



## Ep 146 - Judith Butler on the Gaza offensive

**Jovanni:** [00:00:00] Welcome, everyone, to Fortress On A Hill, a podcast about U. S. foreign policy, anti militarism, skepticism, and the American way of war. I'm Jovanni. Thank you for being with us today. With me today is my co host, Monisha. Monisha, how are you today?

**Monisha:** I'm doing all right, hanging in there. I'm ready for this.

**Jovanni:** All right. All right. Um, so here we go. So, uh, it's been over three weeks since the October 7th daring surprise military assault by Hamas led coalition struck Israeli [00:01:00] positions outside of the separation wall of Gaza. Since then, the IDF has unleashed an onslaught of aerial bombardments on the 2.3 million residents living in a small besieged enclave of Gaza. Which most people regard as the world's largest open air prison, killing an estimated amount of roughly 7,000 people, mostly civilians, in what most of the world sees as a genocide. Israel has cut food, water, and electrical power to the enclave and has stopped humanitarian aid from entering.

Several resolutions have been presented at the United... National Security Council calling for a ceasefire each time the United States has vetoed them. While hundreds of thousands of people around the world take to the streets to demand a ceasefire, still the carnage continues. President Joe Biden has responded by rushing American military assets to theater, which includes two aircraft carriers and several battleships, and asking Congress for an extra 106 billion.

Billion dollar package to fund both [00:02:00] Israel and Ukraine as the situation continues to escalate thousands of American Jews, mobilizing hundreds of cities across the country to organize large protests and demonstrations demanding an end to the carnage and a just peace. Here to tell us more, we're joined by Judith Norman. Judith Norman, how are you?

**Judith Norman:** Very good. Thank you so much. I'm glad to be here.

**Monisha:** Going on right now, and you've been doing a lot as well with Jewish Force for Peace, doing a lot of actions on the ground, um, and yourself, how are you holding up with, with all of this? And, and personally, you know, like your, your health, your, your well being, how are you really?

**Judith Norman:** Oh, thank you. That's a very kind question.

Um, I've been better. I, um, I have friends in Gaza, um, and I'm worried about them. I have, um, uh, I know people in the West Bank. I'm worried about them because that's an area that Israel is attacking. [00:03:00] Um, uh, It's escalated the violence radically in the West Bank. Um, and there's not a lot of attention to that because allies are in Gaza.

Um, and I know people, um, in Israel who, uh, are amongst the sort of, uh, kid, well, I don't know personally, but I have friends of friends who have been affected by the violence there. So, um, it's, it's a lot to take. Um, uh, I'm finding a lot of comfort in organizing around this issue though. That's, that's. It's helped me find a community and it feels good to be taking action.

**Monisha:** Thank you for sharing that with us and humanizing yourself.

And when you, you talk about your organizing, can you tell our listeners more about who you are as an organizer, more about Jewish Voice for Peace and the work that you all are doing?

**Judith Norman:** Absolutely. So I'm organizing with several groups. I'm with Jewish Voice for Peace, but also a local group called San Antonio for Justice [00:04:00] in Palestine.

Um, I entered this organizing area, um, as a Jewish person, because, I mean, Israel, uh, Has this claim to be the Jewish state. Um, it's basically annexed Judaism. It's weaponized Judaism and uses it as a tool to, uh, cover up, defend and justify its settler colonialist policies. Um, and so, uh, the thought behind Jewish Voice for Peace and Jewish oriented activist spaces in general is that we

have a distinctive role to play in, um, in, uh, pushing back against these Israeli claims.

Um, I know a lot of people, um, Are, uh, get confused about this, um, about the situation. I don't want to call it a conflict because that implies two sides, but it gets confused about the nature of the occupation, um, because on the one hand, it does seem like things are bad for Palestine, but on the other [00:05:00] hand, uh, you know, Jews have suffered, uh, immense Prancis, uh, de Violence over the course of centuries.

I mean, culminating in the Holocaust. And so, uh, if Israel is a place of Jewish safety, why should the world object? And that's, um, that's a myth that I think that Jewish people, um, are in a position to really diffuse. The accusation of anti Semitism is a vile one, but it's used against Israel's critics a lot and Jewish people have a role to play in standing up against that criticism and diffusing the myths that it's based on.

**Monisha:** Thank you for that, and thank you for correcting my language on that. I think it's really important that we are precise in how we describe, um, what is happening. Um, so, I really appreciate that. And, um, turning it over to you, Jovanni, for the next.

**Jovanni:** Yeah, absolutely. Uh, Judith, please tell us, uh, what you know. [00:06:00] Uh, it's currently happening in Gaza and the larger Palestinian territories. Uh, what is the context people are missing here?

**Judith Norman:** Yeah, absolutely. So, I mean, there's a big picture and a small picture, right? The sort of big, long lasting context is settler colonialism. That, uh, there is this land called Palestine.

Um, there's been this land called Palestine for many thousands of years. Um, It's been, uh, administered by a number of empires, but in the middle of the 20th century, um, it, uh, um, it became the, uh, home to a settler colonial movement known as Zionism, which, uh, claimed that, um, it was, uh. The place where, uh, it was going to be the country of, uh, uh, uh, it was going to be a country for Jews.

It was going to be a place of Jewish safety. It was going to be the, um, landing spot for the refugees from World War II and from the anti Semitic violence that was accelerating over the course of the [00:07:00] 20th century. Um, uh, now the Jews who were escaping that violence by and large wanted to come to the United States, right?

And that seemed, there was, a history of Jews coming to the United States. My, my, um, relatives had come to the United States and that was the preferred landing place for the majority of Jews fleeing.

But we're prevented because of, you know, anti semitic immigration policies and had to go to Palestine, where, you know, under the guidance and control of colonial powers, they were encouraged to take a colonial position on their presence there and formed the State of Israel, which is a settler colony. On the land of the indigenous Palestinians. Um, since then, there's been, um, they've had a will to conflate Zionism and Judaism. Right? So Zionism is the, um, [00:08:00] doctrine that the Jews, uh, uh, should have an ethno state in historic Palestine. It's a colonialist political doctrine. Many Jews rejected, but, it's enabled Israel to sort of claim, um, credibility on Jewish grounds. And it's meant that people who object to Israel get called anti Semitic. Um, and again, I got into this activism on the grounds that, um, um, as Jews, we have a special, uh, um, role in, um, in objecting to that conflation.

**Jovanni:** Absolutely, absolutely. Yes, and you are right. Anytime people bring up or try to ask questions, at least, or, you know, or just say something, just some mild criticism of actions taken by the State of Israel, the government of Israel, you're automatically accused of being anti Semitic if you're not, if you're not Jewish, right?

I've also seen people, you know, [00:09:00] online who are Jewish and takes the, uh, the, uh, the critical role, critical, uh, take on Israel, but they also get attacked by, by people for, under a different, different, um, um, adjective. Um, so yeah, um, so yeah, can you, uh, can you walk us through a little bit, uh, what was happening, um, in Gaza?

Prior to October 7th, or not only in Gaza, but the larger Palestinian territories prior to October 7th and what kind of led to this

situation.

**Judith Norman:** Yeah, absolutely. So, um, Gaza since, uh, uh, well, for 75 years, but mostly since 2005, um, has been a sealed off enclave in which, uh, uh, In which, in which the Palestinian population, which has now reached 2.

3 million of mostly refugees has been enclosed. It's been described [00:10:00] accurately, I believe, as a concentration camp or the largest open air prison. It's been under Israeli, uh, Occupation and siege. Israel controls the borders, controls what goods come in and out, controls the economy, um, and

periodically every couple of years, um, subjects it to a carpet bombing campaign.

Um, so we have an enclosed Largely youth, uh, um, highly populated, highly densified, um, hyper traumatized population, um, living in this land. Because Israel controls the materials that come in and out after they've destroyed the water infrastructure and the, um, aquifer. Um, they refused to allow, um, uh, equipment to be brought in to repair it.

And so 96 percent of the Gazan drinking water is [00:11:00] contaminated. They destroyed the sewage plant. And so the Gazans had no alternative but to dump sewage into the Mediterranean, which destroyed their fishing resources. If they go far enough into the Mediterranean to find fish that are contaminated, then Israel shoots at them.

If they go near the fence that's their perimeter, Israel shoots at them. If they, um, uh, so it's, it's, um, Israel controls the amount of food that goes into the territory, counts the number of calories that it needs to provide so as to escape the, um, accusation of starving the population under international law.

Controls the amount of medicine that goes, and I visited Gaza twice, once in 2015 and once in 2016. Um, I, towards some of the hospitals, they have, um, the, the medicine is, is radically insufficient for a population like that.

[00:12:00] The, um, the materials that are supplied are radically insufficient. And so there's a population that was, uh, uh, enclosed, ignored, and, you know, left basically to die.

That's been the case for almost, almost 20 years. The, um, the residents of Gaza, um, have tried, uh, various nonviolent means of resistance to try to draw attention to their plight. A couple of years ago, they began, um, a nonviolent campaign called the Great March of Return, where, uh, Gazans would come to the border.

Um, it's not really a border. They'd come to the perimeter where Israel has caged them. Um, they'd demonstrate, they'd dance, they'd eat, they'd celebrate their culture, and they'd object to the fact that they were caged. You have to understand that the, um, uh, The siege began in [00:13:00] 2005. And so the majority of Gazan young people, the vast majority of Gazan young people have never been outside.

They're descended from refugees. They can see the villages that their grandparents were, um, uh, thrown out of in, um, uh, at the foundation of the

State of Israel. Um, but they've never been able to visit. They've never been able to see it. So, a couple of years ago, they started the Great March of Return and Israel shot their legs.

They used experimental bullets. That would explode inside of them to cause unprecedented amounts of bone damage. The doctors had seen nothing like it. They kept demonstrating. Israel kept shooting their legs. You go to Gaza, you'll see young men all over the place who have, uh, limbs amputated because of that.

Uh, the, the Great March of Return was an attempt to raise awareness for what was going on in Gaza. Who knows what's going on in Gaza? [00:14:00] The media's forgotten about them. It's a concentration camp that nobody, you know, nobody knows about. It seems like nobody cares about. The people of Gaza have media. They can see, you know, the, the, the extent to which the world cares about them.

And it's hardly at all. And so on October 7th, an armed group of the political group Hamas, uh, burst out of the cage unexpectedly. Um, right next to the concentration camp, some Israeli peaceniks were having a rave. Um, they were innocent civilians having a rave two kilometers from a concentration camp.

There's just so much going on in there. I'll tell you, let me tell you, when I went to Gaza in 2015, um, it was like, it

was an environment in which the population was living lives of, you know, immense [00:15:00] trauma. They'd been through, I mean, again, in addition to the sort of structural violence of living under this sort of deprivation. Israel carpet bombs it every couple of years and people have nowhere to go. There's nowhere safe.

Israel bombs schools, UN facilities, hospitals. There's nowhere safe to go. And so the population is not only deprived, but hyper traumatized. It disrupts the family structures because children feel like their parents can't defend them. So, it pollutes the family structures. There's nobody to heal them psychologically because the psychologists have all been through this.

They don't just experience secondary trauma by listening to their patients. They've experienced primary trauma. And it's not, there's not PTSD because there's no post because nothing changes. The conditions that would prevent another carpet bombing are, [00:16:00] just don't, don't occur. They never know when it's going to happen again.

And so they've lived like that for almost 20 years. Oh, when I was in Gaza, we, we got, we, we, we, we were able to leave Gaza. It was, it was unusual that we were there. We were able to leave. Um, and um, uh, and right when we left on the border, we went to what was basically an Israeli Denny's. Families were there eating pancakes and laughing.

This was right outside of a concentration camp. The, it's clear that the country, I mean, Israel, I don't know if they don't know or don't care. It's just sort of, it's just dropped out of discourse. It's been invisibilized. So militants from Hamas, which is the governing body in Israel, which has undertaken terrorist tactics, broke out of the cage.

Um, and, um, uh, [00:17:00] uh, uh, massacred, um, hundreds of people at this rave, massacred hundreds of, um, Israeli, uh, civilians in the, um, nearby towns, um, and took 200 hostages. Um, I guess, I mean, it's horrible. Violent resistance is horrible like this. I want to put it into the context of the people of Gaza tried nonviolent resistance.

For years. So, it was basically a question of whether you're going to die silently or die, you know, uh, violently. So, after that happened, I mean, we all saw what happened. You know, Israel sort of were under attack. This is horrible. We need to destroy Hamas. Um, and started to, um, uh, uh, started to re bomb Gaza with, you know, intensified ferocity.

Um, and a couple days ago, they, um, shut off. All telecommunications to and from the Gaza [00:18:00] Strip. People I know there were being, were, were, um, people I know with relatives inside were hysterical, right? They knew the bombing was going on. They know that at that point, it was 4 or 5, 000 people were killed and they couldn't get a hold of their relatives.

Um, apparently they switched back to telecommunications because the US asked them to, or told them to. Um, I don't know what sort of communications goes on under the, um, radar there. But clearly. The U. S. is able to, the U. S. has its finger on this. The U. S. could stop this if it wanted to. And here we are. Um, uh, there's been no effective response to the Israeli bombing.

The casualties are racking up. We're seeing pictures of, um, uh, absolutely devastated, uh, civilian population, and we're just waiting to see what the end game here is.

**Jovanni:** Yeah, here in the United States, the tribe, just like you mentioned earlier, um, what you just [00:19:00] mentioned here in the United States, the, um, the narrative as, you know, we've just been attacked.

They try to conjure memories of nine 11. They try to, they try to frame it as, as Israel's Pearl Harbor. And that just pretty much to, to conjure, uh, uh, sympathy and to conjure, uh, consent. To create consent here in the United States for what it's about to be, what it's about to, to happen. If you, if you go back to the nine 11, the second nine 11, not the original sign nine 11, but the second nine 11 of 2021.

With that, they just unleashed a flood of violence that, that pretty much destabilized the whole region, attacked, um, governments were overthrown, millions of people were killed, you know, eight, like seven, eight Um, countries were attacked, they continue to be attacked, uh, to this day, um, so, so when they framed it to 9 11, and, and back then, I remember back then I was in the military, I was still a soldier back then, uh, [00:20:00] because of, of the images of the towers, you know, they were able to, to, to, uh, generate that consent.

Uh, within the American population that, you know, all bets are off, you know, just going to, you know, uh, just going to bomb everybody, you know, and that was the sentiment at the time in the United States and within the military. I mean, I was surrounded by people that had just this psychotic attitude towards towards Muslims back then.

Um, and I feel that this, again, bringing up 9 11, again, after after 12 7, bringing up Pearl Harbor and everything, I think this was also a way to prepare the population in Israel. Not only in Israel, but the Western population. It was part of the Western population to accept, uh, what, what the, what the government or the state of Israel was about to do.

Um, you got any thoughts there, monisha?

**Monisha:** Yeah, I have a lot. Um, but, um, I want to say I know in the intro, you had mentioned [00:21:00] around 7, 000, um, assassinations, essentially of Palestinians. And I think now the I'm I have Al Jazeera up while we're talking and I'm I'm going to stop. I think it's now, the numbers of the murdered have grown even more, um, over 8, 000 now, um, uh, so what you're describing in terms of the narrative, and Judith, what you've described Um, with the historic, uh, I don't even know the right word to call it, um, it seems just like a long annihilation,



**Judith Norman:** uh, um, yeah, well, the, I think one of the similarities with 9 11 is, I mean, I remember 9 11 happening, and one of the things is that we were sort of like, um, We were, we're, there was this demand for us to be [00:22:00] stupid, right?

It was sort of like our patriotic act to be stupid. I remember them, you know, it was like all the media had to say that the, um, the people who hijacked the planes and flew them into the buildings of 9 11 were, were cowards. We all had to say that they were cowards. Um, I remember thinking, you know, I mean, This is a horrible thing to do.

These are clearly people who, who do horrible thing I wouldn't say is cowardice, right? Sort of like, it's sort of like the one thing that doesn't apply, but that was the one thing we were all forced to say. This is a cowardly act, cowardly. It's like, That, that's like the one bad thing that doesn't fit in terms of a description of this, right?

So, but, but it was required to say that they were cowardly. So, we were sort of like forced to be stupid, right? We were forced to say things that we knew were stupid as a mark of our patriotism. In this case, too, it's sort of like, you know, the Hamas attack, you know, which I certainly, you know, it's horrible, right?

That it came out of [00:23:00] nowhere, right? You know, that we were forced to sort of like, you know, pretend that there's no context for this. And if we, if we suggest that there's a context for this, then we're, you know, we're not sympathetic or anti Semitic or something like that. Um, and so this enforced stupidity as a way in which consent is manufactured.

It's like, we all see this. We all see that, you know, the people who bombed the trade, World Trade Towers, you know, were horrible in so many ways, but just not, not, you know, not, not cowardly, you know, sort of like, we can all see this, but we're forced to pretend we don't. Sort of, empire has no clause. We know that, you know, the Palestinians have been onto this sort of like, vicious, brutal Well, you know, uh, genocidal structural violence for 75 years, but somehow we're forced to sort of, like, pretend that we haven't seen that.

Huh? It's a really, it's, it's a bizarre media story. I mean, what's bizarre about it is it works. Right? Why, why [00:24:00] don't, why, why are we being shut down for saying there's a context in which this has happened? And yet, um, it's invisibilized. But again, you know, I left, I left a concentration camp and, you know, yards away, there's a Denny's, you know?

So, so the invisibilizing was ongoing. It's, um, it's, it's stunning.

**Jovanni:** What you were mentioning earlier about, you know, how the media, how the media just pretty much manufactured this narrative, just created this narrative and just, and just stupefied people, right?

And like you mentioned earlier, you give You gave, uh, I think you gave two examples, you gave one big example about the Great March of Return, which was a peaceful, uh, demonstration. They were gunned down, people were gunned down, you know, by, because, and they were, and they were, and the thing that they were, because I remember that, I was in 2002, uh, 2001 and they were gunned down by snipers.

I mean, they weren't even close to, to, uh, to security forces. I mean, the [00:25:00] claim of, I felt threatened or I felt for my life. That's why I shot him down. That was that I didn't apply here because they were gunned down by snipers. I believe about two over 200 people were gunned down or more.

Um, yet in the media, every time there's an outburst of violence, uh, coming from. Um, the, the Palestinian side, because the violence, like you mentioned, the violence is ongoing on a daily basis from the Israeli side. But when it's an outburst of violence coming from the Palestinian side, the media always asks this question of where is the Palestinian Gandhi?

Where is the Palestinian MLK? You know, why can't? You know, why can't they just, you know, why can't they have sit ins, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. I remember Thomas Freeman, uh, framing it that way, you know, if, if, if Pasadena would be, if there was a Pasadena Gandhi, then the world would be more receptive to their message.

Uh, you have any thoughts on that?

**Judith Norman:** When I was in the West Bank, I met a man, um, named Isa Amro. And he was a genius of nonviolent resistance. He's organized, [00:26:00] he's, he's, uh, helped organize groups in Hebron where he lives, um, uh, uh, Youth Against Settlements, um, just all sorts of, you know, his house, his, uh, his presence is just sort of like a hub for nonviolent resistance.

I learned so much from his, um, From sitting in his home and listening to him. I mean, nonviolent resistance as sort of like, community, sort of mutual aid, right? So, just how the community can take care of itself and to sort of, to diffuse violence, to diffuse the need for, you know, the services that Israel is blocking.

Just, just, he, he is just a genius about it. Um, on October 8th. The day after, um, the, uh, the Hamas attack in, um, in southern Israel, um, he was kidnapped by, um, settlers, brought into, um, Israeli military custody, tortured for 10 hours and dumped out.[00:27:00] No reason. They just rounded him up, tortured him and dumped him out.

Um, there's the Palestinian Gandhi and that's what happens to him. There's Palestinian Gandhis in every, in every village. They're being, they're being rounded up, tortured, and dumped out as an, as an example for everybody to, to understand that this is what happens to you.

I mean, the nonviolent resistance movement is so, it's so threatening to Israel, right? So Israel doesn't, the threat of a good example here, that Israel really just wants to, wants to shut that sort of thing down. I mean, a good example of that is, um, uh, part of the nonviolent resistance that Palestinian civil society has, um, um, come up with is this sort of call for world, um, uh, boycott divestment in sanctions against Israel, right?

So we have this, proven method for nonviolent resistance that sort of engage, uh, uh, [00:28:00] people internationally. Um, and. It, uh, there are anti BDS laws, I think the majority of the U. S. states. Right? So, it gets, um, uh, criminalized to take nonviolent resist, the action of nonviolent resistance.

So, you know, all these sort of, like, state mechanisms for suppressing nonviolent resistance, um, creates, a media vacuum. And then there's sort of this cry as, well, where is it? Where is it? It's sort of like, it's here, it's here, right? You've made it illegal. You've put it in jail. You've done, but it's not a genuine question.

Where's the Palestinian Gandhi? Because if it was a genuine question, it would have been answered amply, you know, thousands of times over. It's not a genuine question. It's a way of posing Palestinians in a certain light.

**Monisha:** I wanted to touch on a couple of things, um, but I, I want to relate it all to, to what you've just described, Judith, with the BDS movement. I've been a long time supporter of it. I'm a [00:29:00] former president of Psychologists for Social Responsibility, um, and once we, it took a long time to get them to agree to support BDS, and then the backlash was immediate. And so earlier you were talking about narrative, essentially you were talking about narrative warfare. My dissertation was all about that, um, was about uncovering how the American Psychological Association is basically the research and development

wing of U. S. Israeli psychological warfare, um, starting with Division 19, which is the division for UFOs, Basically, military psychology.

The father of military psychology praised the Nazis for their use of psychologists in the field, um, during World War II. It's, it's disgusting. Um, and, and what's really horrific as well is the, the way that Zionism is dominant in the American Psychological Association, [00:30:00] even within the Division of Peace Psychology.

Um, and many psychologists, many of my Palestinian colleagues have received, as you have no doubt experienced yourself and witnessed yourself. Um, horrific, uh, disgusting treatment from psychologists and to, to put the icing on the cake, the, the American Psychological Association props itself up as serving humanity.

And one of their largest exports is military psychology and they host international conferences for military psychology, et cetera. They work very closely with the Israeli, um, forces. Um, and I bring all that up because, um, when you bring up the narrative, uh, warfare done on the part of the media, um, do you find that in your work, in the construction of the counter narrative, through truth telling, through particularly your [00:31:00] role as a Jewish person, um, In all of the labor that you're doing alongside others, in concert with the non violent resistance of the Palestinian people, um, do you find that it's, that it's working? The cultural narrative that people inside the U. S., essentially settler colonists inside the U. S., Take onto themselves, I think is, is the priming of the ground.

You know, like the fertilizer for the seeds that then the Israeli government are planting through US media, planting through, you know, NATO media, planting through all these, all these spaces. And so I think you have, um, a connection with settler identity and a connection with settler innocence. I don't know if you find that to be true.

**Judith Norman:** Absolutely. Yeah. I'm in Texas. I have settler identity that, you know, I have, uh, this is the, I'm part of a settler [00:32:00] colonial project, you know, where I live as well. I think a distinctive difference with Israel though, um, is the, um, The claim to settler innocence gets, well, , the settlers originally were victims from the, the Holocaust.

Right? That, that's that, and that get, that makes it really confusing. You know, it makes it much more difficult to sort of intervene . As time goes on, right, as

Holocaust memory fades, as Israel sort of like, you know, sort of overcomes the identity of, you know, the sort of Israel has been working.

I've talked to people who sort of are involved with the K through 12 education in Israel and the nature of Holocaust studies in there. Israel is sort of like weaponized Holocaust memory Yeah, and Holocaust studies to try to, because this is the claim to settler innocence. It's like, this is, you know, we were victims as well.

Yeah. Um, which doesn't address the sort of, you [00:33:00] were victims of Germany, right? And here you are taking somebody else's land. So there's a disconnect there, but it's impolite to sort of point that out. Right. But as, you know, 80 years on from the Holocaust, Israel has become sort of like really shrill about sort of cultivating Holocaust memory.

Yeah. In, um, goodness, I mean, my relatives were killed in the Holocaust. I want Holocaust memory, but here I have it being sort of like cultivated and weaponized by a group of people for this, you know, to justify the settler colonialist project, right? It's more difficult to intervene in that narrative than it is in Turtle Island.

Right? It's sort of like the white people sort of like, you didn't belong here, right? But with the Israelis, we're a refugee population too. It's delicate, but it has to be done. It needs to be done. And at this point, I mean, honestly, you know, this is, we're talking about Zionism as a settler colonial [00:34:00] project.

Judaism as, you know, a religion in which, you know, massive violence has been part of our historical past, you know, I think, I think there ought to be, you know, an understanding of that, a sympathy around that, but rather than sort of like sitting with that and using that as a leverage to sort of, you know, understand suffering more generally, That memory has been sort of weaponized into, uh, um, rhetorical support for the settler colonial project.

And, um, it's, yeah, um, I, as a Jewish person, I feel like my identity has been hijacked, uh, in this way.

**Monisha:** I have two more follow up questions, if that's okay, Jovanni, and if that's okay with you, Judith. Yeah. So, immediately, my, my heart wants to hold you and, and I'm curious to know how can people best support persons like yourself who [00:35:00] are caught in this weaponized state, basically, and, and

you, you have that historical grief and you have this other moral injury attached to you, forced upon you by you.

By Zionism, by the Israeli state, by their, their, their violence, um, how can people be there for you and others who are in your similar position while we're simultaneously holding space?

**Judith Norman:** That's a very kind question. Thank you. Um, I think it's important. Strangely, you know, it's sort of like we have a situation in which, um, uh, Jewish grief has, has displaced Palestinian grief, right? You know, we have a situation which sort of like the Israeli grief, um, and it is the loudest. I don't want, I don't want to reproduce that situation where sort of like, you know, my, um, uh, problem sort of like finding community in this, um, [00:36:00] uh, uh, uh, in some way, uh, obscures the fact that, you know, Gaza is being genocided, right?

I feel like, you know, my Jewish history. As, um, belonging to a group of people who are dispossessed, um, puts me into an identity with the Palestinians, right, who are stateless and dispossessed. I feel like that's where my Judaism goes to, not the sort of, um, uh, the sort of hyper militaristic state of Israel, but to put to this other people.

I, I, it's, it's so important to me that that suffering be the, be, be centered, um, and that problem be centered. I've watched in the movements as sort of like, I mean, I started with the sort of like Jews have a sort of distinctive voice in this because we can sort of navigate through some of these claims of anti-Semitism.

Um, that again, you know, uh, it, If emphasized too much, [00:37:00] that can become a way of centering Jewish voices in this, right? It can become another sort of like a Jewish supremacist move that again, reproduces the dynamics of the struggle. Um, and I have struggled to understand that in myself, right? Um, and to try to, say that what I need is to be accountable to my Palestinian allies, right?

They, they understand what's going on. That dynamic tends to get reproduced in the peace movement in, so, so, so there's, there's Israeli soldiers who have been, you know, fought with the IDF, You know, I mean, as 18 year olds who had to, right, they see what they're doing, they're horrified, and they join, um, you know, the sort of peace groups, like Breaking the Silence, right, um, and they talk about, you know, we went to Gaza, we did these horrible things, here, here's our crime, and, and, and the left has a tendency to go, oh, my goodness, you know, you're so brave, you know, you Israelis, you know, you [00:38:00] really

know, you know, you're, you're speaking the truth, you know, and that, Again, that's sort of like the Israeli society is very sort of like, you know, uh, worships the military, right?

And here we see sort of like Israeli left worshipping the military as well, right? Sort of like these soldiers who sort of like, you know, who's spoken out, you know, thank God for them. So we haven't really gotten beyond worshipping the military. And we haven't really gotten beyond the sort of like, you know, centrality of Jewish voices.

If you want to know what's going on in Gaza, ask the people in Gaza, right? Don't ask these soldiers who have said, I mean, they have a story to tell. My God, you know, their sympathy, their courage, you know, this is real courage. They've done it, right? But the role that they play sometimes in terms of sort of like, you know, left media is a little bit exaggerated and feeds into sort of like, if a Jew is saying it, then it really must be the case.

If a soldier is saying that, then, you know, that's really important. You know? The [00:39:00] voices that need to be sort of centered in this are the voices of the Palestinian civilians. Um, thank you. Um,

**Monisha:** before you jump in, Jovanni, I want to do my second question and say thank you. So, you were talking about the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions Movement, which we all refer to as BDS, and I, I'm seeing an uptick in, on social media of people inside the United States becoming more and more aware.

People who weren't aware before are more aware now and they're sharing, uh, the, the boycott lists and they're, they're really boosting the BDS calls for support.

So, some people are talking about we need to BDS the US as well. And particularly, you can see signs in, in protest calling for an end to U. S. support to Israel. And so my thought is, and my question to you is, [00:40:00] if we see ideas proposed for a national strike, which would be one way of removing taxpayer money from U. S. aid to, to Israeli, uh, occupation and genocide of Palestinians, and Do you see the potential for that to happen in the U. S.? Do you see any opportunities to build the level of mutual aid that would be necessary to sustain a long term national strike and truly impact The U. S. 's ability to support Israeli's genocidal war. ,

**Judith Norman:** no. I'm sorry. I just haven't seen. So I think that things in terms of this sort of Palestine movement in the United States are getting better. Right? I'm operating on a campus and I see that, you know, the, the, what we're able to say now is better than what we could have said two years ago.

The number of students who are expressing sympathy with Palestine and sort of like, you know, are savvy about the way that [00:41:00] the resistance movement works is more than there was five years ago. We have a ceasefire resolution by Cori Bush, I believe, um, that I think 18 U. S. Congressional representatives signed on to, which is probably, you know, 17 more than would have signed on to it a couple of years ago.

So there's all sorts of progress. It's way too slow. It's just, you know, that the, we are at an elementary stage of movement building, of, of, of mobilizing popular support to the point where this sort of thing, um, could be possible. Maybe, you know, maybe with the unfortunate momentum that this is giving to the Palestine movement, um, if that momentum were able to be kept up, you know, in 10 years, maybe.

That's just too late. It's just, it's at this point, you know, uh, uh, the popular move, I mean, it's, it's, it's been [00:42:00] moving too slowly. I don't know. I don't know what to do. Um, at this point, um, yeah. I mean, there's, there are moments when sort of like mass mobilizing and continuing to work is what needs to happen.

There's moments where, yeah, you're doing that, but you're also waiting to see what cards history is going to give you and strategize accordingly. Yeah,

**Jovanni:** because on that, um, you know, um, saying the speed, uh, you know, pretty much, you asked pretty much, it was being pretty much a Palestinian to sit around to wait what, you know, what comes around.

What comes out in this side of the world as far as, you know, uh, movement towards progress into having some type of just resolution, right? Just as October 13, the Israeli government ordered 1 million Palestinians to leave northern Gaza to the south. Um, and at the same time, they're pressuring Egypt to open the Rafah crossing so that the Palestinian refugees to go.

Um, to the Sinai Peninsula, right? And you set up a tent city there, [00:43:00] right? Um, to the point, Egypt is resisting to open, um, to open the, uh, the crossing, right, to let the refugees in, right? And Israel's being criticized for doing so, and et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. But the reason why they're doing so



is because they know that if those, if that million of Palestinians were to cross over to Sinai, um, More likely than none, they would never be able to return back.

Uh, so, so the idea is that, uh, the, the premise here is that, that northern territory of Gaza, which Gaza is about what's about the size of my hand or something like that, right? Uh, that the... Yeah. That, that northern part of Gaza will get, uh, flattened and annex it into the, into this, into the Israeli entity.

Uh, and that millions of refugees will be out of the country, will never be allowed to come back. Right. So while the, the, the, uh, uh, the, the, the movement, you know, the movement here in, in the United States and elsewhere, right. You know, uh. [00:44:00] Do their progress in slow motion, et cetera, with like 17 resolution, Congress doing, you know, putting out a resolution and everything, right?

This is happening real time on the ground, right? This is happening so fast. Um, you know, um, so that could be described, that's what a lot of Palestinians are calling this, the second Nakba. Um, which Nakba is from the original Nakba. Um, would you, would you, would you think this is hyperbolic? Bollock to say that this is essentially ethnic cleansing and that it hasn't registered here in the United States or to, to, you know, people in Congress or whatnot, that this is what's happening or do they know what they know what's happening?

They just

**Judith Norman:** don't care. Yeah, definitely ethnic cleansing. Uh, I mean, it's genocidal levels of violence. It's elimination of settler colonialism. I mean, I think there's sort of settler colonialisms where you enlist the indigenous population as sort of like an underclass or something for economic reasons.

Israel has decided not to enlist the [00:45:00] Palestinian population as an underclass, as a labor movement. I mean, the First Intifada was a strike, right? At which point Israel was sort of like, you know, Screw this, sort of like, let's replace, you know, the Palestinian workers with, you know, immigrants from other countries.

And so they set about building, um, uh, a labor force that was non Palestinian so that they could practice genocidal levels of violence against the Palestinians without, um, See you next time. Endangering their economy, or they can build an alternative economy based on, you know, weapons, um, uh, uh, which are field tested against Palestinians, as opposed to keeping Palestinians as laborers.

So it was a strategic, so, yeah, Israel's endgame has always been elimination. Now, this is not, this is a superfluous population. they're interrupting this sort of, you know, Zionist myth. They can't wait to eliminate them. And then 50 years on, you know, it's sort of like the United States, uh, policy towards, you know, Native Americans, then they can start to be [00:46:00] very sorry.

They're waiting for that. That's, um, so, so, yeah, that's, that's, um, that's the program. Um, it's hardly secret. Um, and, you know, either people die or are forced to immigrate. Um, what's surprising in all this, you know, I mean, this is sort of. . Um, it's a program that's been a program for all that, uh, for a long time.

What's absolutely astonishing has been the, um, uh, uh, the energy around Palestinian resistance. Right? The energy, which isn't just an energy of sort of resistance and survival, but a sort of cultural thriving, right? A sort of like, you know, we're going to continue, you know, you know, we're still here and here's our food, right?

We're still here and here's our joy, right? Um, I mean, this is a culture in which sort of like, you know, [00:47:00] hospitality and, uh, I'm just sort of like, it's a culture with sort of like gorgeous, um, uh, uh, moral, sort of cultural, um, uh, artistic, uh, achievements and, and possibilities. And to sort of maintain the culture with all those, you know, uh, aspects intact, um, for the sake of joy, that's been extraordinary.

Now, and that's the thing that Israeli eliminationist policy wasn't counting on and as, you know, the rest of the world being part of the rest of the world again, I think our marching orders are to sort of like, listen to what the Palestinians are telling us to do. Sort of like support, see Palestine, not just as a sort of graveyard, you know, of bodies that Israel's oppressing, but as a musical, poetic, you know, place of, of, of, um, uh, of intact cultural, you know, joy.

[00:48:00] Um, I mean, now isn't the week for it, right? You know, things are pretty bad, but, but, but I think the ability of Palestinians to sort of survive and resist for this long, um, is due to, um, uh, these immense cultural resources.

Article

**Jovanni:** 2 of the Genocide Convention describes genocide as such, right? Killing members of the group, causing seriously bodily or mental harm to members of the group, deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life

calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part, imposing measures intended to prevent birth within a group.

Forcefully transferring children of the group to another group.

**Judith Norman:** It's hard not to see that, how the shoe fits.

Yeah,

**Jovanni:** um, let me, so, currently, um, Gaza's being bombed. Um, not only Gaza's being bombed, but southern Lebanon's being bombed, Syria's being [00:49:00] bombed. Um, Egypt was threatened to be bombed, uh, if it was to send, uh, convoys across the, uh, the, uh, humanitarian aid convoy across the Arafat. Yep. There's raids being conducted inside the West Bank, um, there's several actors in the region that have been sending warnings to the Israeli government, in particular, the Lebanese related group called Hezbollah and Iran, telling Israel that if they were to, uh, invade on land, they were, they would have to get involved, um, if they were to land troops there.

Meanwhile, the United States continues to send, uh, assets Military assets to the, uh, to the region, uh, two full, two battle groups, uh, two aircraft carriers with, uh, several gunboats and, uh, and, and, uh, bases, um, uh, aircrafts, uh, F 15s were being sent to, uh, To Jordan, uh, they're being housed in Jordan. You got the Jordanian population restless, you know, demanding, uh, that the government, you know, side with the, uh, with the Palestinians.

[00:50:00] Meanwhile, they're getting hosed down by the, uh, security forces in, in Jordan, um, as they try to, uh, as Jordanian citizens try to, uh, cross into Palestine and support their, uh, the Palestinian brothers. The United States just bombed Syria about two days ago, claiming that it was attacking Iranian assets. U.

S. bases in Iraq came under attack by militant groups, Iraqi militant groups, saying, you know, in the support of Palestine. And also you have, uh, the Houthis in Yemen also, uh, apparently through, uh, launched some missiles towards. Towards the area where they were intercepted by U. S. gunboats. Um, all the while people are in unrest around, you know, around West Asia, demanding the government to do something.

Do you fear that this tragedy can spill over and get out of control into a wider, uh, conflict in the area?

**Judith Norman:** Yes, I think that's something that, um, uh, I [00:51:00] think that's, that might be a place where a sort of, you know, mass mobilization for Palestine can, um, uh, can have an effect. Right? I mean, with, with, with In terms of US foreign policy, right, there's this sort of, like, experimental sort of, like, how much pushback are we going to get if we do this?

Yeah, um, and this might be a moment when this sort of mass mobilization for Palestine, there's been sort of extraordinary protests, might carry with it the message that the political cost of militarism is, uh, is going to be too great. That's, That's all I can say and hope for. It's certainly, it's certainly a worry.

**Jovanni:** I think this is a good place for us to wrap it up for today. Judith, thank you so much for coming on the show, sharing your time, thoughts, and experience with us. Any last comments before we

**Judith Norman:** depart? Thank you so much for having me. Sorry about the technical glitches. It's just a pleasure [00:52:00] to talk to you. I'm so grateful for your concern and attention.

Monisha, any last

**Monisha:** comments? I, no, excuse me. I'll say too many things that I shouldn't say openly. Thank you. No, I do want to say thank you to you, Judith, for sharing your thoughts tonight, and I hope you're resting, eating, hydrating as much as possible.

**Judith Norman:** Thank you so much.

**Jovanni:** Judith, please tell us, uh, where to go for information, what actions are...

Uh, the field are, are taking place. I know that, uh, you know, you work with, uh, Jewish World Peace. Uh, what is, what is happening? What are the, you know, what's being done on the ground? Uh, what people, what our listeners should consider on doing if they want to support and, uh, uh, Palestinians and, uh, and, and this madness.

**Judith Norman:** Thank you. That's perfect. Um, U. S. Campaign for Palestinian Rights is an excellent educational resource. Um, and they have, um, a list [00:53:00] of actions. Uh, they, they, they keep a standing list of actions around the country. Um, Al Jazeera and Democracy Now! are both more reliable news sources than what you're Thank you.

Or out of the sort of, uh, uh, the central media outlets. Um, uh, and Jewish Voice for Peace is, is, is a good place to turn. Um, at this point, um, I don't think that Gaza needs, um, uh, aid. I mean, uh, uh, Um, there are places to donate. The Middle East Children's Alliance is a good humanitarian group with working within Gaza.

But I think what, um, what's needed now is a counter to the disinformation campaign. Um, and, um, uh. People to sort of stand up and say, you know, that a ceasefire is what's needed, that the Palestinians are under occupation. Um, and, um, and yeah, and to, and [00:54:00] to be a visible part of the, the movement for Palestine.

**Jovanni:** All right. Thank you for joining us today and, uh, hope to see you soon and, uh, uh, keep the fight.

**Judith Norman:** Thank you. Thank you both so much.

**Jovanni:** Solidarity for Palestine. Take care.

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I hope you'll pay attention. I will not [00:56:00] detain you long.