

# #1584 Israel's Political Upheaval, Supreme Court Power Struggle, US Support, and the Normalization of Apartheid

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**JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT:** Welcome to this episode of the award winning Best of the Left podcast, in which we shall take a look at Israel's politics, which have been upended by the return of Netanyahu as prime minister. He was put in office with the help of extremely far right factions who have now pushed through reforms to the Israeli Supreme Court that fundamentally undermine their democracy.

All this while they were already a farce of a democracy due to the maintenance of an apartheid like system of differing rules applying to different residents based on ethnicity. You know, classic. Sources today include Ali Velshi from MSNBC, Democracy Now, Intercepted, and Deconstructed with additional members only clips from Democracy Now and Intercepted.

## The U.S. should not reward Israel's bad behavior - Velshi - Air Date 9-3-23

**ALI VELSHI - HOST, VELSHI:** With all that's going on in the world and here in the United States, it's easy to forget that Israel is coming apart at the seams. Since the end of last year, Israel's internal politics has been upended. An indicted Prime Minister was returned to [00:01:00] office and, in a situation echoing American politics, is trying to use his power and influence to remain in power to avoid prosecution for fraud, breach of trust, and accepting bribes.

He's even changing Israeli laws for reasons that appear to be entirely self-serving. Now central to what it's looking like, the collapse of Israel's ostensibly democratic system, and I say ostensible because millions of people -- Palestinians who live under illegal occupation -- are subject to Israeli persecution and prosecution without either its protections, or the right to vote, is that the once-fringe anti-democratic ideological and religious movement secured a stunning victory in parliamentary elections.

The former so-called Government of National Unity had included political parties from the right and the left and had the support of the tiny majority of Israeli Arabs in the Knesset. But it lost in the last elections. It wasn't a big loss, but in Israel's incredibly fragmented political system, it was enough to replace the fragile coalition government [00:02:00] with a far-right populist government, which now holds some of the country's most influential positions.

And with that, the thrice-indicted Benjamin Netanyahu returned to power. In a repeat of a sentence that I have uttered several times over the years, Netanyahu's cabinet is the most right wing and extreme in Israeli history. It's so far right wing that it makes the Netanyahu of years gone by look moderate by comparison.

One minister in his government has boasted that he could take active measures against the LGBTQ community without any repercussions from his base. But don't worry, even he has a limit. He said, quote, "I won't stone the gays." Another minister has advocated for expelling disloyal citizens of Israel. So this is the kind of leadership that Israel is dealing with right now, and Benjamin Netanyahu is, once again, at the helm of it.

His return has brought with it an outright assault on what many Israelis believe to be their democracy, even though Israel is, as I've stated before, [00:03:00] An apartheid state, not a real democracy, because only some people who live under its control enjoy its protections, and the delineation is whether you're Palestinian or not.

However, many Israeli citizens either live under the illusion of, or legitimately hope for, democracy. And Netanyahu has undermined that with a judicial overhaul, which essentially gives politicians -- those extreme far-right politicians in his government -- full control over Supreme Court appointments. It also allows Parliament to override judicial decisions, subverting one of the sole checks on the government's authority.

The question is what Netanyahu and his ultra-national government plan to do with their newly unfettered power. It's safe to assume they'll use it to target the already vulnerable Palestinian population. Some Middle East experts say the government could use new laws to expand illegal Israeli settlements or even go as far as annexing the West Bank, which is totally controlling it, without offering its residents a vote. And at least that would [00:04:00] prove the argument that Israel is actually an apartheid state.

This summer, though, Netanyahu already approved plans to expedite construction of thousands of new settlements in the occupied territories. Israeli settlements in the West Bank are deemed illegal under international law, a finding that is notably ignored by both Israel and its greatest military and financial supporter, The United States. Brutal settler attacks on Palestinian villagers have increased, and the additional Israeli military forces that have been sent into the West Bank by Netanyahu are known to turn a blind eye and sometimes even join in on the deadly wave of violence that has now lasted for more than a year, and that has reached levels not seen in two decades.

So Israel has two problems: an allegedly corrupt prime minister pursuing political means to avoid prosecution and hang on to power, and a rapidly deteriorating situation with the Palestinians.

So when the White House confirmed last month that Biden will meet with Netanyahu this year, [00:05:00] it raised eyebrows. At the time, the White House did not specify when or where the meeting would take place. Former Israeli security officials, politicians, advisors, ambassadors, entrepreneurs, activists, and thinkers have all urged Biden *not* to meet with Netanyahu until he stops. Ami Dror, an Israeli tech entrepreneur and the leader of the protest movement, said this to President Biden, quote: "I urge you not to meet him at this moment, not before he stops the attacks on Israeli democracy. The democratic world is fighting three frontiers, the war that Mr. Trump declared on American democracy, the war that President Putin and his partners declared on Ukraine, and the war that Prime Minister Netanyahu and his racist partners declared on Israeli democracy. We, the democracies of the world, must stay united. President Putin, Prime Minister Netanyahu, and Mr. Trump should be *persona non grata* until they stop their attacks," end quote. Says a lot, when Israelis [00:06:00] are begging Joe Biden not to use the office of the U. S. presidency to elevate their own Prime Minister because they fear that doing so would only further encourage Netanyahu's dangerous behavior.

This is a very delicate situation for the United States to be in. The U. S. and Israel are allies. America often calls itself Israel's best friend, and U. S. taxpayer funding of Israel makes that claim largely true. But the United States should not be rewarding bad behavior, and a photo op is just that.

## **Haggai Matar & Gideon Levy - Israel's Fight over Judicial Changes Ignores**

# Occupation & Apartheid Part 1 - Democracy Now! - Air Date 7-25-23

**JUAN GONZALEZ:** And, Haggai Matar, how exactly has the legislation that was just passed weakened the court? Because we've heard the gutting or weakening, but we haven't heard much about the concrete legislation that was passed.

**HAGGAI MATAR:** So, I think, for context, Israel does not have a constitution, and it is very weak in terms of legislation generally. And a lot of what we see in the fabric of Israeli law and [00:07:00] society is based on precedent. And judicial precedent in Israel sometimes relies on this issue of reasonableness.

So, a good recent example was that Netanyahu wanted to appoint for minister of finance someone who was just recently convicted for the third time for tax evasion, fraud and theft, and the Supreme Court basically said this is extremely unreasonable to put someone like that in charge of the Ministry of Finance. So this is a good example and, again, one of the motivations for this initiative. There are other reasons for the government to push forward with this legislation, but I think these examples kind of show what the court has been doing and what the government does not want it to do, in terms of gutting it and suppressing its abilities to act and restrain the government's power.

**JUAN GONZALEZ:** And there has been talk of further so-called reforms that [00:08:00] the allies of Netanyahu want to pass. What are those reforms?

**HAGGAI MATAR:** So, it's important to remember that in January, said minister of justice, Yariv Levin, announced a whole package of a judicial overhaul. It was a set of quite a few bills that the government committed to pass within two or three months in the winter. The massive protest movement is what forced the government to kind of narrow down to just one bill at a time. It's something that we here call the "salami method," just slicing it to thin little pieces of legislation. And this is the first one to pass, but there are many more on the way.

Some of them are meant to allow Netanyahu to escape his current trial for political corruption. Other measures are meant to allow the government to annex territories and do basically whatever it wants with any kind of supervision from the side of the court. There are many other pieces of legislation. [00:09:00] They, all together, basically are meant to ensure that the government both can do whatever it wants in this current term, and can

persecute political rivals and ensure its reelection in the future by disqualifying other political rivals, especially Palestinian citizens, whose parties might be disqualified if the judicial overhaul comes through.

**AMY GOODMAN - HOST, DEMOCRACY NOW!:** I want to bring Gideon Levy into this conversation, also in Tel Aviv. Talk about this piece that you wrote about the militaristic nature of these protests. Explain what you mean.

**GIDEON LEVY:** I have all the sympathy toward this protest movement, the biggest ever in Israel. And I can just appreciate all those hundreds of thousands of Israelis who are going to the streets regularly, week after week, day after day, spending a lot of time, energy, sweat, and many [00:10:00] times even blood, in order to express their protest.

But I have also some criticize — some critics about this movement. One, you just mentioned, Amy, the fact that they really totally ignore deliberately the occupation and the apartheid, but not less than this, the structure and the combination of people who lead this protest and who are really running it. Finally, it is about the old boys from the army. I don't say they are the only one, by all means not, but they are giving the tone, generals who head the state. And now, as we say in Hebrew, and now all of a sudden the state is being taken from them by the right-wingers, and they go to protest. It is very problematic if figures like heads of the Shabak, of [00:11:00] the secret services of Israel, who are quite well known, at least to your viewers, Amy, in its brutal methods of blackmailing people and doing all kind of anti-democratic actions in the West Bank, including kidnapping people without any supervision, legal supervision. So, those are the people who speak about democracy. Those are part of the leadership of this protest movement. Those are the heroes of this movement. I have a problem with this. You know, generals and head of secret services cannot teach anyone anything about democracy. They should learn it by themselves before they teach others.

**JUAN GONZALEZ:** And could you comment also, as you have in some of your writings, about the irony of talking about preserving democracy, while both [00:12:00] sides in this battle continue to assume and expect that the oppression of the Palestinians will continue?

**GIDEON LEVY:** You can compare it to South Africa, apartheid South Africa. Imagine yourself a struggle among the white community in South Africa about democracy for the white ones. It is a struggle over democracy. And by the way, they had democracy. They had elections. They had quite free press, in a way. They had democracy. But it was a democracy only to a very small part of the population of South Africa.

The democracy that we are now struggling over is a democracy only for the Jewish citizens of Israel, and partially for the Palestinian citizens of Israel. What about 5 million people who live under the control of the same [00:13:00] institutions, who have no civil rights whatsoever, who don't even possess a citizenship of any country in the world? How can you speak about democracy and ignore this? What kind of democracy can exist in an apartheid state? I mean, those things, I understand the desire, the ambition to try to recruit as many people as possible to this protest, which is a just protest. But the way they ignore the real dark side of Israel is for me unacceptable and unbearable.

## **Protests in Israel: The Right's Further Consolidation of Power - Intercepted - Air Date 7-26-23**

**MURTAZA HUSSAIN - CO-HOST, INTERCEPTED:** Benjamin Netanyahu came to power, returned to power on the back of a very extreme coalition in the past few years.

Can you tell us a bit about the nature of this coalition and how its motivations for helping push through these revisions to Israel's judiciary?

**MAIRAV ZONSZEIN:** Netanyahu has basically been in power for over a decade, I believe like 12, 13 years now, and then there was a lull in which he wasn't [00:14:00] for about a year. And when he returned to power, he basically had already been charged and on trial for corruption in several cases, and that basically caused a split in the right in Israel between various members of his own party who split off and other members who decided they're not going to work with him anymore as a result of him being on trial, they believed he shouldn't be serving as prime minister even though it's technically legal for him to do so. So that split on the right created fissures in which Netanyahu basically couldn't come back to power and form a majority coalition without turning to far-right parties.

So the two parties that are on the far right: the Settler Nationalist religious far right that came into power as a result of Netanyahu deciding to work with them, the Religious Zionist Party is one of them, is headed by Bezael Smotrich, who is now the finance minister and a minister in the defense ministry, which has a lot of ramifications that we can get into later; and Itamar Ben-Gvir, who runs the Jewish Power Party, which is [00:15:00] essentially a racist Meir Kahane party. So these two parties have a lot of power. They're both senior ministers in government.

And ironically the person who's been leading the judicial overhaul is actually somebody in Netanyahu's Likud party, and his name is Yariv Levine. He's the Minister of Justice. He is also a pro-settlement annexationist type. He's talked about wanting to annex the West Bank for quite a long time and how the Supreme Court gets in the way of doing that. So they all kind of share the same agenda on that level. But the person who's actually been leading this and came out right after they were elected at the end of December of 2022, he came out and said, okay, we're going through with this judicial reform. It's going to start. It's going to look like this. And the minute that happened, protests started to erupt. So that's kind of how it started.

**JEREMY SCAHILL - CO-HOST, INTERCEPTED:** What is the actual agenda here? There's a lot of analysis suggesting, oh, this has to do with some of the examples that you're mentioning, that there are corruption cases and other cases against Netanyahu. There was the blocking [00:16:00] of an appointment of someone because of the past convictions. But from your analysis, Mairav, what's the actual agenda? What do they really want to do by passing this?

**MAIRAV ZONSZEIN:** They want to annex the West Bank to Israel. I mean, there's other elements involved. The religious parties want to, for example, formalize into law that they will be exempt from military conscription because their communities study Torah and Jewish law instead of going into the army. So there's different interests for different groups. But what ties them all together, and what has become a status quo consensus in Israel, for better and worse, is that Israel holds control of the West Bank and that it needs to legalize that and formalize that control. Because the settlers specifically and the settler movement have had certain blows to their own aspirations over the years. So there was the Oslo Accords, which was one of the major first ones, there was the withdrawal from the Gaza Strip in 2005, and there have been Supreme Court decisions, not many, but [00:17:00] some, that have obstructed and made it more difficult for Israel to continue to settle in the West Bank. For example, in 1979, the Supreme Court ruled that Israel cannot take over private Palestinian land when it can be proven that it's private property of Palestinians, simply for the purpose of replacing it with Jewish inhabitants. It can be for security reasons, it can be for other reasons. So that, for example, was a Supreme Court decision that the settlers find to be a big wrench in their plans. And if you look at the people who are leading the judicial overhaul plan, the hardliners in the government, most of them, except for Yariv Levine, live in settlements and are settlers and some of them are hardcore settlers.

So I would say that that is definitely the common denominator here. They don't want the court getting in the way of their plans to continue to create this greater Israel.



**MURTAZA HUSSAIN - CO-HOST, INTERCEPTED:** So there have been these protests against this judiciary reform for a very, very long time now, several months consecutively, and this week we saw protests around the passage of the bill, which were even quite [00:18:00] violent or escalating, it seems like, in the face of this very determined effort by the Netanyahu government. Can you tell us a bit about the motivations and the underlying drive of the protesters? Because clearly there's a divide in Israel society between secular and more religious Israelis. How does that manifest, and particularly over this issue mentioned of annexing the West Bank?

**MAIRAV ZONSZEIN:** So to understand the protest movement looks like, it's hundreds of thousands of people, but it's a fairly homogenous group, not politically, but socioeconomically, and also ethnically, as far as them being from the Ashkenazi elite, which is Jews of European descent versus Mizrahi Jews who are from North Africa and the Arab world. So if you look at the people who are going out to protest, these are people from the center of Israel, mostly, even though there are protests across the country, I don't want to undermine that. But they have served in elite combat units, they are the leading high-tech company leaders, doctors, these are from the very, very high levels of Israeli society. [00:19:00] And they feel like their contract that they have with the state to have a liberal democracy as they see it is being broken and that settlers and religious nationalists are taking over what is otherwise a great country that does wonderful things so they feel very betrayed and they've also risked their lives in several wars. Their kids risk lives in wars, and all of a sudden they're supposed to be listening to people who didn't serve in the army because they're either too dangerous or too religious or whatever. And so they're extremely resentful. So they've come out in very, very high numbers. I think this is unprecedented in Israel.

And also the consistency. You've had, pretty much every week for six months, 100,000 people coming out. And they've done it not just in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, but also in north and south as well.

It's also important to point out who's *not* coming out to the protests, which is what I alluded to before, which are the Palestinian citizens of Israel are not there. Jews of other ethnicity, whether it's Ethiopian Jews or Jews of [00:20:00] Arab descent are mostly not there. So it's a very specific kind of movement and you could see it as a secular religious divide on some level. But there are religious people who come out. And there are also right wing people who are coming out. One of the leaders, or the faces of the protest movement is a former defense minister and chief of staff, Bogi Ya'alon, who oversaw many operations in Gaza and is very much on the right. It's definitely not a right-left divide as far



as the protest movement. It's much more like a liberal-urban, I think, more cosmopolitan divide, versus the more conservative right wing in Israel.

## Congress Melts Down Over Israel Again - Deconstructed - Air Date 7-21-23

**RYAN GRIM - HOST, DECONSTRUCTED:** I interviewed Democratic Congressman Brad Sherman this week about this question. He's a kind of very strong ally of AIPAC, and a relentless defender of the Israeli government, though he is critical of this current rightward shift of the Israeli government. And he made a point that a lot of others made, and it goes to what you were just saying, that he didn't really want to talk about necessarily the reality of the current situation, [00:21:00] but rather the future potential of a better situation in the future. And, as long as there was some hope for a better future, he seemed to be arguing then, therefore, you can't call it, say, an apartheid state now. Because an apartheid state to him is a static situation where you have a recognized government within a certain geographical boundary that treats people within its borders differently based on their race or ethnicity.

And what he and others will argue is, Well, OK, yes, that is practically *de facto* what's been happening for 75 years, but one day it might not be happening. And so, therefore, as long as one day it might not be happening, all we're talking about is a temporary situation.

[To Rep. Brad Sherman] Well, the resolution goes beyond just condemning the racist part, and it adds apartheid. How do you sort out, in your mind, whether or not it's an apartheid state, given the fact that people who live under the laws —

**BRAD SHERMAN:** [00:22:00] Well, this is a temporary, albeit long-lived, situation. We need a two-state solution. You know, there's the Czech Republic, there's Slovakia. If you're a Slovak, you're not a citizen of the Czech Republic. If you're Czech, you're not a citizen of Slovakia. They decided to create two separate states. It doesn't mean that Czechs hate Slovaks, it doesn't mean Slovaks hate Czechs. It just means that they want two separate countries. Israel wants two separate countries.

**RYAN GRIM - HOST, DECONSTRUCTED:** So, is the possibility that a two-state solution could emerge the only thing that prevents you calling the current situation apartheid?

**BRAD SHERMAN:** No. I would say that if Israel were to say that we intend to permanently rule millions of Palestinians, we don't want them to have a state, and we're going to deny them citizenship rights, and I would say that's two levels of citizenship for people who [00:23:00] are, because of Israel, trying to live, uh, you know. Israel is on the way, hopefully, to a two-state solution.

**RYAN GRIM - HOST, DECONSTRUCTED:** What do you respond to that way of framing this?

**BETH MILLER:** I guess it's not shocking that Congressman Sherman takes that approach. I think that's a pretty absurd thing for a sitting member of Congress to say. To say that, Well, one day maybe it would be different, so we shouldn't talk about what it is now. It's honestly a hard argument to even begin to wrap your head around.

The situation now is what we have to deal with. We're not dealing in what could possibly be one day in someone's dreams of what Israel might [00:24:00] one day become. We're dealing with the reality on the ground right now, which is decades of occupation, decades of apartheid — which again, I cannot stress enough, the broad international human rights consensus is that this is an apartheid state, and even Israeli human rights groups have said it's an apartheid state. That's the reality, and what that means is that, right now, today, there are millions of Palestinians who are subject to brutal violence that's being funded by Congress.

And I think that's the key point here, is that this isn't just someone like Congressman Sherman, for example, just opining on a situation that he has no role in. He is a duly elected member of Congress, and Congress has a unique role to play here. They control the purse strings of our government, and our government is sending \$3.8 billion every single year to fund this apartheid.

And so, whatever someone hopes the situation might be in the future, the reality is that we have to name [00:25:00] what's happening right now accurately because our government is the one paying for it. And it will never change, it will never get better if we don't do something about that, and it's particularly rich to hear that from someone like an AIPAC-funded and -affiliated congressman like Brad Sherman, because the policies he pushes for only serve to entrench the current situation. And actually, [if] he wants to make it better and change it, what he should be doing is working right now to hold the Israeli government accountable to create a different situation.

**RYAN GRIM - HOST, DECONSTRUCTED:** He also made the argument — and you hear this a lot from people in his camp — that says, well, there are Arab citizens of Israel who do share in some citizenship rights. And so, therefore, it's inaccurate to say that this is “racist.”

And he also made the point that — I said, well, if you're a Palestinian living in Israel, and you're married to somebody who lives in the Occupied Territories, [00:26:00] your spouse can't even live with you. So, you have thousands of marriages that are separated by this wall, which feels like apartheid, and feels like unequal rights. And he said, Well, that actually would apply to a Jewish Israeli citizen.

[To Rep. Brad Sherman] Even citizens of Israel who are Palestinian aren't allowed, for instance to marry a Palestinian who lives in the West Bank, and have them move and live with them. They literally have different rights based on their ethnicity.

**BRAD SHERMAN:** Well, it's not based — I think that would apply to a Jewish citizen who married a Palestinian from the West Bank as well. I might have to examine that, and I think every country has a flaw. Of all the countries who have been under violent attack from another country, area, or ethnicity, [00:27:00] Israel has had the most benign reaction. We cannot point to anywhere else in the world where a country is under violent attack and is embracing its enemy while being attacked. I mean, try to find a Ukrainian saying something nice about Russia today.

**RYAN GRIM - HOST, DECONSTRUCTED:** So, I'm sure you hear this, the former version of this argument a lot. I'm curious to get your read on it. I'm not sure if you've heard this latter one, though.

**BETH MILLER:** Yeah. I think this is a very common argument, right? We saw this [also] from people like Congressman Ritchie Torres on Twitter the other day. We saw it on the House floor when they were debating this absurd, wink-wink, “we swear Israel isn't an apartheid state” wink-wink resolution the other night. People constantly say this. “Well, how could Israel be a racist state when, how could it be an apartheid state when there are non-Jewish citizens of Israel who have some rights? And look, there are even people in the [00:28:00] Knesset who aren't Jewish Israelis.”

I mean, I think any progressive worth their salt could listen to that argument and say, that's absurd, and that does not mean that there is not systematic racism

going on. The truth of the matter is, the Israeli government has over 65 different discriminatory laws against Palestinians who are citizens of Israel.

At the end of the day, when you zoom out, the reason this is a system of apartheid is because there is one government, Israel, that rules over all people that live between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River. And that includes Palestinian citizens of Israel, and it includes Palestinians living under illegal military occupation by the Israeli government.

The Israeli government controls all of their lives, and those Palestinians are subject to different levels of rights based on where they live, and Jewish Israeli citizens are the people with the most rights. That is pure, systematic [00:29:00] discrimination based on ethnicity and religion and identity. And that's, simply put, apartheid.

## **Protests in Israel: The Right's Further Consolidation of Power Part 2 - Intercepted - Air Date 7-26-23**

**JEREMY SCAHILL - CO-HOST, INTERCEPTED:** And right now, as we speak, there's also once again attacks happening, settlers attacking Palestinians. You also had the incursion once again into Jenin in early July. And I've been hearing from a lot of Palestinians with different perspectives on this. There are some people who take a very hard line and say, let it all burn, let Netanyahu do this, and it'll finally expose that state for what it actually is. And then you have other people who are pointing out what they perceive as the hypocrisy of the intensity of the protests.

Mariam Barghouti, for instance, the senior correspondent in Palestine for Mondoweiss, tweeted on Tuesday, "Israelis are upset that they're being arrested, sprayed with skunk water, beaten for protesting against dictatorship laws. The Israeli protesters, soldiers, and armed forces beat us, shot us, sprayed our homes, bodies, killed us for protesting ethnic cleansing." [00:30:00]

What's your sense of the voices coming from Palestine and Palestinians criticizing these protests along the lines that I just mentioned?

**MAIRAV ZONSZEIN:** Yeah, even if you don't go as far as the West Bank, if you just look at Palestinian citizens of Israel and why they aren't showing up in big numbers, some of their leaders are calling them to come out. It's not that they're boycotting it per se. But for very similar reasons, which is that where

were all these Jewish Israelis when Palestinians were shot in 2000, just before the second Intifada started, Palestinian citizens were shot. Where were they when there were decisions made by the Supreme Court to prioritize Jewish land rights over Palestinian land rights? Again, I'm talking about within Israel, where everybody is a citizen. So in that sense, it's similar. It's the Palestinians who live in the West Bank. They've been living under occupation. They can't vote for the people who control their lives. And for them, the situation is so bad, and actually, even before this government came into power, the situation was getting already very bad, and the former defense minister outlawed six Palestinian civil society [00:31:00] organizations as terrorist organizations. All these things were happening even before this government came in. And then when this government started it got even worse. And the trigger has been extremely hot. There's been more Palestinians killed in the last six months and last year than I think since the second Intifada. It's basically a consensus that if a Palestinian throws a stone at a soldier, he should be shot at and they are being shot at in great numbers. And this is something that the protest movement isn't addressing almost at all, except for the tiny minority which is the anti-apartheid, anti-occupation bloc, which is really a tiny minority. It's very important that they're there.

But for Palestinians in the West Bank, some of this judicial overhaul stuff, as extreme as it could be as far as the annexationist agenda, it doesn't change the reality on the ground day to day. That continues apace regardless, and Israel has found many ways to legalize what is illegal and to *de facto* create realities on the ground that are extremely detrimental anyway. For them, the situation day to day is so bad [00:32:00] already.

And again, some of the Israelis that are protesting now and are getting skunk water or are getting police brutality, they're getting the tiniest taste of what Palestinians get on a daily basis.

It's also important to remember that Israelis have the freedom and the right to protest, whereas Palestinians in the West Bank don't. They literally don't have a right to protest. So these are things that are not coming through clearly enough inside Israel. And as impressive and important as the protest movement is, somehow they compartmentalize these issues.

Even if you stop an Israeli protesting and ask him what he thinks about the occupation, the settlements. He'll say, yeah, it's horrible, but I'm fighting this fight right now and this is the fight that I need to fight. That's the unfortunate reality of it.

**MURTAZA HUSSAIN - CO-HOST, INTERCEPTED:** You mentioned that the judiciary has been, at least to some degree, an impediment to this annexationist idea held by the right in Israel over the West Bank. With the judiciary out of the way, and with the annexation theoretically going forward in the future, what is the vision that they have for how the West Bank will be governed and controlled? [00:33:00] And would it include permanent legal control of the Palestinians, or is the long-term vision to get Palestinians out of there by some means slowly or quickly? How do they actually see the idea of Israel controlling the West Bank in the long term?

**MAIRAV ZONSZEIN:** It depends who you mean by "they." And it depends who you ask.

Certain political parties, like the religious Zionist party headed by Smotrich, he is a radical Hilltop Youth type, and he does have a clear platform of either taking over all of the West Bank, areas A, B, and C, annexing it, and then either those Palestinians have to give in and be second-hand citizens, not citizens, be subjects of Israeli rule, or leave or be killed. That's basically what his platform says. And that's I think the most extreme version of it. And if you speak to certain radical settlers, they'll say I realize Palestinians are here and they don't want to leave, and that's why I'm fighting with them to the bitter end, because they want the same thing that I want; they want to stay here.

So you [00:34:00] have that. And then you have more moderate settlers who, they'll tell you different things. They'll say that based on the Oslo Accords, Area C, which is 60 percent of the West Bank under full Israeli control, that should remain under part of an Israeli state. But A and B, which is where most of the urban centers are, Ramallah and Nablus, those places can become part of a Palestinian autonomous entity of some sort. So they'll tell you that, or they'll come up with different ways, or they'll say areas A and B can be maybe a state. I don't know how that would work. And then if you ask them about Gaza, that's a whole other story. I don't know how they think that would work. I think most of them keep Gaza out as if it's just like this separate entity that will somehow disappear if we ignore it.

So it really depends on who you ask. And there are a lot of nuances between the different elements of the right.

The Likud party, headed by Netanyahu, he basically threatened annexation in 2020 and then went back on it because of the Abraham Accords. But if you look on the ground today and also if you look at his promises when he formed this government, he basically said, [00:35:00] We have the right to self-



determination across the entire land, and we're going to settle it as much as we want.

And I think basically the difference on the right today is between, it's not, if we say that most of the West Bank will be under Israeli control, the question is whether Palestinians will be able to be citizens or not. And some think that they could be. Settlers will tell you yeah, they could become citizens as long as they respect that it's a Jewish country. There's a Jewish anthem. They're a minority here. Some of them will say that. But I think in reality, obviously if you look at what happens inside 1948 Israel today, that's not really gonna be the case.

## **Palestinian Attorney Noura Erakat\_ The U.S. Is Normalizing Apartheid by Hosting Israel's President - Democracy Now! - Air Date 7-18-23**

**NOURA ERAKAT:** So, let's just begin by setting up the context, that this is 2023, in the aftermath of the legacy human rights organizations, Israeli human rights organizations, U.N. committees, U.N. agencies, as well as multiple scholars and independent investigations have all concluded that Israel oversees an apartheid regime. This is also in a context where, since the collapse of the peace process in 2000, [00:36:00] Israel has made clear that there will be no Palestinian state, there will be no such thing as binationalism, that they will catalyze and enhance their takeover of Palestinian lands and their removal. They have shifted from occupation to warfare.

This is a completely different universe than the one [that] existed in 2000, and yet the rhetoric and the feedback surrounding Isaac Herzog's invitation and speech is one that completely ignores all of that. So, it's important to emphasize that this effort within Congress, specifically among a mainstream Democratic element, is meant to normalize apartheid. It's not just saying that they want to defend Israel. They are saying that if this is in fact apartheid, as all of these luminaries and experts have concluded, then in this case it's OK, it should be an exception, and it should be exemplary for others to follow.

And so, [00:37:00] I applaud the progressive members of Congress who are skipping this address. I encourage other members of Congress to do the same and continue — continue to build the momentum amongst a progressive base that sees Palestine squarely within a social justice agenda. This is already manifest in social justice movements, such as Black-Palestinian transnational



solidarity, that has centered that this is a joint struggle, that has endorsed BDS, and that, in fact, catapulted many of these progressive Democrats into office. This is also evident amongst the Democrats themselves. Not only has Israel become a bipartisan issue, but for the first time ever, more Palestinian — more Democrats sympathize with Palestinians than they do with Israelis, according to a 2023 Gallup poll. Continue to build that momentum. Resist this movement to normalize apartheid.

What the members of Congress are doing with the invitation, what they did in response to [00:38:00] Representative Jayapal's very accurate statement that Israel is a racist state, is akin to gaslighting, for lack of a better word, but really is normalization, that is responding to the fact that they have lost the battle on the grassroots level and are trying to stem, from the top down, what they couldn't defeat from the bottom up. And we see this not only in this normalization, but we also see it in the passage of anti-BDS resolutions, as well as the adoption of the Israel Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition that wants to equate criticism of Israel with antisemitism.

**AMY GOODMAN - HOST, DEMOCRACY NOW!:** Noura, I wanted to play the clip you were just referring to, to the Progressive Caucus chair, Congressmember Pramila Jayapal, who made headlines this weekend after she called Israel a “racist state” while speaking at the Netroots Nation conference in Chicago, Saturday.

**CONGRESSMEMBER JAYAPAL:** I want you to know that we have been fighting to make it clear that Israel is a racist state, that the Palestinian people [00:39:00] deserve self-determination and autonomy, that the dream — that the dream of a two-state solution is slipping away from us.

**AMY GOODMAN - HOST, DEMOCRACY NOW!:** After facing criticism, Congressmember Jayapal later clarified her comments, writing, “I do not believe the idea of Israel as a nation is racist. I do, however, believe that Netanyahu's extreme right-wing government has engaged in discriminatory and outright racist policies and that there are extreme racists driving that policy within the leadership of the current government. ... We know that the status quo is unacceptable, untenable, and unjust,” Pramila Jayapal said. Your response to that, Noura Erakat?

**NOURA ERAKAT:** One, I want to point out that nothing that she said was controversial. If Representative Jayapal is wrong, then so are all the experts and the advocates that study this issue and that apply it across the globe. So, the attack on her is actually a bullying and harassment attack that is meant to scare

everyone else from even having a [00:40:00] conversation and acknowledging this reality on the ground, and, most importantly, taking responsibility for it.

The United States is not just a bystander here. The United States is complicit and a pillar of Israeli apartheid in its provision on unequivocal financial, diplomatic, and military support, that, but for that support, Israel could not sustain this regime, which is not surprising, which is not surprising at all, because the U.S. was the last pillar to fall, the last domino to fall, in sustaining apartheid in South Africa, where it had to fall in line with everyone else. But during apartheid South Africa and the international campaign against it, during that regime's tenure, the United States issued the most vetoes within the Security Council to protect apartheid there, just — to protect apartheid in Namibia and South Africa, and here we're seeing a similar pattern.

As to the way that Representative Jayapal amended her statement, note that she didn't walk it back. She didn't say that [00:41:00] Israel is a racist state. She wanted to make a distinction between Israeli people and the Israeli government. But what we need to understand here — and this is important for the audience to know — that she used the term "Israeli nation," and there is no such thing as an Israeli national within Israel's law.

And this is the crux of the matter. Israel bifurcates Jewish nationality from Israeli citizens so that it can flow all of the possessory rights to land, to employment, to housing, to the right to life through Jewish nationality in a way that it's extraterritorialized, so that a pubescent Jewish teen, who doesn't even know where Israel is on the map, ostensibly has more claim than a Palestinian grandma who is 80 years old, who was born before the state of Israel was established in 1948, has to those rights. Under any situation, we would decry this system as being discriminatory, contravening liberal norms of democracy. [00:42:00] But in this situation, the international community, specifically the United States and Western governments, want to insist that this exception is acceptable and exemplary.

And what I want to emphasize is that it actually is not just harmful to Palestinians, as evidenced by the systematic killing of Palestinians, the removal and the harm inflicted upon them, but that these ideas are not contained just to Israel-Palestine, but in fact are exported. These ideas of what sovereignty should look like are exported across the world. We see it embodied by the Hindutva movement in India and its reigning government. We also see it embodied even in the United States by European supremacists such as Richard Spencer, who says that he envisions that the future of European sovereignty should be modeled upon Israel's model of sovereignty. These ideas are dangerous. And it's not that we want to make an exception here. We want to

actually make it clear that there should be no situation where states are not states that belong to everybody who is [00:43:00] there, rather than to a nationality that exists extraterritorially.

## **The Palestine Laboratory Antony Loewenstein on How Israel Exports the Technology of Occupation - Democracy Now! - Air Date 6-23-23**

**AMY GOODMAN - HOST, DEMOCRACY NOW!:** Your book has just come out. What do you mean by the term “the Palestine laboratory”?

**ANTONY LOEWENSTEIN:** Thanks so much for having me on, Amy. What I mean by that is that the occupation of Palestine by Israel is now the longest occupation in modern times, 56 years and counting. There’s obviously been an occupation of sorts since 1948, but particularly since 1967. And during those years, what Israel has done, very successfully, from its perspective, is find various tools and technologies to maintain and control Palestinians. And what they’ve done during that time, what Israel has done, is increasingly export those tools and technologies, but also those methods, those so-called counterinsurgency methods.

So, what I look at in the book, both being on the ground in Palestine for many years and also through declassified documents and various interviews across the world, is that you find in over [00:44:00] 130 countries across the globe in the last decades, Israel has sold forms of anything from spyware, so-called smart walls, facial recognition tools — a range of tools of occupation and repression, that have initially been tested in Palestine on Palestinians. So, in other words, what I’m saying is that the occupation of Palestine is not staying there. It’s not a conflict that remains geographically based just in Palestine. It’s become so-called “global Palestine”.

**AMY GOODMAN - HOST, DEMOCRACY NOW!:** How would you describe “politicide”, a term you use?

**ANTONY LOEWENSTEIN:** Politicide, I think, was a term that was coined by Baruch Kimmerling, who is now the late, amazing academic. And he was talking really about the concept of a desire within many in the Israeli elite to find ways to destroy Palestinians, not necessarily just through killing them, but

also through extinguishing their political identity, their political self-determination.

And when looking from the [00:45:00] outside, one could argue that in some ways Palestinian resistance lives on. Your last segment talked about that very strongly. Palestinians mostly have not left Palestine. They remain there.

But certainly, from the current Israeli government, and, I would argue, for decades, there has been a sense that there's a way to crush Palestinian aspirations, their views, their political reality, their future, their horizon. And by doing so, Israel has increasingly marketed that to a global audience, including in its whole identity as an ethnonationalist state. It's arguably the most successful ethnonationalist state in the world, a Jewish supremacist state. And growing numbers of nations around the world, from India and others, look to Israel with admiration and inspiration.

**AMY GOODMAN - HOST, DEMOCRACY NOW!:** We just covered Modi and the lavish reception he got by the president of the United States, Biden, with a state dinner last night, the joint session of Congress. Talk about — a little more — [00:46:00] about how India looks to Israel.

**ANTONY LOEWENSTEIN:** Look, what India is doing under Modi, of course, is not solely because of Israel. But traditionally, Israel and India were not particularly good friends. But in the last 10 years or so, since Modi took power in 2014, there's been a real ideological alignment.

But the relationship is really twofold. One, it's a defense relationship. So India buys huge amounts of technology, defense equipment, spyware. I interview a number of people in my book, individuals in India, lawyers, others, who are spied on by Israeli spyware, particularly Pegasus by NSO Group. But also, there's an ideological alignment, a belief that many Indian officials in the Hindu fundamentalist government there are openly talking about admiration for what Israel is doing in the West Bank, and wanting to do something similar in Kashmir.

And what I mean by that is, they say that — two reasons. One, because Israel gets away with it. No one's stopping it. There's a complete state of impunity that Israel has [00:47:00] globally, really. But secondly, this idea of bringing in, according India's view, huge numbers of Hindus to Muslim-majority Kashmir to settle that territory, to build so-called settlements akin to what Israel is doing in the West Bank. And I think there's a really disturbing ideological alignment. I would actually make the comparison between Israel and India today to Israel

and apartheid South Africa back in the day — nations that were very, very close ideologically and got inspiration from each other, in the belief, in Israel's case, of course, being a Jewish supremacist state, in India's case, being increasingly a Hindu fundamentalist state. And that, to me, is something that should concern people, including the U.S. president.

**AMY GOODMAN - HOST, DEMOCRACY NOW!:** So, Antony, you talk about a Jewish supremacist state. I'm wondering if you could talk about your own background, something that you take on in this last piece you wrote, "Being Jewish and critical of Israel can make you an outcast. I should [00:48:00] know." And talk about your family, your grandparents, your great-grandparents, those who died in Auschwitz, those who didn't survive the Holocaust.

**ANTONY LOEWENSTEIN:** Most of my family, sadly, Amy, like most Jews who lived in Europe, perished in the Holocaust, including Auschwitz. And the ones who got out and escaped Europe, particularly in 1939, just before the war started, escaped to wherever they were given a visa: Australia, Canada, the U.S., elsewhere. And the ones who came to Australia, when I was growing up — I was born in the mid-'70s in Melbourne — Israel was not the center of their lives, but Israel was seen as a safe haven. For those who don't know, as a Jew, I can go to Israel tomorrow, and within a few months, I can almost certainly be a Jewish citizen, if I can prove that I'm Jewish.

And I think, for many Jews, including my family, there was a real reluctance, and, in fact, a hostility, to any kind of Palestinian reality, Palestinian story, even to meet Palestinians. I mean, as a young Jew, I [00:49:00] never met Palestinians. And I think there is a change going on, but, certainly, when I started writing about this issue around 20 years ago — I wrote a book in 2006 called *My Israel Question*, where there were attempts by the Israel lobby in Australia to censor the book. There was attempts to pulp the book. There was condemnations of me in Parliament. I mean, it was ridiculous. The book became a best-seller, thanks to all that ridiculous controversy. But over that time, my parents, both of whom lost most of their Jewish friends, because it was the sins of the son — I was being critical of Israel. I was trying to humanize Palestinians.

Now, I'm not the only Jew, of course, who was saying this. And I'm really encouraged in the last years, in Australia, the U.S. and other Western countries, a growing, almost like a Jewish insurgency against particularly an older generation of Jews who doesn't want to humanize Palestinians and somehow believes that Jewish identity should be tied to Jewish supremacy. And so, for me, personally, I don't claim to [00:50:00] be a victim. That story that you

referenced at the beginning sort of gives a bit of a pallid history of my life, but also explains that one does pay a price for it. One does pay a price as a Jewish person. I'm a secular anti-Zionist Jew today. But I feel often that there is a real moral collapse in much of the Jewish diaspora in the last decade. It is changing, but not nearly fast enough.

## **The Palestine Laboratory Antony Loewenstein on How Israel Exports the Technology of Occupation Part 2 - Democracy Now! - Air Date 6-23-23**

**AMY GOODMAN - HOST, DEMOCRACY NOW!:** Antony, we were talking about the horrific shipwreck last week of migrants, maybe up to 700 dead. Can you talk about Israeli technology used by the European Union to surveil and target asylum seekers?

**ANTONY LOEWENSTEIN:** This really shocked me, you know, years ago, when I started doing some work on this issue. The short version is that the European Union in the last years after 2015, when they were, in their view, overwhelmed by particularly Muslim refugees from Syria, Afghanistan and elsewhere, didn't want to ever repeat that. And they [00:51:00] put in place almost a fortress-type Europe, which has occurred in the last years, which is a range of tools and technologies to keep people out — mostly Muslim and Brown and Black bodies, of course.

And part of that arsenal is using Israeli drones. They're unarmed, but they are flying over the Mediterranean 24/7, and they're used mostly by Frontex, which is the EU's sort of border security arm. And they're the eyes in the sky, essentially. So, they are sending back all these images 24/7 to Warsaw, which is where Frontex is based. And the EU has made a decision — of course, they don't admit this, but this is the reality — of letting people drown. This is the new policy. There are very, very few rescue boats. The EU barely rescues anyone. There are some NGOs that are trying to do so, and I deeply admire what they're doing. So, the Israeli drone becomes a key arsenal in part of this infrastructure of essentially allowing people to drown. And to me, it [00:52:00] really goes to the heart of why Israeli drones are used by the EU, because they were battle-tested in Palestine over Gaza in a number of years in the last 15 years.



And you see this almost Israeli border-industrial complex exported across the U.S.-Mexico border, for example. There are massive amounts of Israeli surveillance towers, made by Elbit, which is Israel's leading defense company, dotted across the border. It's a key part of the U.S. arsenal across its border with Mexico. And why was that company chosen by the U.S.? Because, of course, it was tested first in Palestine.

So, to me, the real concern in the 21st century is, as the climate crisis worsens, as resource wars are worsening, as refugee numbers have never been higher since World War II, many Western nations are, sadly, making a choice to not welcome people in — as we saw with the recent awful shipwreck disaster in the [00:53:00] Mediterranean — but, in fact, to build higher walls and more surveillance. And Israeli surveillance and technology and repression is part of that arsenal that many nations are now buying, because it's been used, in their view, successfully on Palestinians in Palestine.

**AMY GOODMAN - HOST, DEMOCRACY NOW!:** And do you have evidence of the United States in particularly controversial situations working with Israel to perhaps have, for example, in Guatemala, Israel work there so that the United States won't get — won't be held responsible?

**ANTONY LOEWENSTEIN:** Absolutely. One of the things I document in the book really clearly is that over the last 50 years a lot of nations that the U.S. was close to, Israel almost became an American wingman, often supporting, arming, training nations the U.S. even couldn't do officially because of some issue maybe in Congress. And that did include nations like Guatemala, including at a point where they were committing genocide against their Indigenous populations. [00:54:00] And one of the reasons that many of those nations — Guatemala, Honduras, Chile under Pinochet, a range of other nations in Latin and South America, or, of course, it went far further, including in Africa and Asia — was that these nations were really attracted by the idea of learning the so-called skills that Israel was gaining through its occupation after 1967. How is it managing the Palestinian population? How is it repressing them, essentially?

And a huge amount of evidence, through declassified documents and interviews, much of which is in the book, virtually goes to the heart of showing that the U.S. and Israel became almost like invaluable partners during that period, to the point where today — look, America remains the world's biggest arms dealer. Forty percent of the world's arms is sold by the U.S. Israel is now 10th. And just last week, in fact, Israel released its 2022 arms figures: \$12.5 billion U.S., the biggest amount ever. [00:55:00] And 25% of that was going to Arab autocracies, after the so-called Abraham Accords, the Trump deal from a few years ago. So we're talking about Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Morocco and



others. So, what are they selling? They're selling repressive technology, spyware, intelligence gathering, a range of other tools, to prop up U.S.- and Israeli-backed dictatorships in the Middle East. So, this is what the Israeli arms industry is about. Like, this, to me, is not just a moral failing, but a really dark stain on the Jewish legacy 75 years after the Holocaust. Like, this is what we've become — "we" meaning the Jewish population of the world. The legacy seems to be backing and supporting and arming the worst regimes in the world.

**AMY GOODMAN - HOST, DEMOCRACY NOW!:** Let me ask you about something you mentioned earlier, and that's NSO's Pegasus. Explain further how it's used and how it is used to infect the phones, for example, of journalists, some, [00:56:00] for example, who are in jail, like in Morocco, as you talk about the Abraham Accords, Omar Radi, who we interviewed before he was imprisoned, and has been now for several years.

**ANTONY LOEWENSTEIN:** Pegasus got a lot of attention in the last years, as viewers will know, as probably the most known or infamous Israeli spyware. Essentially, it's a tool that allows any government or military intelligence or police department to spy on someone's phone, iPhone or Android, and get all the information from that phone. And it's popped up in dozens and dozens of countries around the world. And I spend a lot of time in the book interviewing some of the victims of that surveillance, in Togo, for example, in Mexico, in India. And Mexico, interestingly enough, is the biggest user of Pegasus by far. There is an absolute addiction in Mexico, both under right-wing governments and the current nominally left-wing government. Governments don't want to give this tool up. And it's not just Pegasus. Of course, there are many other [00:57:00] Israeli companies doing the same thing.

But one of the things that I explore in the book is that so much of the media in the last years around Pegasus missed the key point. It was almost framed as a rogue Israeli company doing terrible things around the world, when, in fact, companies like Pegasus actually are only private in name. They are basically arms of the state. Netanyahu and the Mossad, who have been going to various countries in the last 10 years — I document this in the book, and this has also been shown by Haaretz, the Israeli newspaper — often go to nations, like Saudi Arabia, Rwanda and others, and they hold Pegasus and other tools as a diplomatic carrot: "If you support us in the U.N. or elsewhere, we will sell you the most powerful spyware in the world." And it works, because it's been sold in UAE, in Saudi, in Rwanda and many other repressive states. So, unless there is a complete ban or massive regulation, which currently does not exist at all, these technologies will continue. And even [00:58:00] if NSO Group disappears tomorrow — and it's currently in financial crisis — many other companies do

exactly the same thing, and which is why Israel is now one of the leading spyware exporters in the world.

## **Protests in Israel: The Rights Further Consolidation of Power Part 3 - Intercepted - Air Date 7-26-23**

**MURTAZA HUSSAIN - CO-HOST, INTERCEPTED:** You mentioned that from the U. S. perspective, that it's very important that Israel appears to be a democracy, and the trajectory that's going on right now suggests it'll be less and less like that, and were there to be a collapse in the P. A. or annexation of the West Bank, certainly the chaos that projects from Israel will be greater.

From the perspective of the Israeli right, and given these discussions, even in the press in the U. S. increasingly cutting aid to Israel or conditioning aid to Israel, do they feel that the U. S. relationship is critical to their plans in the future, or do they feel that they can hold on to that military and political relationship regardless of how things may change in the West Bank? Do they see this as a relationship to outgrow, I would say, or is it something that they expect to be there regardless of what they pursue in the future?

**MAIRAV ZONSZEIN:** If you talk to the practical [00:59:00] right and the military right, which is a big chunk of the people who control the mechanisms of this country, they would say that, of course, the US- israel relationship is the most important thing. I think the foreign ministry, even today, under Netanyahu's foreign minister -- it could be that it was the previous one -- but their main goal is to maintain and strengthen the US-Israel relationship, and if you talk to former military intelligence heads and heads of the Sheen they all agree that the biggest threat right now is a) national unity as a result of what's happening, but b) the threat that the US will no longer support Israel in the same way. So the practical Right thinks that it's necessary, it's the most important kind of asset that Israel has. If you talk to the more nationalist, far-settler-right, they make comments about how, oh, we respect the US of course, but we're a sovereign country and we'll do what we want.

You even had Naftali Bennett who doesn't live in a settlement, but is a pro-settler politician, talking about how Israel has become an economic [01:00:00] power in the region and it doesn't really need US aid in the same way that it did. And he actually wants to wean Israel off of this aid in order to be able to do things with more currency.

You have different perspectives. But I think the security apparatus and establishment is very concerned that the politicians in power, again, some of which have no security background at all, and the opposite -- they have a background of attacking security forces in Israel -- that they are completely undermining the US-Israel relationship. And that will hurt in the future.

And I think we are going to see, even if it's not an announcement that the US is going to stop aid, because I don't think that's going to happen anytime soon, but we probably could see little movements the kinds that Obama even tried to do, which is to abstain from vetoing a UN resolution on settlements or things of this nature, and I think probably we can expect that to happen a bit more, but it won't be formal. It'll be very tacit and piecemeal.

**JEREMY SCAHILL - CO-HOST, INTERCEPTED:** This doesn't often get mentioned but part of what I think people need to understand about this four billion plus dollars in what is just universally [01:01:00] referred to as aid, a lot of money that the US is giving to Israel actually comes back to US defense contractors and the war industry. There's a way in which it's also, it's not just about the US-Israel special relationship, there's a capitalist dimension to this. There's a war profiteering dimension to this. And there's the military-industrial complex in the United States which benefits from it. And then those companies are financing the election campaigns of many politicians in the United States, both Democrat and Republican. I just think it's important to put that on the table, because it's surprising, but it just doesn't often get mentioned.

But related to that aspect of this, Mairav, I wanted to ask you is there anything about this current situation that can tell us anything about Israel's posture right now and the Netanyahu government toward Iran? Is there any connection between this judicial move, this law, and Israel's posture toward Iran at this moment?

**MAIRAV ZONSZEIN:** It's funny because the Iran issue is something that Netanyahu has built [01:02:00] his career on, he went to Congress about it, and we actually haven't heard him talking about Iran that much lately, even though we are in a moment in time where Iran could not be closer to a nuclear weapon as a result of Trump, at his behest, pulling out of the JCPOA.

I'm not sure I see a direct connection, but I do see that Netanyahu has, for a long time, and we reached the point that we reached because he has been attacking civil society, inciting against Palestinians, and creating facts on the ground to build this conservative kind of camp, and also making relationships with the evangelicals and the Republicans, which would not make it so that he doesn't

really need Joe Biden because he can wait for the next election and he doesn't even need him.

But if you ask me specifically on the Iran issue, if Israel wants to build up a military power to strike Iran, or if it wants to build up a credible military threat with the US, then obviously what it's doing now is counterintuitive to that. So I'm not really sure what Netanyahu's strategy on that is. And again, the [01:03:00] security establishment is very much against Netanyahu and what he's doing because, specifically of this issue, that we need the US's support, whether they do it with us or without us, we need US support. But I guess, part of Netanyahu's foreign policy the last few years has been to build up what he would have hoped would have been an Arab NATO against Iran. That obviously isn't happening. And, his push for normalization with Saudi Arabia I think is part of this effort and part of also a way to detract from his domestic issues, because I don't think it's something that is going to happen anytime in the near future.

So I think he may be using the judicial overhaul -- and let's not forget he's on trial for corruption -- using those issues to detract, and then come back to the Iran issue when it's convenient for him. But if you look at the practical approach, he's not really doing what a responsible kind of an adult who wants to make sure that Iran doesn't have a nuclear weapon should be doing.

So I don't know if that's him being irrational or him just worrying [01:04:00] only about his own political survival, but it doesn't really seem to add up.

## **Final comments on the circular Supreme Court case sending Israel into a spiral of chaos**

**JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT:** We've just heard clips today, starting with Ali Velshi arguing that the U. S. shouldn't be inviting Netanyahu for photo ops while he's actively undermining democracy in Israel. Democracy Now! looked at the Israeli Supreme Court reforms and the protests supporting democracy in that country. Intercepted discussed how the right is consolidating power in Israel and the impacts of that shift.

Deconstructed tried to wrap their minds around the pretzel logic of refusing to call Israel an apartheid state because maybe at some point in the future they won't be. Intercepted looked at the division in the protest of the Supreme Court issue and the Palestine issue, as well as visions for the West Bank.

Democracy Now! discussed the arguments around labeling Israel an apartheid state, and Democracy Now! also discussed the technological side of Israeli occupation. That's what everybody heard, but members also heard two additional bonus clips. [01:05:00] The first from Democracy Now! continuing the discussion about Israeli technology being exported to the rest of the world.

And Intercepted looked at the importance of the continued support of the U. S. to the Israeli far right. To hear that and have all of our bonus content delivered seamlessly to the new members only podcast feed that you'll receive, sign up to support the show at [bestoftheleft.com slash support](https://bestoftheleft.com/support), or shoot me an email requesting a financial hardship membership, because we don't let a lack of funds stand in the way of hearing more information.

Additional episodes of Best of the Left you may want to check out for more context include No. 1542, Despair and Violence in Israel's Illiberal and Exclusionary Democracy. C. That's from February of this year, and it's basically a prequel to today's news, discussing the election of the far right government and warning about the reforms that were planned at the time and are now being implemented.

But number 1447 [01:06:00] settler colonialist structures around the world. That's from October, 2021 is really interesting because it looks at the dynamics and structures of settler colonialism, including the us. Caribbean, Australia, Israel, and Mexico. So it's really useful as a perspective to recognize that what's happening in Israel isn't unique to them or anything intrinsic to the Jewish people, Palestinian people, or their individual or shared histories.

It's really just the dynamics of settler colonialism playing themselves out. Again, those were episodes 1542 and 1447. Now, to wrap up, I just wanted to make mention of the Israeli Supreme Court hearing for challenges to the new law that is meant to limit Supreme Court power by giving the legislature the ability to vote to ignore Supreme Court rulings.

[01:07:00] And if that sounds circular, you are right. And that is exactly why this is such a dangerous path for the Parliament to have sent them down. The whole idea is that the Supreme Court is supposed to be a check on legislative power, and this is totally normal. But the legislature passed a law to limit the power of the Supreme Court to limit the power of the legislature.

So now the Supreme Court will have to decide whether to reject the law as an overreach of legislative power. And then you might be able to guess where that could go. So there should be a ruling by January. It's going to be fascinating no

matter what happens. The three basic options for how it could play out are number one, they allow the law to stand.

And give the legislature, currently led by a far right coalition, essentially unchecked power. Number two, they reject the law as unreasonable overreach of legislative power, and the previous status [01:08:00] quo sort of goes back into place. Or three, they reject the law, but then the legislature votes to ignore the Supreme Court, and the country spirals into an abyss of constitutional crisis like we haven't seen in a good long time.

Have I mentioned before that 2024 is going to be a hell of a year? That feels like something I've said and that you should be girding yourself now for the onslaught of completely wild news and politics coming our way. Anyway, if I hadn't said it before, I've said it now. That is going to be it for today.

As always, keep the comments coming in. I would love to hear your thoughts or questions about this or anything else. You can leave us a voicemail or send us a text to 202 999 3991 or simply email me to jay at bestoftheleft. com. Thanks to everyone for listening. Thanks to Deon Clark and Erin Clayton for their research work for the show and participation in our bonus episodes.

Thanks to our transcriptionist trio, Ken, Brian, and Lawendy [01:09:00] for their volunteer work helping put our transcripts together. Thanks to Amanda Hoffman for all of her work on our social media outlets, activism segments, graphic designing, webmastering, and bonus show co hosting. And thanks to those who already support the show by becoming a member or purchasing gift memberships at bestoftheleft.

com slash support. You can join them by signing up today. It would be greatly appreciated. You'll find that link to sign up in the show notes, along with a link to join our Discord community, where you can continue the discussion. So, coming to you from far outside the conventional wisdom of Washington, DC, my name is Jay, and this has been the *Best of the Left* podcast, coming to you twice weekly, thanks entirely to the members and donors to the show, from bestoftheleft. com.