyst to come to these conclusions. So then it begs the question, why the hell did Trump do this? That's why I've been giving that theory a lot more thought recently.

**#Max**

Well, I have talked about this a lot, and I've written about it a lot. And if anyone's interested, The Grayzone, under my byline, I published an investigation called "How Israel and the FBI Manipulated Assassination Plots to Goad Trump into Iran War." And this was published on March 6th, so anyone can look it up.

**#Mario Nawfal**

Can you retweet it if there's a tweet about it? And I'll retweet it as well so people can easily spot it.

**#Max**

Yeah, I'll just send it to you in the chat.

**#Mario Nawfal**

On WhatsApp. Yeah, send it to me on WhatsApp if you can, and I'll just retweet it for the audience.

**#Max**

All right. I'm just looking you up real quick. All right, here it is. So, yeah, I mean, this was an investigation I did into the case of someone named Asif Merchant. And there are several other cases, but basically into all of these supposed terrorism cases, which were spun as Iranian assassination attempts against Donald Trump directed by the IRGC. And remember, on February 28th, 2026, when Donald Trump launched Operation, quote-unquote, Epic Fury, and assassinated Iran's Ayatollah Ali

Khamenei, he said, "I got him before he got me." Trump was really excited about this. It's because he was told by the Israelis that the Israelis did this. And then Hegseth went out and said, we also killed an IRGC operative who directed several attempts against Donald Trump. And what was that based on? What was that comment based on?

It was based on several plots that never would have reached their conclusion, which were never serious, which were always being monitored by FBI undercover operatives and informants, in many ways guided by FBI agents. Prior to that, they were being directed by Israeli intelligence, specifically this plot of a Pakistani national named Asif Merchant, who was just convicted of a very nebulous assassination plot, which Trump was told were Iranian plots against him. And it got to the point where, during Donald Trump's campaign for president, he was flying on a ghost plane to campaign stops. He basically sent his staff on Trump Force One, and he was riding on Steve Witkoff's private jet because he was told, completely falsely, based on the shadiest information, that IRGC operatives were in the United States and were planning to take Donald Trump out with anti-aircraft weapons.

## **#Mario Nawfal**

This was fake.

## **#Max**

It was basically fake, and Trump was being manipulated. But there were real plots. I mean, there were real assassination attempts on Donald Trump, more real than attempts on any president since Ronald Reagan, since John Hinckley shot Ronald Reagan. And these are weird attempts. Like Butler... It was weird. Everybody could just feel that. It was unusual that this unknown man, who we were initially told had no online footprint, Thomas Matthew Crooks, was able to scale a roof after testing a drone at the Butler Fairgrounds and then fire several shots before a heroic local cop shot him as the Secret Service basically froze. There weren't immediate firings at the Secret Service, and he nicked Trump's ear, according to the official account.

There was Ryan Routh, you know, he was able to get close to Mar-a-Lago with a rifle. This guy had this shady background of training American and foreign volunteers for the international battalion in Ukraine. And then the assassination attempt on Charlie Kirk clearly shook Donald Trump. But with the Butler plot, there was no clear evidence pointing to Iran at all. But that didn't bother Mike Waltz. Mike Waltz was at the time a member of Congress, was very pro-Trump, was in Trump's bullpen in Congress, and was someone whose career had been cultivated by the Israel lobby. He's one of the largest recipients in the House of Representatives of AIPAC money. AIPAC helped recruit him. And after Congress, he went into the Trump administration. He was initially NSC director until Signalgate on Yemen.

Now he's the UN ambassador. But he was on the committee to investigate Butler, and he kept trying to guide the committee into this weird rabbit hole in which Butler was actually an Iranian plot. It's so

strange. Now, what if Butler had succeeded, right? And Trump had actually been assassinated on that day? And Mike Waltz was pushing this Iran narrative. And who was standing next in line in the Republican Party? It was Nikki Haley, who was one of the biggest Iran hawks and neocon fanatics ever in the Republican Party today. And she would have potentially filled Donald Trump's shoes as the nominee and launched a war on Iran right then, blaming Iran for killing Donald Trump. I mean, that was a possibility. There's a great book right now by Ken Silva.

## **#Mario Nawfal**

I was chatting with him a few days ago. He knows so much about the damn assassination. He knows the weather, the temperature at the time. But yeah, he's got an incredible book.

## **#Max**

He's the expert, and he's also not like a conspiracy theorist. He's a conspiracy analyst, or he only deals with conspiracy facts. So he's actually poured cold water on some of the sillier assassination conspiracy theories. They're very serious theories. He's a reporter and analyst, and you know, I consulted him on my investigation. But the overall point I'm making is that there's clear evidence, there's a clear record of Trump being placed under duress through real assassination plots, where they've been spun into an imaginary Iranian plot, or a more dubious Iranian plan, to avenge the death of Qasem Soleimani by killing Donald Trump.

And Trump believed that up until February 28th. I don't know what he believes now or if he believes that Israel will seek to eliminate him, but I do know from several sources who've talked to Donald Trump recently and been around him that he's not fond of Netanyahu, that he's very wary of Netanyahu, and that he feels a deep sense of unease and is aware of the ability of these Israel-directed forces to harm him. But when I say harm him, I mean it's more like he may fear that they could harm him politically, or Miriam Adelson could pull the plug on Trump's financial feeding tube. There are many areas of leverage that they have short of actually physically harming Trump.

## **#Mario Nawfal**

Her publication, Israel Hayom, put out a piece calling him—I think they called Trump a traitor today.

## **#Max**

Yeah, and assassination is in their wheelhouse. They have an entire division of the Mossad dedicated to assassination, and that's why I think many people believe that Charlie Kirk was assassinated by Israel, even though I've found no evidence of that. I didn't deny it twice. I was reading another piece in the Jerusalem Post in which they sort of imagined Joseph Aoun, the president of Lebanon, being assassinated by Hezbollah, and then they said if that happens, then the US will have to go back to war with Iran. So that would make me get conspiratorial a little bit.

## **#Mario Nawfal**

Yeah, exactly, exactly. I wouldn't expect Israel to kill Joseph Aoun or the Americans. And by the way, I support what he's trying to do. Or he's skeptical, but I support it. But anyway, yeah, when I see a story like this, I don't disagree with your skepticism. Max, welcome back. Don't leave us for too long again. It's good to chat with you again. Give us your overview on things. Love the analysis, and I'd love to do this again soon. I appreciate your time.

## **#Max**

Thanks a lot, Mario. Thanks, Max.

## **#Mario Nawfal**

All right, guys. I'll be going live again in a few seconds with Brendan Weichert. Then we have Trita Parsi right after. We have an incredible lineup today. Let me see who else we have. Trita Parsi, Brendan Weichert, Glenn Diesen, Alex Jones, Malcolm Nance, Larry Johnson, and Jack Farley. So they're all scheduled for today. And the last two interviews you should check out: Professor Izadi from Iran and Yaakov Katz from the Jerusalem Post. Both great discussions that I really enjoyed. So we've got a lot of interviews left for the day. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven. It's going to be a long day, an incredible lineup. I hope you enjoyed the conversation with Max Blumenthal as much as I did. He's been covering this longer than most people I speak to, so he's always a good person to listen to. I'll see you guys in a couple of minutes with Brendan Weichert. Bye.