

# Dr Azzam Tamimi interview with the Thinking Muslim

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## Host (Muhammad Jalal)

... Much of what has happened is premised on a set of collective myths that the West has attempted to perpetuate about Israel and its intentions. A compliant media and a political class that have provided a thin veneer of acceptability to Israel's murderous rampage has all but shattered the myth that the West holds the moral high ground. Today we want to explore the myths that surround the current crisis.

To help us understand the situation better, we invite back onto the show Dr Azzam Tamimi, who is a Palestinian-British academic and author of the book Hamas, the Unwritten Chapter. Dr Tamimi, assalamu alaykum wa rahmatullah and welcome back to The Thinking Muslim. Walaikum assalam, Abdullah.

## Dr Azzam

Thank you for having me.

## Host

It's really great to have you with us. Now, Dr Tamimi, just before the 7th of October, the US National Security Advisor, Jake Sullivan, said the Middle East is quieter today than it has been in the last two decades. Did Hamas break this peace?

## Dr. Azzam

Bismillah ar-Rahman ar-Rahim.

Well, apparently they did. Of course, even some Palestinians thought that their cause had been deserted by much of the Arab world because we saw Arab countries, one after another, rush to normalise relations with Israel. And it seemed to the Israelis and their supporters in the West that the Palestinians had finally been really subjugated, put under complete control.

So Hamas did surprise the world. And when you say they surprised the world, some viewers, especially in the West, may contend that Hamas upset what was really an uneasy peace in the region and have upended some of the, you know, you talked about the Abraham Accords, some of the attempts to create some level of stability after the war on terror. And how would you respond to that?

There was really no peace, no real peace at all. I mean, the West Bank was still occupied. Jewish settlers were on the rampage every day.

They were attacking Palestinians. They were provoking Muslims around the world by infringing and encroaching on Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa. What was happening actually is that some of the despotic regimes in the region who don't represent their peoples or the peoples they rule, went ahead and signed deals with Israel that sane people would tell you they were unlikely to last.

As soon as these peoples were free from the shackles of despotism, they would most likely repeal such deals with Israel.

## **Host**

Dr. Tamimi, you're an expert on Hamas and you've written a book and conducted a research, an extensive research study into this movement. At the moment, there is a discussion about ceasefires.

In fact, we're talking on the day that potentially there may be a vote at the UN. I suspect that the word ceasefire has certainly been removed from that vote. But one of the arguments that comes very loudly from the West is that Hamas has broken many of the ceasefires in the past.

In fact, the 7th of October was breaking of one such agreement. Can you trust, they would argue, Hamas to maintain a ceasefire in the current crisis?

## **Dr. Azzam**

Regarding the 7th of October, I'm not familiar with a formal ceasefire that Hamas violated.

I don't think there was such a ceasefire. Gaza was still under siege. The Israelis were at will shooting at Palestinians whenever they feel like it.

My study, as I explained in my book, proves that every time a ceasefire was negotiated with Hamas, it was Israel that violated the ceasefire. I can give you several examples, but one of the most famous ones was in 1996 when Perez was prime minister and he was preparing for elections. There had been a ceasefire with Hamas that lasted for about six months, but then he violated it by assassinating a field commander, Yahya Ayyash, who was known as the engineer.

This happened again in 2008 when Ehud Olmert was prime minister and when we had the war of 2008-2009 because after six months of a ceasefire, again the Israelis violated it. There is a discussion in the Israeli press, and I think it was picked up in some of the broadsheets in the United States, but in many ways Hamas was tacitly accepted by Netanyahu because it was a means by which they could split the Palestinian camp. So in this narrative, Hamas is not necessarily a puppet of the Israeli government, but served its military and political ends.

What would your thoughts be about that? I don't agree with this theory or this proposal. Evidently, Hamas and the Israelis have always been fighting, having clashes.

In 2021, for instance, there was a major war. Before that, in 2014. Before that, in 2012.

After that, 2008 and 2009. People find it easier to assume that the Israelis are the cleverest people on the face of earth and that they are the ones who contain the others, who control the others. And that's why some silly analysts came up much earlier with the idea that Hamas was the creation of Israel.

All these silly assumptions fail to recognize that the Palestinians are capable of resisting and are capable of making their own decisions.

**Host**

But there is a... I think most Muslims, if we take the West to the side for now, most Muslims who...

In fact, I think you mentioned this in our last program, pre the current crisis, that the split between Hamas and the PA really did a disservice to the Palestinian cause. Could they have done more to build bridges with the PA in order to unify and keep the Palestinian cause as one unified message?

**Dr. Azzam**

Of course, in theory, it would have been nice if all the Palestinians were united.

But when you have completely different projects, contradictory projects, completely contrasting visions, you cannot really have unity. We have one party that believes Israel has the right to exist on two thirds of Palestine. And the best you can get out of Israel and its supporters is some sort of a Palestinian statehood.

The other side, which really represents the majority of the Palestinians, still aspires for the liberation of Palestine, the whole of Palestine, from the river to the sea. Because as far as the Palestinians are concerned, Israel is a colonial outpost for Europe that had and still has no right to exist in our land.

**Host**

So what does the river to the sea really mean? Because, of course, this has created controversy here in the UK. The previous Home Secretary, Suella Braverman, condemned it and argued it's a call to annihilate Jews. As a broader point, if Hamas rejects, or if you say the majority of Palestinians reject, the statehood on a small sliver of Palestine, are they really then calling for the annihilation of the Jewish people in Palestine?

**Dr. Azzam**

Far from it. This has nothing to do with the Jews and Judaism. Jews have always lived in the Arab and Muslim lands.

And actually, the Zionist projects did not emanate from Jews who lived in Arab and Muslim lands. It came all the way from Europe. It was started in Eastern Europe.

And it was, at the time, a reaction to anti-Semitism, which is a European phenomenon, not an Oriental phenomenon. Because in Islam, the Jews are the people of the book. They are Ahl al-Dammah.

They have a covenant from God and his messenger. And they should not only be respected, they should even be protected. When we say from the river to the sea, we mean Palestine will be free from Zionism.

Zionism is the problem. Zionism as an ideology is one of the most racist ideologies humanity has ever seen. They believe that Jews are superhumans.

Non-Jews are subhumans. They believe that Jews, and I know that many Jews don't accept this, but the Zionists believe that Jews have a divine license to do what it takes in order to conquer Palestine and take it from its own indigenous population. It is this Zionism and it is people who believe in this ideology that we want to see Palestine free from.

But as for the Jews, the Christians and the Muslims, they lived and they coexisted peacefully together for 13 or 14 centuries and they can do the same again.

**Host**

So can I ask you to explain that a little further? So in your ideal state, let's call it a one state solution.

I'm not sure if that's a term you would use, but in your ideal Middle East or Palestine, how would Jews be allowed or how would Jews be configured, let's put it like that, within this Palestinian entity? I suppose my question is, would all of those Israelis who currently live there be permitted to stay in this one state?

**Dr. Azzam**

Look, we have a model that we can really learn lessons from and that is a model of South Africa.

Similar to the situation in Palestine, South Africa was ruled by an ideological minority that believed that if you had white skin, then you were superhuman. If you had colored or black skin, you were subhuman. When the people of South Africa struggled against this, eventually the authority, which imposed itself upon the majority of the people of South Africa, who were blacks anyway, couldn't handle the resistance, they went to see Nelson Mandela in his prison cell.

Nelson Mandela said to them, very simple, no more apartheid, we can live together. We can discuss the details. He refused to enter into any form of details with them until they agreed that apartheid would be nullified.

And I would argue the same thing for Palestine. First, declare Zionism null and void and then we can talk. We can talk about a future in which we can all live together.

**Host**

Do you think that's going to happen? I suppose the difference between Palestine and South Africa is by then the Western nations had deserted South Africa and had engaged in their own boycotts to various degrees on that country. Whereas we see the reverse is true when it comes to Israel.

The United States supports Israel as if it's a 51st state of its country. And the European states, you've seen the comments of even Ursula von der Leyen of the EU, President of the EU Commission, and how staunchly she favours Zionism. So we see a unanimity in the West towards Israel and its policies.

Can you foresee that ever changing?

**Dr. Azzam**

Well, that's a phase. What you are describing is a phase in the cause that has similarities in South Africa as well.

There was a time in South Africa when under Reagan and Thatcher, the ANC was considered to be a terrorist organisation. Margaret Thatcher vowed that Nelson Mandela would never be allowed to set foot in this country. They supported the minority apartheid regime in South Africa.

But then things changed. The change started with the people. And we are seeing this happen in the case of Palestine.

Look at the world map now. In the United States of America, in Western Europe, in the East, in the West, in the South, in the North, everywhere. People now are questioning previous positions on Palestine.

And I think this is the beginning. This is the beginning of a massive popular change that will have to be followed by change of policies on the part of governments.

**Host**

Dr. Timiaby, can I ask you about a two-state solution?

So what you've described so far as the ideal for most Palestinians is to liberate Palestine from the river to the sea. In your thinking, in your makeup, do you see any place, even as an intermediary, a sort of a position in between, a place where maybe seeking a two-state solution of some sort would be favored over the carnage we've seen over the last two months?

**Dr. Azzam**

Well, I personally don't think of Palestine as a state.

It doesn't matter to me whether there is a state called Palestine or not because before Zionism, Palestine was never a state on its own. It was part of a much bigger entity called the Ummah, the Islamic Caliphate. But regarding the two-state solution idea, there was an opportunity for that.

And the Israelis rejected it. They entered into a deal with the PLO at the expense of Palestinian rights, promising that in five years' time, see, Oslo was signed in 1993. By 1998, there should have been a Palestinian state.

They never fulfilled that. On the contrary, what they did throughout the five years is expand their settlements, bring in more settlers, detain more Palestinians. It became hopeless in the minds of many Palestinians.

So nobody now believes anymore in a two-state solution. But once again, if we want peace to prevail in that part of the world, Zionism has to come to an end. Because even if you accept a two-state solution, you're talking about a Zionist state next to another state.

If Zionism as an ideology remains intact, and there is a government somewhere in the world believing in this racist ideology, they will continue to justify aggression against others. There will be no peace.

## **Host**

Israel presents its operations, or its bombing or its slaughter even in Gaza, to be a defensive operation against Hamas.

There's some discussion about what's the game plan after Hamas is destroyed, if it ever is destroyed by Israel. And I suspect it's never going to destroy Hamas. Do you feel that there is a broader campaign going on here where Israel is effectively ethnically cleansing, if not all of Gaza, but parts of Gaza, in order to rehouse settler populations into that region?

## **Dr. Azzam**

Of course, that is the Zionist plan. The original Zionist project was based on the idea that if you remove the Arabs from Palestine, then you can establish a Jewish state to which you bring a population from elsewhere. Because there was no population in Palestine really in the beginning.

Very few, a very small minority of Jews lived there under the Ottoman Empire. Yes, the Israelis might contemplate ethnic cleansing, genocide, depopulation, complete depopulation. But really what matters is that this is not going to succeed.

Right. We're talking now, it's almost, what, 70 days now? And the resistance is still there, as lively as it was in the beginning.

The people of Gaza refused to leave their homes, even those who were forced under the influence of bombing, daily bombing, nightly bombing, to move a bit to the south. Many of

them returned. I think the Israelis are acting on the basis of wishful thinking, no real strategy, nothing.

And that's why many analysts today are telling the Israelis, including some Israelis, some former senior politicians, Ehud Olmert for one, today, that the objectives set by the Netanyahu government were simply impossible to achieve.

**Host**

Do you think Netanyahu is acting in a rash way despite the United States? Or do you feel that the United States, in a sense, is giving Israel the diplomatic and military cover to undertake its operations in Gaza?

**Dr. Azzam**

Netanyahu or any Israeli leader would not and could not do what he's been doing without a green light from the United States of America. Good. It's the Americans who are funding this war.

It's the Americans who are providing weapons and ammunition for this war. And it's the Americans who are preventing the United Nations from agreeing on a resolution calling for a ceasefire. This is an American war, I regret to say, and the Americans are simply embroiling themselves in another lost cause.

**Host**

Public opinion in the West has, over the last 70 days, been quite squarely behind—political opinion has been behind Israel. I suspect public opinion is far more accepting of Palestinian narratives today. But one of the arguments that comes through in the United States on the TV channels is that Israel is the only democracy in the Middle East.

And in a sense, democracy gives you a quality that makes you, I suppose, more benign or more civil when compared to the dictatorships in the region. Now, you and I believe we know that there are dictatorships all around that region, and we despise or dislike those dictatorships. But does democracy give you or give Israel a quality which places it above those of the countries in the region?

**Dr. Azzam**

You see, this is exposing a really very important myth about democracy. Yeah. Because Israel claims to be the only democracy in the region, and this is how it's described by mainstream media in the West.

Yeah. And by the way, mainstream media is no longer representative of public opinion. Yes.

Luckily, we have the social media now. But it is presented as a democracy because it's a democracy for the Jews who are Israeli citizens. Even Arabs who are Israeli citizens don't exercise the same rights as those exercised by the Jewish citizens of Israel.

Israel is a democracy as much as apartheid South Africa was a democracy. And the myth that this has really shattered is that even in the West, the United States of America is a democracy within the borders of the United States of America. Britain is a democracy within the borders of Britain.

France is a democracy within the borders of France. And the same applies to every single liberal democracy in the West. But when it comes to anything happening outside their borders, the rules of democracy don't apply.

The principles of human rights are not upheld. International law means nothing to them. It's really a myth.

And this just shows how racist, deep down, is the people who are ruling these so-called liberal democracies.

### **Host**

So just to expand on that point, what does that tell us then about the efficacy, I suppose, of these Western values? Because for the last 20, 30 years, certainly during the war on terror era, we've been preached to by the West that these Western values are sublime values.

These are the values that we should aspire to. In fact, Iraq and possibly even Afghanistan were fought in the pursuance of these values. Have we got to the point where these values are now seen to be what they are, just hypocritical tools as you've described them, as a means to subjugate the rest of the world?

### **Dr. Azzam**

Well, the values are values. I mean, if you talk about universal human rights and you claim that these universal rights should be applied equally to all human beings, irrespective of their colour or race or ethnicity or whatever, that's a good value. But the fact that these values are not upheld by certain people who claim to uphold them, it's the people who are hypocritical and not the values.

So we shouldn't just discard the values because these politicians are hypocritical. Some of these values are excellent values. Some of them are compatible with Islam.

Many of them actually are compatible with Islamic values. It's just a question that to what extent these politicians, these intellectuals, these academicians, these media people, the journalists, are universal in their espousal of these values?

### **Host**

Previously, in a previous answer, you talked about how Israel is a democracy for Jews in Israel, but there are two million Arabs or Palestinians that live in Israel who do not have the same rights as other citizens.



Can you expand on that? Because again, that's a myth that we hear constantly in the mainstream media, that if Israel was an apartheid state, why would there be Arabs represented in the Israeli Knesset?

**Dr. Azzam**

Well, Israel is an apartheid state as testified by three major human rights organizations, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and B'Tselem, which is an Israeli human rights group. The Palestinians, who happened to be Israeli citizens, were allowed to stay in parts of the Palestine that was depopulated in 1948 because the Zionists at the time were in shortage of a population. They needed a workforce.

And then afterwards, of course, they went shopping around the world and they incited against the Jews of Iraq to get them out, the Jews of Egypt to get them out, etc. But these Palestinian citizens, until the mid-60s, were actually under military rule. Military rule was not lifted until the mid-60s, imagine, from 1948.

And then they were allowed to integrate, gradually and slowly, into aspects of sociopolitical life of Israel, but not everything. They continue to be treated as second-class citizens. The law doesn't always apply to them as it applies to the Jews.

In terms of protection, that protection is not afforded to them. Not only that, the Israelis use dirty tactics, actually, to encourage crime and drug addiction among the Arab populations of 1948 Palestine.

**Host**

Again, touching on the point you mentioned there about the immigration or emigration of Jews from the rest of the Middle East to Israel, the argument goes that these Jews face intense persecution in these countries.

And so the only place in the Middle East that became a place of sanctity or of safety for Jews was Israel. Is there truth behind this narrative?

**Dr. Azzam**

Not really. And people can read Avi Schlem's autobiography, which is a brilliant one. The title is Three Worlds, Memoirs of an Arab Jew. He's an Oxford academic, Jewish origin, yes.

He's a great historian. He explains how his own family were forced out of Iraq, where their ancestors lived for thousands of years. Actually, it's the most ancient Jewish population on the face of Earth.

Now, there probably were some offenses against the Jews, but clearly after 1948, when Israel was created in Palestine and the Palestinian Nakba was seen by the Arabs around it, who could do very little at the time. And that Zionist state claimed to be Jewish, doing what it was doing in the name of the Jews. The rise in Arab nationalism might have in certain places restricted, restrained, constrained, abused to some extent Jewish communities.

But to a large extent, they remained in their countries, living in their houses, in their businesses, not until the early 50s, when the Mossad coordinated a campaign of bombings in synagogues and of distributing leaflets claiming to have been written by Arab nationalists, telling the Jews that the only safe place for you is in Israel. And they actually, with the U.S. assistance at the time and European assistance, arranged a lift, how this is described, it's an airlift, either directly or through third countries like Iran and other places.

**Host**

There is a suggestion that the Israelis cannot find a genuine partner for peace.

The argument goes that every opportunity where there have been Israeli peacemakers as prime ministers, they've negotiated in good faith with Palestinians, but Palestinians have rejected those treaties either offhand or they've obstructed those peace treaties within a few years. Is there any sense to that argument?

**Dr. Azzam**

That's nonsense, of course.

I'm not going to defend those who entered into a peace deal with the Israelis because I'm against the principle of doing it. But Yasser Arafat gave the Israelis almost everything. And when eventually they wanted him to give up on al-Masjid al-Aqsa and he refused and the second intifada started, they killed him.

It's not true at all that the Israelis were seeking peace. They were actually seeking an authority that could be trusted to control the Palestinians. And this is what they have now under the leadership of Mahmoud Abbas.

**Host**

Can I come back to Gaza? The suggestion that Gaza prior to October, 7th of October, was an open-air prison. Again, the Israeli argument is that, well, an open-air prison wouldn't have beaches and wouldn't have mosques and wouldn't have clubs and schools and universities.

The trappings of a civil society existed in Gaza. Is it an exaggeration maybe to call it an open-air prison according to these Israelis?

**Dr. Azzam**

Well, let's take the Israeli description of Gaza.

Okay, Gaza had a beach, it had universities, it had colleges, it had shops, it had markets. Yet, Israelis control who comes in or comes out. Israelis control what merchandise is allowed in or allowed out.

Israelis can attack at any moment, any target they feel poses a threat to them. Thousands of university or school leavers first and then university graduates are not allowed out of the strip to go and seek higher education or seek employment elsewhere. You have a very small

piece of land, 360 square kilometers with 2.3 million people whose lives are controlled completely by the Israelis. So, who would want to live along such a beach and study in such a university or have such a job? Wouldn't you wish to just get rid of this permanent control over your lives?

**Host**

You may have caught on social media, there's been a lengthy discussion about justifying what happened on the 7th of October and whether the torment or the persecution that the Palestinians have faced justified some of what may have happened on the 7th of October.

Before we go into what may have happened on the 7th of October, how would you respond to that argument about condemning Hamas for breaking out of this open-air prison?

**Dr. Azzam**

Well, what happened on the 7th of October has actually been described in many outlets, including some mainstream media, as a break out, as a break out of jail. You have a jail, a huge jail, and these young men couldn't take it anymore.

If you keep oppressing a certain community, if you kick them day and night, if you spit on them, if you humiliate them, if you tell them exactly what they can eat or what they cannot eat, eventually they'll explode. So we're talking about an authority that is abusing its powers in order to keep under control, under tight control, an entire population of people.

**Host**

Did Hamas undertake atrocities when it broke out of its open-air prison?

**Dr. Azzam**

Well, what happened on the 7th of October is still a mystery to many of us. The only things that we really have are some of the testimonies given by people who fled from the scene. The Israelis have claims, the Palestinians have claims, but increasingly we are discovering evidence that most of the Israelis killed on that day were killed by the Israelis themselves, either by gunships that fired on the young men and women who were fleeing the festival because they thought they were Palestinians coming from Gaza, or the tanks that fired at houses in which there were Hamas fighters holding some hostages.

**Host**

Why would they do that? Why would they kill their own population?

**Dr. Azzam**

Partly confusion, but partly also because they didn't want Hamas to take any hostages. It's already been written about in the Israeli media as well as in the Western media that they

have a doctrine called the Hannibal doctrine, by which they prefer to kill the hostages instead of allowing them to be captured.

**Host**

The Israelis, at least at the beginning of this conflict, were blaming Egypt for not opening the Rafah border.

We can discuss whether it's right to accept or to allow the depopulation of Gaza, but the reality is that at the moment, men, women and children are dying, innocents are dying. Is there culpability on Egypt for not opening that border early enough and still remaining, keeping that border fairly sealed?

**Dr. Azzam**

Unfortunately, Egypt is not sovereign enough to open the border whenever it wants.

There was an agreement, I think it was signed in 2005, between the Palestinian Authority, Israel and Egypt, according to which anything coming out or in through the Rafah crossing would have to be approved by the Israelis. There were European officers appointed for the job of monitoring this, I think later they left, but the Egyptians continue to say that they have no authority to open the crossing without Israeli consent.

**Host**

The argument that again came through and still in fact is endorsed by many current generals and politicians in Israel is that Hamas was elected by its people and so in a sense there is culpability there.

Why did they elect a terrorist group? And so it's guilt by association. How would you respond?

**Dr. Azzam**

That's a very dangerous logic because in this way the Israelis are saying it's okay to attack the people anywhere if their government misbehaves. So it's okay to kill any Israeli because of what Netanyahu is doing at the moment. If the Palestinians perceive Netanyahu as a terrorist and his government as a terrorist government, then does that mean that yes, you can go ahead and do whatever you want?

Can we do this to the British people if a certain British government adopts a policy that certain people around the world see as inappropriate or hostile or wrongful? This is a very dangerous logic.

**Host**

Do you think Hamas as a political administration now, not the military side, was effective in administering Gaza during the years that it was in power?

**Dr. Azzam**

You cannot really be effective in ruling a population under siege. It's impossible because how are you going to provide for their needs? And Hamas, when it was elected in 2006, and that takes us back to your earlier question, Hamas was willing to work with the Palestinian Authority in Ramallah to commission the Palestinian Authority to continue its peace process with the Israelis, provided that this will lead to an end to the siege and to the occupation, but that never happened.

So you end up, and why is Hamas in control of Gaza? People need, and I'm really delighted that what happened or what is happening in Gaza at the moment is encouraging so many people to go back a little bit and try and understand because context is very important, history is very important. In 2006, Hamas was elected.

In 2007, the Americans conspired with the Palestinian Authority and Israel in order to carry out a coup d'etat against Hamas, and this led to a fight between Fatah and Hamas, the result of which was that Hamas became in charge of Gaza under siege, and the Palestinian Authority, which is led by Fatah, in charge of the West Bank, which is under occupation. So how can you really be a good government or be able to provide good governance if you are under constant siege?

**Host**

Can I ask you about the Arab countries?

Now, I think generally speaking, most people, most Muslims condemn their lack of action. But on a sort of real politic perspective, real politic platform, what could they really do in this situation? They don't have the strength of Israel, probably, in terms of military strength.

They certainly don't have international backing. Is it plausible that these Arab countries could unleash their armies and so that these armies could liberate their brothers and sisters in Gaza?

**Dr. Azzam**

Well, the least they could have done is not to collaborate with the Israelis in their war against Gaza.

Yes. I mean, only a few days ago, the Israelis announced that they were receiving fruits and vegetables from Dubai via Jordan because they could no longer produce their own needs of fruits and vegetables. And Dubai or the United Arab Emirates came to their rescue.

The Arabs are not asked by the Palestinians to fight Israel, but at least not to collude with it. We have several Arab states that have full diplomatic relations with Israel. The least they could have done is threaten to sever those ties, if not sever them.

You have Turkey, you have Jordan, you have Egypt, you have Morocco, you have Sudan, you have Bahrain, you have the United Arab Emirates. And there are several others who are dealing with Israel from underneath the table. This is what's needed.

By the way, Arab armies are not in a position to wage a war against an external power. These armies were trained and armed in order to suppress the populations.

**Host**

And there is an argument. Would you regard that argument to be quite emotional then? There's a hashtag on Twitter that comes about.

It's given prominence every so often, armies to al-Aqsa. Is that really a viable option today?

**Dr. Azzam**

Where are they going to come from and how are they going to get to al-Aqsa?

Yes. Palestine is surrounded by Arab regimes who are all in collusion with Israel. Jordan has a peace treaty with Israel and it would shoot any Jordanian who would attempt to cross the river.

Egypt has a peace treaty with Israel and it is in charge of protecting Israel from the Sinai side. Then you have the Mediterranean Sea, which is patrolled by the Israelis and their allies. You are left with Syria, which is a failing state, hopeless. And Lebanon, which is the only Arab country next to Palestine where some resistance exists. The rest are all really supporting Netanyahu.

**Host**

Dr. Samimi, I've come across a number of well-meaning Muslims who look at the crisis, look at the bombardment, the slaughter of those in Gaza, and they believe in everything you believe in. They believe that ultimately we need an Islamic resolution which is in conformity with our Islamic past. But they argue that things are very bleak and we are in a very bleak position as a Muslim ummah. We don't have even glimmers of hope, possibly, in the political elites in the Muslim world.

And so maybe the only option for us now is to accept the meager peace treaties or two-state solutions or containment policies or Abraham Accords that are on offer in order just to moderate the sheer violence of the Israeli state. How would you accept or respond to that type of thinking?

**Dr. Azzam**

Well, if every nation that is invaded or that comes under occupation succumbs to the status quo, there would be no struggle. No one becomes free. The Vietnamese probably were told similar things. The people of South Africa, the blacks of South Africa probably were told the same thing.

The people of Algeria, 132 years of French colonialism. They never gave up. Yes, there are people who will give up.

There are people who say we cannot do anything. But there are people who will not give up. So if you are weak, I don't want to say if there are people who are cowardly.

I say if they are weak, if they are unwilling to take action, don't blame those who are brave and are willing to take action and are willing to make sacrifices. **I don't think the situation is bleak. I think the situation today is much better than it was before the 7th of October.**

**The sacrifices the people of Gaza are making, though they are very hefty, very serious, very painful as well, these sacrifices are changing the world for a change.**

**Host**

Can I turn to the sizable Muslim population we have in the West? We've got nearly 4 million Muslims in the UK.

We've got 6 million or so in the United States. Alhamdulillah, the Muslim communities have developed themselves economically and today we're on the second, third generation of Muslims. Yet there is an inability for us to influence the politics in these countries, to a shocking level.

The Labour Party in the UK have been a recipient of large blocks of Muslim votes for decades. I think in 2019, something like 81% of Muslims voted Labour. Why is it that we are so unable to impact the politics of these countries yet we have sizable minorities?

**Dr. Azzam**

We have a sizable minority of Muslims in this country but I bet you that until recently we had very little political awareness. I think this is changing. I have been meeting young Muslims across the country the new generation. Forget about the old generation we are interested in the young generation and I see that they are interested; they are politically active; and they're all thinking about how can we translate our sympathy with the Palestinians into political action. And we have an election coming soon and this is a time where Muslim votes should be tactically used in order to make a difference and it can make a difference and I've been advising Muslim audiences where I go for lectures on lecture tours etc. in the country that if you have the right to vote you need to speak to your MP and speak to other candidates who are preparing to fight the next election and see what they think about what's going on in Gaza we need really to be firm. Those who support the slaughter of the innocent people of Gaza those who voted against a ceasefire those who are avowedly supportive of Israel and Zionism do not deserve the Muslim vote and a Muslim, would be committing a sin, if he or she were to give their votes to such people

**Host**

In 2003 they went to war in Iraq 2 million people or so demonstrated in the UK we thought that was the turning point for British Muslims, for Muslims in the West yet 2 years later

things were back to normal and we voted Labour do you see this as a transformational point where things are going to get better for us or could it very easily slip into business as usual?

**Dr. Azzam**

No, I hope it will not be business as usual anymore because we're talking about a new generation a new generation that is more interested in these issues, especially in the Palestinian issue. We have to do our bit we have to educate people about this we have to enlighten them bring awareness to them and hopefully this will pay.

**Host**

One last question Dr Tamim it's a question that I've been thinking about since the 7th of October and that is, does the Muslim world need another Salahuddin Ayubi and if so, how would a person like that a transformative leader come about?

**Dr. Azzam**

Well usually Muslims look at Salahuddin as an individual Salahuddin was a phenomenon Salahuddin was a generation he was one man in an entire generation it really does a great disservice to his entire generation to think of him as the person who brought about the change. There's a brilliant book that I usually recommend it's in Arabic, I don't know if it's been translated into English it talks about the generation of Salahuddin how the generation of Salahuddin came to be and the author traces that to the work of Imam Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali. Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali passed away nearly a hundred years before Salahuddin was born but his work and the work of the ulema that came after him is what paved the way for the rise of the generation of Salahuddin which inflicted defeat upon the crusaders

**Host**

Dr. Azzam Tamimi it's a pleasure as always to have your wisdom with us Jazakallah Khair for your time today.