

YOU Aare Next: Zionism Expanding Into Europe | Amira Berzi & Ali Abunimah

The Zionists are losing BIG TIME. And one of the battles going completely wrong is unfolding in idyllic little Switzerland. Today I'm talking to Ali Abunimah, founder of The Electronic Intifada, and Amira Berzi to discuss Ali's 2025 arrest and deportation from Switzerland. Luckily, recent court rulings found the actions unlawful, which is very important for the wider concerns for free speech and public accountability. Mainstream media's silence about the case speaks for itself but goes seamlessly together with pressure around Pro-Palestine demonstrations across the West. Support Ali Abunimah here: The Electronic Intifada: <https://electronicintifada.net> Neutrality Studies substack: <https://pascallottaz.substack.com> Our Merch: <https://neutralitystudies.com/shop> Donation: <https://neutralitystudies.com/donate> Timestamps: 00:00:00 Introduction 00:00:50 Ali's arrest in Zurich 00:03:47 Legal wins and pending cases 00:08:06 Accountability in Switzerland 00:11:35 FedPol, Zurich, and immunity 00:15:51 Free speech and public rights 00:19:12 Israel, elites, and repression 00:26:03 Swiss media and public silence 00:31:45 Lessons from fighting back

#Pascal

Welcome back, everybody, to Neutrality Studies. Today again live, because we are here in beautiful Zurich, and I've got with me the one and only Ali Abunimah, the founder of the Electronic Intifada, and also Amira Bersi, who had quite an experience last year in January here in Switzerland. Many of you will know that Ali was back then arrested by the Swiss Federal Police, and we have some updates today. Maybe we can start with Ali. Can you give us a short rundown of what happened to you back in January? Make the gist of it.

#Ali Abunimah

Thanks, Pascal. And what a great pleasure to meet you in person. I had the chance to be on your channel before, and I'm a huge admirer of your work. So thank you for talking to us today. What happened in January 2025 is I was invited to Zurich by a group called Watermelon University to hold public events about the genocide in Gaza, which is and was of concern to people in Switzerland, as it is around the rest of the world. And I was very excited to do that because Zurich has a great and very active activist community.

But what happened, very shockingly, is after I entered Switzerland and while I was on my way to the venue — actually not the original venue, but a substitute venue because the original venue was canceled — I was effectively abducted by undercover or plainclothes police, pushed into a car, and taken to prison for three days, then forcibly expelled from the country with the purpose of preventing our public events on and about the situation in Palestine. And since then, we have, of

course, pursued the matter legally, but we can talk more about that unless you want me to elaborate more on what happened.

#Pascal

No, I would just like also, Amira, your take, because you actually saw what happened, right? Can you just quickly describe to us how this whole scene went down back in Zurich, January 2025, right? Yes.

#Amira Berzi

It was definitely a shock. I didn't know a lot about Ali. I had met him the evening before, very, very briefly. I was on my way to the venue and was actually perhaps a few minutes late. I was crossing the street when I saw three men, from what I could see, attack a pedestrian. I thought this was like a gang, like a mob robbing someone. By the time I crossed the street, I recognized that it was Ali. I saw them push him against the wall, then drag him across the street into a car and drive away.

#Pascal

So, like a really bad Hollywood movie, right? And the thing is, these people then kept you in prison. And in the last interview that we did on my channel, you explained the entire affair — also in prison — like what happened to you there and then how you were whisked away. This turns out to have been highly illegal, right? I mean, you've pressed charges against the people who did this to you, and so far you've been winning in the first round of this. Can you tell us where we stand with the case by now?

#Ali Abunimah

Yes, we filed a number of legal cases, which include administrative challenges and criminal complaints. And I know much too much now about the Swiss legal system, much more than I ever expected or wanted to know. But there were several aspects, because I was arrested, I was detained in prison, and also the FedPol, which is, I guess, like the Swiss FBI, you could say, the Swiss federal police, issued an entry ban and an expulsion order. So you have four elements there: arrest, detention, entry ban, and expulsion. And we challenged each of those. And in the Zurich Administrative Court, we challenged the arrest and detention, the fact that I was kept in prison.

And there we had a favorable ruling that the arrest and detention were unlawful, unconstitutional, and in violation of the European Convention on Human Rights, and that I was never given—there was no legal basis whatsoever for my detention. Also, we challenged the entry ban and the expulsion order in the Federal Administrative Court, and we succeeded there as well. The Federal Administrative Court ruled that there were severe violations of my due process rights, and ultimately, FedPol had to make a new decision, a retroactive decision. And in brief, the result of that is that the

entry ban and the expulsion order were ruled to be unlawful. And in addition to those legal cases, I filed criminal complaints against several individuals. And that's part of why I'm in prison in Switzerland now.

I'm not going to say more about those cases now because they're still in process. But I have also filed, and I did announce this before, a criminal complaint against Nicoletta Della Valle, who was the director of FedPol at the time. She no longer is, and that case is still pending. And the reason I filed the case against Nicoletta Della Valle is because, in addition to the court cases which we filed, there was an investigation by the Parliamentary Control Committee, which is a parliament—you know, they investigate, they hold the government accountable—and they found that Nicoletta Della Valle, that there were indications that she had engaged in improper political interference in order to make this unlawful decision, which resulted in my arrest and detention.

And what is also significant about Nicoletta Della Valle is, as has been publicly reported, she retired from FedPol soon after this incident, and she was immediately hired by an Israeli investment company called Shampel Capital, which invests heavily in the arms industry and very likely profits from the ongoing genocide. So I felt it was important to hold her accountable, but also to try to seek some transparency. So we did file a criminal complaint against her for misuse of public office.

#Pascal

Hey, just a very quick note. The best way to support this channel is by signing up for my free Substack. You can also help with a paid subscription there, or you can get some of our new merch on neutralitystudies.com. Links below. See you there. When I heard about this case, I couldn't believe that this is happening in Switzerland. And Amira, you also told me that you haven't seen something like this before. And then you actually tried to get some public attention toward this, right? But with not that much success inside Switzerland, right?

#Amira Berzi

Yes, I think this is the part that's more shocking for me. I mean, the fact that abuse of office by authorities can happen is not the most shocking thing, even in a democratic system. But what decides whether a system is working and is democratic is if there are mechanisms to investigate what happened, if there are institutions willing to investigate, if there is a way to hold these authorities or authorities that act unlawfully accountable. So for me, as much as I'm a big fan and I think there was a grave miscarriage of justice towards Ali, this has not been my main concern. I mean, he sued, he had the capability to sue, and he got the right ruling. But the question, the bigger question, the more troubling one, is my rights as a citizen here—that the authorities and the political figures don't act outside the law and are not held accountable to prevent me or to control or to decide for me what speech I am allowed to hear and what story, what version of the story, is the true one.

And this is, I think, the most alarming thing. And, you know, initially when this took place, I understand that nobody was interested because the details were not there. But then we read the story and we found out that FEDPOL actually overturned the judgment or the assessment of their own institutions, the Swiss institutions, to not issue an entry ban. They found that nothing was—I mean, the courts ruled that he has no crime. He did not commit a crime. None of his speech is a threat or violates anything. But then the Swiss authorities or authority figures decided that it's their decision. So when this came out and still there was no investigation, I didn't know to whom it falls.

#Pascal

Yeah, and I think we need to point this out, right? All the court cases that you're running now are on your initiative, right? It's because you sued or because you tried to defend your rights. But there is no public prosecutor who actually stepped in and said, oh, we need to investigate what happened with Nicoleta de Blavalle. And the other person who's heavily involved in this is Mario Fehr, right? Maybe you can say a little bit about this, but so far, there's just nobody trying to step in from the government side in order to investigate this, right?

#Ali Abunimah

So, as Amira mentioned, this is important. Even before I arrived in Switzerland in January 2025, the Zurich authorities had requested from FedPol to ban me from entering Switzerland. Right. And FedPol did an assessment, and we obtained it in the course of the legal process, that said that I am no threat to the security of Switzerland, that the things I say are protected by free speech, and that an entry ban is unjustified. That was their original assessment. And then it was on the intervention of Nicoletta della Valle that this was overturned and the illegal decision was taken to retroactively prevent my entry, and then to detain me and expel me. And yes, these court decisions are the result of our initiative. I had a lot of support to do that, by the way. And although the parliamentary investigation was done by the control committee, I had nothing to do with that.

And they did a very good investigation, which revealed important information. So that was an initiative, and that's to the credit of those lawmakers who decided to do that. As far as Mario Fehr is concerned, we did file a criminal case against him. But unfortunately, the Zurich Executive Committee, the government in Zurich, refused to lift his immunity. And that is the case today, and that means it is difficult for us to hold him accountable. Ultimately, it would be the decision of voters in Zurich to decide his fate, and that's their business, of course. But I would wish that I had the chance just to confront him through the legal due process.

In a fair process. That's all I ask for. You know, also to the credit of the Swiss courts, they treated me fairly. That's something that should be reassuring to people in Switzerland because many people expressed to me how disturbed they were by what happened to me and how this could happen in Switzerland. But on the other hand, the courts did make the right decision, but we had to pursue that. So, you know, it was our initiative, and I couldn't have done it by myself as an individual. It

was only because I was able to get the support of many people around the world to fund the legal challenges.

Also, the lawyers I worked with, who are fantastic, were very generous. Yes, there were still costs, but they were also very generous with their time and their efforts to make it possible to bring these cases. So it's not easy to do that. Not everyone can do that. I was lucky that I could. And the reason I did it is not for me personally, but because we are seeing a wave of repression in the West in general against free speech, and particularly when it relates to Palestine. And I felt that it was a responsibility to make that kind of abuse as costly as possible for people in power, with the hope that they will be deterred in the future from violating the rights of other people. To me, that's the real value of pursuing accountability.

#Pascal

Yeah, and seriously, as Swiss citizens, Amira and I have to thank you for this. There is nothing that would compel you to do it, but thank you for actually pushing these charges, because exactly as you said, Amira, this is a question of whether they can do it to us as well, and to anyone. Let's take it a little bit broader. What does this tell us about the state of international affairs in 2026? Because the suspicion is, of course, very, very high that this was an act done in order to please somebody who's not at all in Switzerland. But Amira, if you want to add something before that.

#Amira Berzi

I wanted to add this, exactly what he said, because he said the good news for Swiss society is that the court and the justice system work. But it only worked in the rights and the violations towards you. But what about the rights of Swiss citizens to transparency, to record keeping, to accountability, and to due process? That was not adjudicated. This was not the case. That's why I was saying, I'm saying these are two separate things. The fact that the system worked for him is, first, he had access to the system that other people don't, and that we didn't have here, where we don't even know who should be speaking. I mean, from a public interest perspective, who in that system, what mechanism exists to hold or to defend our rights as Swiss citizens so that our authority figures or authorities do not act in this manner? Or not that they do not act—you cannot prevent them from acting—but that you hold them accountable, that you deter them.

#Pascal

That this kind of abuse of office doesn't take place. I mean, and if it takes place, it must be remedied, right? The system must do that. And I mean, so what we're seeing is, yes, on the one hand, it works. On the other hand, I am scared that this is possible in the first place. And maybe, Ali, you can speak to that a little bit, like the long arm—I don't know—how come the long arm of Israel reaches all the way to Zurich?

#Ali Abunimah

Well, that's an important question, but I'll just add one thing to what Amira said, because, again, I've now become very educated in Swiss law and the Swiss constitution. And the Swiss constitution contains an interesting principle—something interesting. It contains freedom of assembly and freedom of speech and freedom of religion, and that is common to many democratic constitutions. That's not so unusual, although it's very precious. But it also contains the right to receive information—that Swiss citizens and residents have the right to receive information. And in that respect, by preventing me from speaking, yes, that was a violation of my rights, but it was also a violation of the rights of those who wanted to attend to receive information.

And I understand what Amira is saying is there's been no mechanism for that to be investigated, for that to be vindicated. And that's important for Swiss citizens to keep pushing. And I will give credit because the people here who I'm in touch with have been pressing for that in Zurich and, you know, through freedom of information requests, through the mechanisms that exist. So I think that is important. Well, in terms of the long arm of Israel, I mean, we can see that across the West. I don't want to make specific accusations regarding what happened here without knowing exactly, because we want the court process to determine the facts and to do it fairly.

But in general, we can see that across the West there is fear of offending Israel—that institutions, universities, corporations, governments, lawmakers are so much at odds with their own populations, particularly on the question of Palestine and the genocide. And we saw that in a recent global poll by the Pew Research Center that found that the gap across Western societies—well, around the world, but talking about Europe and North America for a moment, because those are the countries that mostly support Israel—there are large majorities in all of these countries: France, Germany, the UK, the Netherlands, North America, Canada, the United States, where the population has very negative views towards Israel.

And this is not reflected at all at the elite level, either in the media or in university administrations or in political life. And to me, that is the explanation for why there is so much more open repression now. Because when the gulf between the elites and the population becomes so wide, you know, if the general public supported the Western policy of enabling and arming Israeli genocide, there would be no need for repression. It is because of this massive democratic deficit. And I think that the repression is becoming more naked and more obvious because of the complete collapse in support for Israel and those policies. And yes, the long arm of Israel or the long arm of the lobby is there. But I do think that in some ways that arm is becoming withered and weaker.

#Pascal

I mean, that would be the hope. But the lobby, you know, is something that we usually think about in terms of the United States, right? I mean, John Mearsheimer and Steve Walt, they wrote that very important book, **The Israel Lobby**, and they tried to show how systematically money buys off

politicians. I just didn't imagine that that could happen inside Switzerland as well. And we don't know. We don't know what happened. So you're trying to determine that through the legal process. But it came as a surprise to you too, right? That in a place that seems as law-abiding as Switzerland, and where political processes seem to take very long, that even here it seems to be possible to get particular interests through directly to certain offices.

#Ali Abunimah

I think the conundrum, or the puzzle, which I don't necessarily fully have an answer for, is why we see this phenomenon in Western countries. We see this in the UK, we see it in the United States. We could discuss the extent to which this is true in Switzerland or other countries that are prepared to sacrifice fundamental rights and fundamental institutions for the sake of suppressing criticism of Israel. So, for example, we've seen the Trump administration fundamentally attacking free speech in the United States, targeting student movements that were protesting the genocide in Gaza. We have seen in the UK similar processes, but we've also seen proposals to abolish the right to a jury trial.

And this is motivated by the fact that juries keep acquitting Palestine Action activists who admit that they have gone into Israeli arms factories, Elbit factories, to destroy weapons and destroy drones. But they come to court when they're put on trial and they make a necessity argument. They say that we were acting in defense of others, which is a legal defense, to say that these weapons were going to be used as part of a genocide in Gaza. Therefore, our action was justified, notwithstanding any, you know, technical violation of, you know, breaking and entering into premises and so on. And time after time, juries acquitted them. And so, in order to get around that, the UK has really rigged the system finally to get some convictions.

And in the United States also, we've seen universities basically sacrificing academic freedom, academic independence, all motivated by suppressing discussion of Palestine or criticism of Israel. One argument you could make is that, well, Palestine is an easy issue for them to do that because there's already a strong lobby. They can use the justification of, well, we're fighting anti-Semitism, or whatever they might claim. But then those tools of repression remain available to the authorities to suppress discussion of other issues in the future, so that Palestine is used as a test case in order to establish a broader system of repression.

But I would say that since the genocide began in October 2023, I have been surprised how tenaciously Western elites remain committed to the Zionist project, in the face of how openly genocidal it is. And I can't claim—you know, some people give you a very simple explanation for that—I can't claim to have a simple explanation for why the European Union, for example, remains so committed to Israel, despite the fact of how unpopular that is with its people, despite the fact that Israel is not a very big economic power, it's not an energy source, you don't have those big excuses, at least it's not a major one. It's not a major industrial power. And that requires a whole conference to explore that question, but probably you wouldn't be able to hold it in any European country today.

#Pascal

Amira, what do you think? Because you do follow the Swiss media, you follow what's happening over here. It's where you live. It strikes me that we have some form of weird elite consensus that, you know, talking about genocide in the context of Palestine is kind of— that's just not good etiquette. That's just not how we should talk about it. And that we have, in other affairs in international relations, kind of an elite consensus, or at least a discourse that happens in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, the *Tages-Anzeiger*, and others, where you have this disconnect between what's being discussed there and how things are being discussed also on social media. Would you agree with my assessment, or how do you see this discourse actually developing, and why is it that in certain circles, you know, what happened to Ali is still looked at as, you know, that's the right thing that should happen to any kind of opposition to, or “anti-Semitism,” as they always call it, for anyone who opposes genocide against the Palestinians?

#Amira Berzi

I think this is the second most important topic—the media landscape and the press here in Switzerland—that I can speak to. I don't think I can speak to why, but I can say what the options are that are possible. And looking at Swiss media in general is one thing, and looking at the NZZ is a completely different thing because... I have to say, through the case that Ali pursued and the rulings and investigations that came out of it, the findings have actually revealed abuse of power, political motivation for these two entities in FEDPOL and in the Zurich police. And also, the report from the Parliamentary Oversight Committee outlined these things. And so the outcome and the findings should be the story. So today, even now, I mean, it failed to receive any coverage until these things happened, the rulings came out.

And now that Ali announced that he's coming, there was some coverage. And I've only seen probably one from the NZZ because I obviously avoid it. It's true rubbish. But the stunning thing is that not only was it cheap in terms of sensationalism, but the entire coverage, as the story is cataloging what they call controversial statements from Ali. So you come out of the story thinking as if the story, the public interest, is in what Ali stands for, not the fact that from the findings, the central question is whether Swiss authorities can unlawfully arrest, detain, and deport, fail to justify their reasons, get rebuked by the courts, and still avoid any scrutiny or accountability. And I think the fact—because you said something about the lobby—I think we have pursued, after what happened to him last year, we have sent letters asking questions, asking for investigations.

Why was it reversed? And then we also asked for communication. We used the IDG to ask for information about communication and documentation. Until now, I mean, the authorities have refused to give the information. That's also not reported. And we have seen some links. There are established links between the Israeli lobby here and a lot of people in public office or in the press here. These are, how do you say, verifiable. I mean, we found them through our requests. But in the

end, there is nothing that follows from that. So whether they are aligned, whether the press—something like the NZZ with the story and the way they cover it—the interest they are trying to pursue is actually to make sure that the opinion of Ali is kept out of public knowledge. Yeah.

#Pascal

So it doesn't get out as far as it should. The fourth power isn't doing its job of trying to investigate these kinds of things on their own. Ali, just maybe in closing, is there any other kind of insight that you've gained now throughout these one and a half years of this process that came out? You know, something that you think you understood about how things are working, maybe not even so much in Switzerland, but about the system of repression and the system of silence on repressive methods.

#Ali Abunimah

Yeah, I would never have imagined that I was important enough to be the subject of a request by the Zurich Canton to ban me, that I would be assessed by FedPol and the Swiss Intelligence Service. And in fact, they found I'm not a threat. But nonetheless, the fact that this happened in the first place—in a million years, I never thought that I would merit any of that—because I run a publication online. Everything we publish is there for people to read. We don't hide anything. And I just think, I thought, okay, well, yes, people do follow my work, but I mean, in the grand scheme of things, I'm not that significant.

So what I learned is that they're watching everything and everyone. And any outlet of information that challenges the elite discourse, whether it's on Palestine, whether it's on Ukraine, whether it's on any number of other issues, is a threat. So there is, I think, a sense of insecurity among the elites that surprised me. And the other thing that—I won't say it surprised me, but the experience confirmed it—was that there is a great number of people who absolutely abhor this type of repression, whether it's in Switzerland or the UK or the US, and who are willing to act in solidarity to challenge it.

And this is so important to know that we can resist, and especially if we do it as a collective effort. We can win. I mean, we're definitely not as powerful as states, but our power is not insignificant. So the thing I would emphasize about my experience in the past year and a half is that it was a collective effort. You know, the legal work was crowdfunded. The lawyers were committed because of their own commitments to the rule of law and human rights. And people around the world saw this as an opportunity for us to fight back. And that's what we have to take from it, that it's worth fighting back. We should never say, well, okay, you know, what can we do?

I mean, they're so powerful. No, they're scared of public opinion. They're scared of people speaking out. They're scared of independent media. They're scared of you. You know, your channel was taken off YouTube briefly. And they can say it was a mistake or that the AI made a mistake, but the AI made a mistake for a reason, you know. So, I mean, the point is to say that this can happen to any

of us at any time. You know, the Electronic Intifada, we have had videos erased without any justification. And so I would say our collective solidarity and our collective resistance to these abuses matters and can be effective.

#Pascal

Yeah, I guess we need to collectively scare them a little bit. And with this, I mean, we are running out of time, but I thank you very much for both of your inputs. Let's scare them a little bit more, just a little bit.

#Ali Abunimah

Ali, Amira, thank you so much.

#Pascal

Thank you. Thank you.

#Amira Berzi

Thank you.