Journalist Abby Martin tells Mehdi Hasan about the zionist extremism she saw while conducting “man on the street” interviews

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The speaker discusses their experiences documenting Israeli attitudes towards Palestinians, revealing widespread extremism and racism that they observed nearly a decade ago. They recount statements made by Israelis expressing violent sentiments towards Arabs and Palestinians, highlighting a pervasive culture of hatred that existed prior to recent conflicts. The speaker reflects on the implications of these views for the possibility of a two-state solution and critiques the narrative that attributes current sentiments solely to recent events like October 7th. They emphasize the necessity of movements like boycott, divestment, and sanctions in response to these societal attitudes.

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Street Interviews in Jerusalem Reveal Systemic Extremism

When conducting man-on-the-street interviews in Jerusalem, I documented the views of Israelis on Palestinians, Arabs, Muslims, and the occupation. In just 20 minutes of footage, I captured how casual, how systemic, and how widespread extremism is in Israeli society. This was nearly a decade ago, well before the protests against judicial reforms and long before **October 7th**. The remarks I heard were shocking: people openly said things like "Islam is a very bad disease," "Jews should have the right to hate them"—meaning Arabs—and "I would carpet bomb them," referring to Palestinians.

Today, much of the discussion frames the problem as being about specific leaders like Netanyahu, Ben Gvir, or Smotrich, as if changing the government would solve everything. But my direct experience showed me that this extremism runs far deeper

than any individual politician or administration. This was a grassroots reality, not something confined to the political leadership.

The Shock of Direct Encounter

I saw the writing on the wall. This genocidal fervor was palpable, and it had clearly been building long before October 7th. The atmosphere felt like being transported back to 1932 Berlin—it really did feel like Nazism. I usually conduct man-on-the-street interviews wherever I travel to get a snapshot of local sentiment, but I have never experienced such virulent **racism**, hatred, and bigotry expressed so openly, knowing full well that people were on camera. Normally, people hide these views away, but this was different. People said things like "we should kill Arabs" directly to the camera, laughing about it. I was just stunned.

At the time, I was genuinely flabbergasted. I went into those interviews thinking that a **two-state solution** was possible. Throughout my life, I had been told that Palestinians were the ones who hate Israelis and that they couldn't live in peace together. But what I witnessed completely flipped that narrative on its head. Everything I had been told turned out to be a lie.

The Shift in Justifications

Watching those clips now is, in a sense, even worse than it was at the time. Today, when Israelis express similar sentiments, they hide behind the trauma of October 7th, claiming that the events of that date have made them hateful. But these interviews were from 2017. There was no October 7th for them to reference. This was a period of relative calm. These people were just standing in front of Sephora, hanging out, going about their day. This wasn't some exceptional moment or crisis; this was everyday conversation.

The extremism came from all walks of life—secular people, religious people, people from every segment of society. Everyone said essentially the same thing. One man even described himself as a liberal, and when I asked what that meant, he explained that the term is actually used as a slur in Israeli society. He said, "Don't call people a liberal." His definition of liberalism was that he wanted "the occupation to be more humane." That was considered the liberal position.

Systemic Attitudes Across Society

It is striking to see how far to the right Israeli political discourse sits globally. In the United States, we sometimes think our right-wing conservatives are extreme, but compared to the rest of the world, they are actually quite far to the right themselves. What I documented was not just anecdotal evidence. These sentiments are proven time and again in polling data. When prominent political figures like Bernie Sanders try to wash away accountability by painting this as merely Netanyahu's crimes, we know

the reality is different. This sentiment is widely felt and held throughout Israeli society. It is a systemic problem that extends far beyond any one leader or administration, which is precisely why **boycott**, **divestment**, and **sanctions** are so necessary as a tool for accountability and change.

#Israel #Palestine #extremism #racism #human rights #two-state solution #October 7th #boycott #divestment #sanctions

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