

## RALPH NADER RADIO HOUR EPISODE 502 TRANSCRIPT

### “Invisible Palestinians”

Recorded October 18, 2023

**Steve Skrovan:** Welcome to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*. My name is Steve Skrovan, along with my co-host, Hannah Feldman. David Feldman is actually out making some money today, so we've got Hannah. Hello, Hannah.

**Hannah Feldman:** Hello, Steve.

**Steve Skrovan:** And of course, the man of the hour, Ralph Nader. Hello Ralph.

**Ralph Nader:** Hello to everybody, especially our listeners.

**Steve Skrovan:** In our continued coverage of the current Israeli Palestinian conflict, today we welcome co-founder and President of the Arab American Institute, James Zogby. Mr. Zogby has written extensively about issues in the Middle East, particularly how the Arab world views American intervention in their affairs. He's also Managing Director of Zogby Research Services, a firm that has conducted groundbreaking surveys across the Middle East. We look forward to talking with Mr. Zogby about the latest developments as well as the history of what's going on in that region.

Then in the second half of the show, we're going to pivot to a different subject. It's one of our favorite-least favorite things: nuclear power. We're going to welcome back no-nukes advocate, Harvey Wasserman, a longtime fellow traveler with Ralph on the no-nukes movement.

Today he's going to bring us up to date on the supposed decommissioning of the Diablo Canyon nuclear reactor in central California. One issue at the core of the nuclear power debate is “embrittlement,” which is just a wonky way of saying “cracking.” Mr. Wasserman maintains that embrittlement “may seem obscure, but it's at the center of whether a melting atomic reactor will calmly cool down or explode in a violent planetary apocalypse.”

As always, somewhere in the middle, we'll check in with our relentless corporate crime reporter Russell Mokhiber. But first, let's hear about the latest developments in the Middle East. Hannah?

**Hannah Feldman:** James Zogby is co-founder and president of the Arab American Institute who is featured frequently on national and international media as an expert on Middle East affairs.

Since 1992, he has written a weekly column, “Washington Watch”, that is published in 12 countries. He's the author of several books, including *Looking at Iran: The Rise and Fall of Iran*, and *Arab Public Opinion, The Tumultuous Decade: Arab, Turkish and Iranian Public Opinion, 2010 to 2019. Arab Voices: What They're Saying to us and Why it Matters* and *Palestinians: The Invisible Victims*. Welcome to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*, James Zogby.

**James Zogby:** Thank you.

**Ralph Nader:** Welcome indeed, Jim. You've been a long-time spokesperson for the Arab American community and for the national interest of the United States and the Middle East area, and you always provide context for things that are going on while the attention is properly focused on the massive convulsions now over there.

I want to start the program by quoting a statement from the founder of Israel, David Ben-Gurion. The early founders, coming off the Nazi Holocaust against the Jews, were in no mood, you know, to respond to the indigenous rights of the Palestinian people. They wanted a state, and they wanted a homeland. And David Ben-Gurion was very candid about what happened.

And in the book called *The Jewish Paradox* by Nahum Goldman, who was head of the World Zionist Organization that came out in 1978. He quotes David Ben-Gurion as follows, and this is very important listeners, to understand the historical context of what's going on now.

Here's David Ben-Gurion's quote: “If I were an Arab leader, I would never sign an agreement with Israel. It is normal. We have taken their country. It is true, God promised it to us, but how could that interest them? Our God is not theirs. There has been anti-Semitism, the Nazis, Hitler, Auschwitz, but was that their fault? They see but one thing. We have come and we have stolen their country. Why would they accept that?”

That's why David Ben Gurion and subsequent Israeli leaders have said that if they were Palestinians, they would be involved in the resistance as well, including Ehud Barak, who was a former Prime Minister of Israel and a fighter in the Israeli army.

So I want to ask you, Jim, how do you provide the context to positions taken by members of Congress, Joe Biden and others so they don't just dehumanize Palestinians and focus entirely on Israel, which is now a military, economic and technological superpower that has been described by its generals as being the most secure time in Israeli history until the failed intelligence system on October 7th.

How do you deal with members of Congress who are ready in a huge financial package, billions of dollars to assist Israel, which has a greater social safety net than we do in the U.S. It's very modern, prosperous country and they're going to try to get this through Congress. How do you provide the context?

**James Zogby:** Well, look, thank you, Ralph, for the opportunity to talk to folks today. I had some meetings with White House officials last week and I tried to do exactly what you're saying. I started with, of course, that what happened on October 7<sup>th</sup> was deplorable, condemnable,

outrageous, and barbaric. I said, you can use all the words that you can come up with in the English language and they still don't describe the horror of what happened to Jewish people on that day. It evoked for Jews around the world the trauma of the Holocaust, which they have come to see as self-definitional, because it describes their vulnerability and insecurity. At the same time, what Israel had been doing before October 7<sup>th</sup>, and most certainly what they've been doing since, up till the present day, evokes for Palestinians the trauma of the Nakba—the feeling of expulsion, of the vulnerability that we are not in control of our own land; we are no longer controllers of our destiny, even of our history, which is being rewritten by folks in the West to describe Palestinians as the aggressors instead of as the victims historically.

When I said that I got rebuked by one at the White House who said, “I am tired of hearing this; whataboutism and trying to equate the two and say Israel suffered” But I stopped him, because I was a little upset, and I said, “I never said ‘but.’” What I said was there are two narratives, and we have to understand both. There's Israeli trauma and Jewish trauma and there's Palestinian and Arab trauma. Both are real because there are two groups of humanity who each have histories. When we adopt one and ignore the other, then we end up creating the kind of torment the Palestinians have been living with.

Biden is in Israel right now, and listening to his rhetoric can only help say to Palestinians, who when they hear it, say *he doesn't care about us; he doesn't even see us as real people*. This was a love fest for Israel, with Palestinians literally being written out of history, written out of the present day, written out of the legacy of suffering that they've endured. I can't even imagine the thinking or the lack thereof that went into sending him on this trip today, especially when you have, across the Arab world, riots in front of American embassies and hatred being reignited not only toward Israel but towards the United States. Because we are the enablers and the funders, the supporters, the cheerleaders, and coat holders for one side, in what has been historically a very bloody and misunderstood conflict.

I've been through this myself for decades now, as you have as well for decades now. All this did was remind me of '67, certainly reminded me of '82, when the Israelis marched up to Beirut and did what they did. And there was after that the Intifada and how they responded to it, followed by the invasions of Gaza and the attacks on Gaza in 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014, 2021. And 2006 when they demolished Lebanon's infrastructure because they were going to end once and for all, Hezbollah. They ended up making Hezbollah stronger.

The PTSD of having been through this and trying to remind people in Congress that taking massive amounts of Palestinian lives, evacuating them, forcing them to flee from their homes, and murdering them from the air does not make Israel more secure. At the end of the day, when the dust settles and the tears dry, you're going to have a whole lot more dead people, a whole lot more anger, and a whole lot more frustration. And nothing else will change in Gaza or in the West Bank, where Israelis are running over Palestinians trying to evict them from their homes and villages. And they're doing it.

So, there is this history. It has to be understood. I just want to add one quote to Ben-Gurion. He implemented a plan during '48 that was a deliberate plan to evict Palestinians from the areas that Israel wanted to take from them, areas that had not been given to Israel in the UN partition plan.

That's what they did. They implemented this plan. At the end of it, he celebrated what he called "a double miracle." And Israel, he said *was larger and had less Arabs*. So, it was it was something that they've celebrated. And these people in Gaza, 80% of the population of Gaza, are refugees. And they have this as their history, as their legacy, that they are families of people who were expelled from their homes and now they're being expelled one more time.

**Ralph Nader:** Let's provide more history here. We're talking with Jim Zogby, the founder of the Arab American Institute. In 1948, when the UN essentially established the state of Israel in the partition decision Palestine, formerly a British mandate, under control of the British, and Israeli partisans, attacked British installations, blew up part of the King David Hotel, and that's all part of the history.

But the Palestinians, now 5-6 million of them, living in the West Bank and Gaza, are living in only 22% of the original Palestine area. The Palestinian Authority has conceded that Israel is going to control 78%. They have, out of the Oslo Accords, recognized Israel's right to exist.

The question is whether Israel recognizes the Palestinians right to exist and in Congress, which is the big backer of Israeli militarism, they keep saying Israel has a right to defend itself. But they never say the Palestinians have a right to defend themselves. And they're innocent casualty tolls of deaths, injuries, diseases from the deprivation and the occupation and property destruction are hundreds of times greater than the loss of innocent Israeli life over the decades.

This raises the question of bigotry and hatred on Capitol Hill and refusal to disavow high Israeli official racist comments, totally genocidal comments over the years that are part of the historical record. You have lectured on the other anti-Semitism before an Israeli university some years ago.

Could you describe the other anti-Semitism? Because this is an important aspect of the dialogue here. Any members of Congress who dare speak on behalf of Palestinian rights are accused of anti-Semitism immediately. So, can you discuss this? Because you've had many conversations with Israelis over the years and you know quite a bit about the other anti-Semitism.

**James Zogby:** What we have is a blindness toward an entire people. There is the other anti-Semitism. There's the bigotry that grew up in the West during the same period that anti-Semitism flourished, the rise of the nation state. The Jew was seen as the threat from within, and the Arab and the Muslim were viewed as the threat from without. And both were caricatured in similar ways, big noses, bloodthirsty. They controlled our wealth, and their wealth was ill-gotten because it really belonged to us. They lusted after our women, etcetera. Both of them were portrayed in the most horrific fashion.

We rightly condemned one. We ignored the other. The situation of Palestinians is a little different. They both have to endure the broader bigotry of the Arab world. But more importantly, as I wrote in the book *The Invisible Victims*, they have literally been written out of the story. They don't exist in the consciousness of most Americans.

When the film *The Exodus* was made, there was a deliberate piece of Israeli propaganda hasbara. It was funded to be that. They put the cowboy and Indian motif on the Israelis versus the Palestinians, so that the Israelis were the sweet young people, the young folks trying to carve out a home for themselves on the frontier and being blocked by these savages who were trying to destroy them, who didn't understand their yearning for freedom and a place to just be able to be. And the Palestinians were less than human. They became an objectified problem the way Indians were in the lore of the West as it was conveyed in film and in popular culture here in the States.

And the Israelis actually fueled it. Founders of the Zionist movement portrayed themselves as a civilizing culture going against the uncivilized East. It was, as one of them said, a conflict between barbarism and humanity. Max Nordau, one of the founders of the movement, said: "We are the product of the West, the civilized West. They're the product of the uncivilized East."

And they were going to not just bring civilization, but like the Cowboys, like the Pioneers and the Indians, they were going to clear the savages from the frontier like trees so that the people could survive. That was the Ben-Gurion, "less Arabs, more land" argument. So, Palestinians in the language of the West, literally became invisible as human beings.

We cry for the Jewish suffering. We can't even speak about the Palestinian suffering because they're not real people to us. They don't exist. There's no Palestinian mothers or grandmothers. One Israeli Minister Ayelet Shakib said that Palestinians are "snakes," and "their mothers are the bearers of snakes and vermin, and so we needed to kill them." That they were all the same.

That sense of dehumanizing, of making "other" an entire people and listening to the rhetoric coming from the Israeli generals today about Gaza, it's as if there's no real people there, no real human beings there. We'll level the place. This is the home of 2.3 million people. *We'll evict them from the north, and Gaza, when it's over, will be smaller and have less Arabs* from Ben-Gurion. That's what the foreign minister was saying today. They want to expel them to Egypt and not let them back.

That sense that they don't really exist as people. If what was being said about Palestinians were being said about Jews or any other people, we would rightly identify it as bigotry. We wouldn't pay attention to the fact that these are ministers, high level ministers in the government. Netanyahu gave a speech about "the forces of light versus the forces of darkness," civilization confronting barbarism. He gave that just yesterday in the Knesset and Biden is sitting with him today. We understand your people. We understand the suffering. Of course, we understand the suffering, but the cries of the Jewish people cannot drown out the cries of the Palestinian people. And yet that's what we've done.

**Ralph Nader:** And Joe Biden is over there while the Israelis have been destroying and bombing schools, apartment buildings, homes, electricity networks, water mains, hospitals, clinics and well-marked from the roof United Nations relief agencies that have been there for years, having taken the lives of about 14 so far, UN staff there and the UN seems helpless here. Give us a little more context. There was a resolution 242 passed by the UN years ago. What is it and how has it been treated by the United States and Israel?

**James Zogby:** It was a resolution calling for an end of the conflict and basically as it's been sort of put into a slogan, it created the formula of land for peace; that Israel could not continue to occupy militarily, land seized in war. It was called for the removal of the occupation basically, and the U.S. supported it. It has been, as we say, honored more in the breach than in the observance. It's never been implemented. It was in every U.S. document up to Reagan support for 242 and the formula of land for peace that's been now ignored.

And so if Israel were to surrender land, it would be as a gift, as Netanyahu says, "They're asking us to do painful things." The painful thing being give them back their land.

I remember when I met with Clinton after Camp David, he called me into the Oval Office to say Barack made an offer I need to get Arafat to counter, give me another offer. And I said I've heard about Barack's offer. He is offering a percent of the territories occupied in '67. And he said, "yeah, and the only offer Arafat keeps telling me is he talks about 22%. What's that about? I said, Mr. President, you have to know the 22% is what's left of Palestine after Israel is the 78% of Palestine; he wants that back. And he said, well, Barack's offering part of that and I said he doesn't want part of it, he wants it. I said you don't understand that for that generation of Palestinians accepting Israel's 78% and writing off their rights is a big deal. And offering him 90% of the 22% so that Israel can keep the settlements that literally still carve the West Bank up into pieces or keep the Jordan Valley so that they don't have access to the outside world except through Israeli security isn't peace. He just didn't get it at all.

And I don't think people here get it because basically it's Israel, Israeli people versus the Palestine problem. And the solution is how do we solve this pesky problem so that Israeli people can have freedom. It's not how do we deal with Palestinian humanity and their legitimate concerns as a real people who've suffered dispossession.

**Ralph Nader:** Well, let's talk about the current situation that focuses on Hamas's attack and the counterattack by Israel powerful Air Force, Navy, Land forces massing.

Hamas was a tiny religious organization which was fostered into a more powerful organization by the United States and Israel. They thought that if they built up a religious organization, it would undermine the PLO, the Palestine Liberation Organization, and once again, just as in Afghanistan we create our own adversaries and blundering back and forth.

Now Hamas is now being focused on, but the focus should be on the order by the Israeli defense Minister and the energy minister, who collectively ordered the soldiers and the military with the following words in the strike against Gaza. "No power, no electricity, no food, no water, no gas. We are fighting human animals." Those are the orders given.

And as Bruce Fein, an international law practitioner, said in our program last week, this meets the definition of genocide. And he said, I'm quoting Bruce: "The genocide Convention born of the Holocaust, defines the crime of genocide in Article 2C, to include, "Deliberately inflicting on a national, ethnic and racial or religious group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part."

And when you cut off water, food, electricity, fuel, you're condemning everybody, children, babies, women, men to collective destruction. What is going on with a few of the progressives in Congress and what do you see happening in the next few weeks?

**James Zogby:** Ralph, here's the thing. If you don't see Palestinians as real people, as people, just as equal as Jewish people, even though Biden says the equal worth of both Israeli and Palestinian lives, they repeat that line ad nauseam. But do nothing about it. But if you don't see them as real people, then cutting off water, power, fuel, and forcing them to be evicted, doesn't matter to you. Imagine if that same thing were happening to Jews. Imagine if that same thing were happening to another people with whom we identify as human beings. But if you don't identify Palestinians as real people, then what the hell? It doesn't matter. It's just a tactic the Israelis are doing to become more secure.

And so, what the reaction will be in Congress is: *leave me alone. I got no time for this. Or it'll be, hey, I'm really with you guys, but I can't do anything about it because, or it will be I gotta run for office in November next year, and I got to protect myself because otherwise, they'll come after me.* That's what you get. Either ignored completely because they don't care, or hey, I'm really with you guys, but.

They remind me of the way the Pope used to appoint Cardinals during the Soviet Union. behind the Iron Curtain, he'd appoint them in his heart because he didn't want to reveal their name. So, I have this club in my heart of members of Congress who I'm really with you guys but, and that's as good as nothing.

I got a call from somebody at the White House today saying who sounded like... remember Digger O'Dell, the sonorous funeral director on the old Life of Riley Show? He said, "I just want you to know that many of us here share your concern, and we're deeply upset that you're upset, and I just want you to know that we understand how you feel." I don't care if you understand how I feel, when I care about it are you going to do something to change the situation? And they're not because they're only concerned about the politics of it. That's why they're not doing anything.

**Ralph Nader:** According to the *New York Times*, the Israeli Air Force, using U.S. fighters and bombs, dropped 6000 bombs on this tiny enclave the size of Philadelphia in area in the first week, which is more than the U.S. dropped in Afghanistan after 9/11 in a year.

So, we're dealing here with tremendous physical destruction, but also the mental damage to these little kids and these children. They cut off electricity and everything. People in hospitals are on ventilators and babies are in incubators. When all this is put forward, the Israeli, the government says *it's all Hamas's fault*. Bret Stephens wrote an op-ed in the *New York Times* that says *it's all Hamas's fault*. There's never any admission of genocidal activity in Gaza, never any admission of over- proportionality, nor of collective punishment, which is illegal under international law. So, we're dealing here with a situation enabled by the United States, funded by the U.S. taxpayer. The U.S. taxpayer is going to be given the bill from Netanyahu for this. And Senator Schumer is preparing the legislation as the first installment. What do you want the American people to be doing here, and what groups in the United States are really standing up?

**James Zogby:** There are progressive groups in the Jewish community that are great. They've taken a lot on in leadership. There are also folks in the black community who have come to identify strongly with this issue. They've also been important in believing we have support from the churches, we have support from peace groups. We have support from a lot of the civil rights groups, except from some of the historic civil rights groups. They have been far less sympathetic. Historically, they've been less sympathetic. But there is a movement that is not going to change.

People said in the beginning, *oh, this is going to kill the progressive support for Palestine*. Far from it. The Israeli behavior will only reinforce that mood among progressives. As you just poll Democrats period, the percent of Democrats who are sympathetic to Palestinians is about 11/12 points higher than the percentage of Democrats who support Israel.

It's different on the Republican side because everything is different on the Republican side, but there is this very strong support that needs to be understood as playing a role in the demonstrations seen around the country. And this support will grow over time. Americans have come to know Palestinian students on campuses; they've come to know Palestinians in the community; they've come to have a feeling about this issue that is radically different than the way Congress behaves, which is why we're seeing large numbers of progressives now running for office and making Palestine an issue, which is driving the pro-Israel groups a bit crazy. Because given what's happening on campuses and what's happening in the electoral arena, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) starts raising tens of millions of dollars to defame, smear and defeat people like Jamaal Bowman and Cori Bush and Summer Lee, etcetera. There are also efforts to pass legislation in states banning the Boycott Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement and penalizing people for supporting boycotting Israel and now expanding the definition of anti-Semitism to include legitimate criticism of Israel, which is now being used on college campuses to try to silence the debate.

They can't win the debate so what they have to try to do is silence it. That's not going to make it go away. And it's certainly not going to make more friends for Israel at the end of the day.

**Ralph Nader:** The moral courage of Israeli human rights groups, especially in this kind of atmosphere, is really so commendable, along with the moral courage of American Jews on this. Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP) had a major demonstration at the White House and was part of a major demonstration before Congress this week [2nd week of October].

Let's go to the most ticklish issue of all here. Given the pending negotiations with the U.S., Saudi Arabia, and others, and given the indifference to the Palestinian issue by Israelis. As Gideon Levy has written in *Haaretz*, the young generation of Israelis hardly gave a thought, as they build their technological economy to what's going on a few miles away in the West Bank and Gaza.

What do you think was in the minds of Hamas in the October 7th attack? What was the strategic and tactical goal, and what were they most fearful of if they didn't raise the Palestinian issue in the brutal way that they did?

**James Zogby:** I'm going to be very honest with you. I've written about this because I cannot understand what was in their minds. They had to know what would happen the day after. And if



they didn't know what would happen the day after, then in addition to being brutal, they were also stupid.

To me there was no strategy here . There was no sense that *we do this and then that will happen and that will happen, and here's the logical outcome*. Despite the fact that Bush violated (it and by going into Iraq) the Powell Doctrine, to me makes sense.

I don't believe you should ever go to war, but if you go to war, [General Colin] Powell said, you have to know the consequences. You have to know the terms of it. You have to have an exit strategy. You have to have a sense of how this is going to contribute to victory, and you have to be able to define victory. I can't imagine that Hamas had any sense of any of that when they did what they did. I think they struck out blindly to murder people and without paying attention to what would happen to their own people afterwards. That's the first part.

The second part is that I don't think Israeli leadership adheres to the Powell Doctrine either, because their behavior in the last several days since this attack has demonstrated that all they wanted to do was kill as many people as possible, create fear and panic, and evict people from their homes. And the outcome is that we're going to be right back where we started, with a lot more dead people, a lot more angry people.

The other party who I don't think have any sense of adherence to any doctrine is the United States. Joe Biden, I'm sure doesn't understand. But there had to be people in the administration that told the president that the U.S. shouldn't come out with full-throated support for Israel and what they're doing. *We can say yes, what happened was terrible and we condemn it, and we support your right to defend yourself, you can't defend in a way that take away and destroy the lives of thousands of innocent people as they're now doing. And we will not support that, so you better be careful what you do.*

We didn't do that. Instead, we just said *go get them, guys, we're not going to offer any criticism*. And the result is that everybody in this is losing; the Palestinians are losing, and the Israelis are losing. Ultimately the United States is losing, as we can see on the streets across the Arab world.

**Ralph Nader:** There's also an internal issue. Israel is very divided over the usurpation of the jurisdiction of the judiciary. Netanyahu was in hot water, and a very strong pro-Zionist American who just went to Israel is raising the question, *why did it take five or six hours before the Israeli military began responding to the assault on October 7th?*

**James Zogby:** Because 75% of the Israeli military was in the West Bank protecting settlers and settlements. That's why. Because the Israeli military was busy brutalizing the West Bank, that's why.

It was a stupid move on the part of Hamas, but they confronted a brutal enemy who was willing to pay any price at all to kill as many people as they could in order to exact a toll on Palestinians. The problem is, the United States did nothing to restrain Israel. In fact, the State Department issued two statements: one called for restraint and one calling for protection of civilians and for a

ceasefire. Both statements were taken off the website within hours and replaced with “we support Israel's right to do anything it needs to defend its own people.” That was just criminal.

**Ralph Nader:** Now there's verbal censorship at the State Department. Tell us about this internal memorandum that was leaked to the press about what phrases should not be used by the State Department, whose charter 200 years ago was “diplomacy in customs, not war.”

**James Zogby:** The State Department issued a statement banning the use of words like “restraint” or “ceasefire.” And you get what you get—unrestrained Israel doing the worst it possibly can to make life as miserable as possible for Palestinians and committing, as you say, genocide, which is what is happening.

**Ralph Nader:** Which of course involves U.S. as a co-belligerent even under international law.

**James Zogby:** We're an accomplice; we're an accomplice to war crimes.

**Ralph Nader:** And the last point I want to run by you, Jim, is this. In 2014 when there was another war in Gaza with Israel, there was a five-day truce. Can there be a temporary truce now to negotiate the release of the hostages controlled by Hamas, now in tunnels in Gaza and the prisoners in Israeli jails who have been imprisoned for years without due process or even charges, including youngsters? What do you think is the chance of that, just to temper the process for a few days? What do you think Joe Biden should've come back to the U.S. with?

**James Zogby:** That has been proposed and it has been rejected by the U.S. government as an approach. They've completely rejected it, and they are reaping what they sow. I just can't tell you how frustrating it is to deal with this administration. We had more of an opportunity, more of a sense that people were listening even in the Bush years. I can't say Trump. But this administration has been completely deaf to any risk, any proposals that went differently than what the president is currently doing, which is offering complete, unquestioning support for Israel. And what they tell me is that he's quietly telling Netanyahu things that are critical. Netanyahu never responds to quiet diplomacy. He'll pocket this, and say *good, oh, thank you very much, good*. And then he'll they ignore it. If it's not public, it might as well not be being done. They should know that by now, but they don't.

**Ralph Nader:** There's a risk of a wider war here if the Israelis begin provoking areas outside. They've been bombing, by their own estimates, hundreds of times in Syria. Just a few days ago, they bombed the international civilian airport in Damascus. And if there's a wider war here, the U.S. is going to get involved in it.

**James Zogby:** yeah, and we have two warships off the coast, and we have 2000 Marines on the way. And I'm wondering to myself, what the hell are they thinking? Don't they remember what happened in Beirut after the '82 invasion when we got hundreds of Marines killed? Don't they remember Iraq? Is that too distant for them to remember the blunder we made?

We should never get involved in a war in a part of the world whose history we don't understand, whose culture we don't understand, and whose grievances against America we don't understand.

It's mind numbing, Ralph, that after all this time I'm dealing with people at the White House who couldn't find some of these countries on the map before they got the job five years ago! And they're making policy decisions about a part of the world that we've messed up for decades, and now they're messing it up.

**Ralph Nader:** U.S. military families, as they suffered in Iraq and Afghanistan. And of course, civilian deaths in Iraq were far, far greater than U.S. soldier deaths; by far a million Iraqis killed at least by Bush and Cheney's criminal war of invasion there. But Hillary Clinton, for example, voted for the Iraq war, and afterwards, she said it was a mistake. That's the way they treat millions of casualties in these Arab countries that are invaded by the U.S.— as a mistake.

So, with all that, we're looking for diplomacy. We're looking for the American people to say, *stop* the way they did when Obama asked the Congress to send U.S. soldiers into Syria—95% of the comments coming into Congress from Republican and Democrat voters said *stop*. And that seems to be the only hope when they read the tea leaves in public opinion in the US.

Let's go to Steve.

**Steve Skrovan:** Mr. Zogby, talk to me about the Anti-Defamation League as a source of information for Americans. What would your assessment of them be?

**James Zogby:** Number one, their history has been betrayed by their attitude over the last several decades. They've gone from being an Anti-Defamation League that was always on the right, I mean on the right wing, to a group that has become almost solely focused on Israel and on defaming people who are critical of Israel. They've even conflated criticism of Israel with anti-Semitism, and they've sought to silence groups and they've tarnished groups like Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP), that Ralph just mentioned, as anti-Israel and anti-Semitic, even though they're Jewish. They've done the same with Black Lives Matter. They've done the same with the student groups on campuses and other groups as well.

When it comes even to the Arab community, they are famous for in the '80s, for example, they had a spy on the West Coast who was working undercover in Arab groups and providing documents to the FBI about these groups that included people like former Congressman Pete McCloskey, and people who I knew out there, none of whom were involved in any terrorist activity. They were Arab American organizers and Arab American community activists and business leaders. Finally, there was a lawsuit against the ADL, which former Congressman Pete McCloskey and his group, who were co-defendants with him, won because the ADL had turned its mission into spying and defaming Arab Americans. And that's a lot of what ADL does these days.

I am obviously really distressed at it because they still have the name legacy of Oh my God, it's the ADL one—they defend Jewish people against anti-Semitism, but they've become one of the main proponents of anti-Arab bigotry and anti-Arab sentiment by accusing us. When we criticize Israel of being an anti-Semite, which we're not. And we're not because we know that anti-Semitism means hatred of the Jewish people and hatred of groups because they are Jewish and because there are somehow felt to be internal qualities that are shared by all Jews that

characterize them, and it can be negative or positive. I mean somebody who says, Jews are cheats or Jews are money grubbers or Jews are... that's bigotry. But those like Trump who say, yeah, Jews are really good with money is also bigotry. And anti-Semitism finding in any case, whether you're talking about Arabs, talking about Jews, talking about Chinese—any behavior that treats another people they're all the same and they have internal or innate qualities that define them, that are immutable, that can't be changed, because they're Jews or they're Arabs and you know what they're like—that's bigotry.

The ADL has fallen into that trap, because they have literally portrayed every Arab American who is a defender of Palestinians as a bigot, which is itself a form of bigotry, because it puts an entire community at risk.

**Ralph Nader:** We're out of time. We've been talking with Jim Zogby, the founder of the Arab American Institute. Jim, is there any last-minute point you want to make to our listeners?

**James Zogby:** A lot of the questions that have been asked, Ralph I deal with in the book *Palestinians: The Invisible Victims*. And I'd sure like to send people a copy if they want to write to me at [jjz@aaiausa.org](mailto:jjz@aaiausa.org) or DM me on Twitter it's @jjz1600.

*The Invisible Victims*, I wrote it back in 78 and some folks looked at it a few years back and said this book ought to be published today; it's exactly relevant to the conversation today. I looked at it and said it was great idea, so we reissued it. It's a very short book, but it traces the history of Zionism and the oppression of Palestinians and how the two were connected.

**Ralph Nader:** Thank you very much, Jim Zogby.

**James Zogby:** And, we'll send a copy. Thanks.

**Steve Skrovan:** We've been speaking with James Zogby. We will link to his work at [ralphnaderradiohour.com](http://ralphnaderradiohour.com). Up next, Harvey Wasserman joins us to talk about the Diablo Canyon nuclear plant.

But first, let's check in with our corporate crime reporter Russell Mokhiber.

**Russel Mokhiber:** From the National Press Building in Washington, DC. This is your *Corporate Crime Report "Morning Minute"* for Friday, October 20, 2023. I'm Russell Mokhiber.

The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau and the Federal Trade Commission are cracking down on junk fees. Junk fees are hidden surprise fees that companies sneak into customer bills, increasing costs and stifling competition.

Junk fees cost American families 10s of billions of dollars each year. Junk fees may take many forms, including fees for late penalties, overdrafts, returns, using an out of network ATM, money transfers, inactivity and more. With overdraft fees, a cup of coffee can go from \$3 to \$35.

When an individual needs help, they may even be charged a fee for speaking to a real person. And some companies charge you to pay your bill by phone or other methods. For the *Corporate Crime Reporter* I'm Russell Mokhiber.

**Steve Skrovan:** Thank you, Russell. Welcome back to *the Ralph Nader Radio Hour*. I'm Steve Skrovan along with Hannah Feldman and Ralph. Could contract law help activists prevent a nuclear disaster in Diablo Canyon? Hannah?

**Hannah Feldman:** Harvey Wasserman is a journalist, author, democracy activist and advocate for renewable energy. Mr. Wasserman is the author of *Solartopia!: Our Green-Powered Earth*, and *The People's Spiral of US History*. He has written and researched Atomic Energy since 1973 and co-authored *Killing Our Own: The Disaster of America's Experience with Atomic Energy*. Welcome back to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*, Harvey Wasserman.

**Harvey Wasserman:** Thanks for having me. I really appreciate it. It's always great to talk to you and to Ralph.

**Ralph Nader:** Listeners should know that Harvey Wasserman is one of a kind. There's no way to fully describe the wide array of injustices that he has not demonstrated against, picketed against, written about, and organized against all over the United States.

In fact, in his book *The People's Spiral of U.S. History*, Howard Zinn who wrote his own *People's History of the U.S.* said: "Harvey Wasserman constantly provokes us and educates us. Sometimes outrageous us, and U.S. often inspires us, is always delightfully readable."

But your concern right now is the increasing embrittlement of 18 U.S. nuclear plants around the country that could lead not just to a nuclear disaster in traditional ways like breaking through the containment and releasing radioactivity, but could actually lead to an explosion. And your focus is on the Diablo Canyon, two nuclear plants in California; these are the only nuclear plants operating that are left in California, a state that predicted having 100 nuclear plants by the year 2000. But never happened. Tell us the immediate problem of extending, the operating life of the Diablo Canyon plants, which were slated to close down by Governor Newsome, and his protection of this criminally negligent giant utility, Pacific Gas and Electric in California.

**Harvey Wasserman:** Yeah, thank you for that, Ralph. And we really are in crisis mode on a number of fronts here. There are 94 commercial reactors left in the United States. They are instruments of global warming and mass suicide. They operate at 570 degrees Fahrenheit every day. I'd like someone to tell me how you cool the planet with a radioactive fire that burns at 570 degrees Fahrenheit. They also emit carbon, especially carbon 14, and a lot of carbon in the nuclear fuel cycle. But the bottom line is that all these old reactors are embrittled. Embrittlement is a process that occurs when a piece of metal is exposed for decades to heat, pressure and radiation, which all the internal components of nuclear power plants are subjected to.

And with embrittlement you have a situation where if, God forbid, there's an accident and they have to pour in water to cool, the radioactive chain reaction going on, the embrittled reactor core

will shatter. And if, God forbid, the reactor core shatters, steam, hydrogen, and nuclear explosions will occur as happened at Chernobyl and Fukushima. And, it could not be more serious.

The two reactors at Diablo Canyon opened in the 1980s despite 10,000 people being arrested, including me. I spent three lovely nights in the San Luis Obispo County Jail. I highly recommend it. But we tried to stop them from going online.

They've operated since the mid-1980s, and in 2016 a deal was signed to shut them down and phase them out. Gavin Newsome was Lieutenant Governor at the time and he signed that deal. But last year he stabbed us in the back. And Ralph, we can never, ever trust Gavin Newsome for anything because he's now attempting to keep open these two reactors despite the fact that they're deeply flawed internally and surrounded by and literally a dozen earthquake faults. The NRC's own inspector has said that Diablo Canyon cannot withstand a likely earthquake. So, we are building a state and a nationwide movement to keep these two old reactors shut. Right now, Diablo Unit 1 is actually shut for refueling. We want it never to reopen. Newsome is refusing to allow us a public inspection. They are operated by PG&E, which is a convicted criminal of more than 90 manslaughter counts because they blew up a pipe in San Bruno and incinerated eight human beings. And then they burned down most of northern much of Northern California, killing over 80 people.

This is a criminal operation, Ralph. And they are continuing to be allowed to operate these two nuclear plants that could really cause an apocalyptic release of radiation. And one thing we have to understand is that all the nuclear plants in the United States today are essentially military facilities. No nuclear plant in the United States can compete now with wind and solar. In California, we get substantially more electricity from rooftop solar than we do from Diablo Canyon. There are 1500 people working at Diablo Canyon. There are 70,000 people installing solar panels in California.

There's only one explanation why they're continuing to operate these two reactors and all the other reactors in the United States. And it's because the commercial reactor industry is now the infrastructure of the nuclear weapons industry. If you like nuclear power, you love nuclear weapons. Because these two industries are joined at the hip, and that's why the federal government keeps intervening to keep these old reactors shut because they are incredibly dangerous.

People need to write to [mothersforpeace.org](http://mothersforpeace.org), which is the principal operation opposing Diablo Canyon. But Ralph, this could not be more serious, because these two reactors are upwind of the entire United States. An accident at Diablo Canyon could send within four hours an apocalyptic radioactive cloud into Los Angeles, into the Central Valley, where we get our fruits and vegetables for over the winter, and into the Bay Area. The stakes could not be higher.

Again, these are military facilities masquerading as fighters of global warming, which is absolutely ridiculous. You pioneered this movement. I was with you in 1973, and 1974 at the Critical Mass Conference in DC. And we've done tremendous work Ralph. In 1974, Richard Nixon said there'd be 1000 nuclear reactors in the United States by the year 2000. In the year 2000, there were 104. Now we're down to 94, but all these reactors are very old, very dangerous and they need to be shut as soon as possible.

**Ralph Nader:** As you know, the two Indian Point reactors 30 miles north of Manhattan have been shut down and Governor Andrew Cuomo was insistent that that be done. And New York's not suffering from an electricity shortage. There's huge areas of conservation of electricity, by the way, that will give us far more electric power by saving megawatts instead of building megawatts, nuclear power style.

Just to be specific Harvey, give us the timeline. You got two reactors at Diablo Canyon near an earthquake zone. Are the operating one now? And when were they supposed to be closed? What year has Governor Newsome given them and extension until? And by the way, further subsidized them?

**Harvey Wasserman:** Well, yeah, so the state of California, he's kicking in \$1.1 billion to keep these reactors open. It's absolutely insane. And another billion for 1.4 billion coming from the federal government. The only reason they're doing this, Ralph, is for nuclear weapons.

The 40-year license on the two reactors at Diablo was supposed to expire in 2024 and 2025, in other words, in the next two years. And the deal that was cut with the state of California, the Assembly, the utilities company itself, the regulators, the unions, the local governments, and the environmental groups in 2016, said that these two reactors would shut next year in 24 and the year after in 25. Newsome signed that deal and suddenly he waltzed in last year and is abrogating the deal.

It's outrageous and completely illegal Ralph. They are breaking the law 40 different ways from Sunday. We're in federal court now and trying to get the NRC to at least inspect these reactors. They don't want to inspect them. They don't want the public to know how bad internally they are.

And I got to tell you, the great miracle since the Critical Mass Conference that you did way back when, is the rise of renewables. Renewable energy—wind and solar, along with battery technology, is about to make a major breakthrough switching from lithium to sodium. These technologies have advanced so much faster and so much more effectively than anybody thought was possible.

There is absolutely no doubt that we can convert the entire global economy to renewables—wind, solar, batteries—efficiency, in a very rapid period of time, but what's standing in our way is nuclear power and fossil fuels. Nuclear power completely screws up the grid. In California, they're running Diablo Canyon right now. They're refueling. But when they're running Diablo Canyon, the electricity from the nuclear plant takes up the space on the grid that could be going too far cheaper wind and solar. Everything we envisioned 50 years ago has come true about the benefits of wind and solar.

**Ralph Nader:** What you're saying has been said many times on our program by the late David Freeman, who was the head of the Tennessee Valley Authority as well as utilities in Sacramento and Los Angeles.

Harvey, I want you to say more about the connection between nuclear power and nuclear weapons.

**Harvey Wasserman:** Well, what's happened is, Ralph, that we have successfully shut many of the key pieces of the nuclear weapons infrastructure—Rocky Flats, Hanford, Fernald, Ashtabula. Much of our activism against nuclear weapons has been extremely effective.

So now, the government's putting all its eggs in the basket at Portsmouth and southern Ohio. They want to expand uranium enrichment and do all sorts of things to make plutonium available and enriched uranium for these depleted uranium weapons. And how HALEU fuel, which is supposed to be for these ridiculous new reactors that are never going to get built, and they're going to use the spent fuel and other pieces of the infrastructure for the commercial atomic reactors. So, the commercial atomic reactors are now the new infrastructure for the atomic weapons industry.

I'll give you a very clear picture. The Prime Minister of France, Macron, has very explicitly said that without nuclear power, you don't have nuclear weapons. And without nuclear weapons, you don't have nuclear power.

The first solar panels were invented at Bell Labs in '53 and '54. If we had gone that route instead of the nuclear route, we would not have a global warming problem. We would be infinitely richer. We'd be fully employed. Because renewables employ way, way, way more people than nuclear power fossil fuels.

There are more people working in California on solar alone than there are digging coal in the whole United States.

**Ralph Nader:** You want people to connect with [mothersforpeace.org](http://mothersforpeace.org), and in what way can they connect?

**Harvey Wasserman:** “Mothers” has a great website. They've been active for 50 years, and they're a great group. They're right there in San Luis Obispo. You can also contact me at [soatopia.org](http://soatopia.org), [mothersforpeace.org](http://mothersforpeace.org), and they are doing the legal intervention.

Ralph, if we covered every usable rooftop in the United States with solar and did nothing else, we could power this country twice over. I mean, it's ridiculous.

**Ralph Nader:** We're out of time. Thank you very much. Harvey Wasserman, author of the book *The People's Spiral and U.S. History* and also the leader in the Movement that he calls Solar Topia. Go to [mothersforpeace.org](http://mothersforpeace.org) if you want to get involved in this effort. Thank you very much, Harvey.

**Harvey Wasserman:** Hey, thank you and listen, if you want a piece of music, go to YouTube, and look for Pete Seeger, Solartopia!. I once approached Pete and asked him to write a song about Solartopia!. And he did for God's sakes. And it's on YouTube and you could use that very cool music.

**Steve Skrovan:** I want to thank our guests again, James Zogby and Harvey Wasserman for those of you listening on the radio, that's our show. For you podcast listeners, stay tuned for some bonus material we call “The Wrap Up” featuring Francesco DeSantis and In Case You Haven't Heard. A



transcript of this program will appear on the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour* Substack site soon after the episode is posted.

**Hannah Feldman:** Subscribe to us on a *Ralph Nader Radio Hour* YouTube Channel, and for Ralph's weekly column, it's free, go to [nader.org](http://nader.org).

For more from Russell Mokhiber, go to [corporatecrimereporter.com](http://corporatecrimereporter.com).

**Steve Skrovan:** Saturday, October 28<sup>th</sup> is Tort Law Education Day at the American Museum of Tort Law.

Join Ralph's Saturday, October 28<sup>th</sup> at 1:00 PM Eastern for the museum's free virtual panel. Go to [torpmuseum.org](http://torpmuseum.org) to register.

**Hannah Feldman:** The producers of the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour* are Jimmy Lee Wirt and Matthew Marran. Our executive producer is Alan Minsky.

**Steve Skrovan:** Our theme music, "Stand Up Rise Up", was written and performed by Kemp Harris. Our associate producer is Hannah Feldman. Our proofreader is Elisabeth Solomon. Our social media Manager is Steven Wendt.

**Hannah Feldman:** Join us next week on the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*. Thank you, Ralph.

**Ralph Nader:** Thank you everybody. The next issue, the *Capital Hill Citizen* is coming soon.