

Ralph Nader Radio Hour

Episode 515

“Grassroots Groups for Gaza”

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Guests

**Ido Setter from “Standing Together”
Stefanie Fox from “Jewish Voice for Peace”**

Jimmy Lee Wirt: “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 stolen their country. Why would they accept that?”

Steve Skrovan: Those are the words of David Ben-Gurion, reported by Nahum Goldman in his 1978 book, *The Jewish Paradox* read by our very own Jimmy Lee Wirt.

Welcome to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*. My name is Steve Skrovan, along with my co-host, David Feldman. Hello, David.

David Feldman: We have an amazing show today.

Steve Skrovan: We do. And to join us for that is the man of the hour, Ralph Nader. Hello, Ralph.

Ralph Nader: Hello, everybody. David is right. We have two very courageous people joining us today.

Steve Skrovan: As the assault on Gaza continues unabated, and a United Nation’s study just released reports that two mothers an hour are dying in Gaza. On today's program, we're going to focus on the grassroots peace movement both inside and outside of Israel. To that end, we have invited two guests from different organizations.

First up will be Ido Setter from Standing Together. Standing Together is a movement based in Israel, aimed at "mobilizing Jewish and Palestinian citizens of Israel in pursuit of peace, equality, and social and climate justice," We'll find out how the peace movement is faring in the eye of the storm.

Next, we speak to Stefanie Fox, head of Jewish Voice for Peace. Jewish Voice for Peace is the largest Jewish anti-Zionist organization in the world. They have been doing a tremendous amount of work by informing Americans, Jews and gentiles alike, about the realities of Netanyahu's

policies with their demonstrations and their daily "Power Half-Hour for Gaza" Zoom calls, which give updates and encourage Americans to contact and urge their representatives in Congress to call for a ceasefire.

As always, somewhere along the line we'll check in with our vigorous corporate crime reporter, Russell Mokhiber. But first, let's speak to an Israeli voice for peace. David?

David Feldman: Ido Setter works on Standing Together's digital mobilization team. Standing Together is a grassroots movement mobilizing Jewish and Palestinian citizens of Israel in pursuit of peace, equality, and social and climate justice. He joins us today from Israel. Welcome to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*, Ido Setter.

Ido Setter: Hi. Thank you for having me.

Ralph Nader: Welcome indeed, Ido. First, before we get underway on some of the questions we have about the situation over there, describe your group, Standing Together. It's a pretty courageous group. It doesn't get all that much deserved media in the US. People in the US don't know how much cooperation there is inside Israel on a daily basis between Israeli Jews and Israeli-Palestinians.

For example, over 20% of the pharmacists in Israel are Israeli-Palestinians. A lot of doctors are Israeli-Palestinians. And a lot of bus drivers. are Israeli-Palestinians. Miko Peled, a recent guest said, "There's already one state. The Israeli government controls all of Palestine. All we need are equal rights, and we're underway." So with that background, tell us about Standing Together, how it started and what it does.

Ido Setter: Standing Together was founded at the end of 2015 and began its activities then. It advocates for peace, social justice, climate justice. The main thing to know about Standing Together is that it's a grassroots movement, a populist movement, a movement that envisions Israeli society in a different manner, because we're used, here in Israel-Palestine, to divide or be divided to the regular axis of left/right, capitalist/socialist.

At Standing Together, we try to break those divisions and connect all the various communities that we have in Israeli-Palestinian societies, such as Russians, Ethiopians, Palestinians, Israelis, religious Jews, secular and Muslims, the Druze and so forth. We try to connect with these communities, on the basis of immediate interests, and not to divide according to the left-right axis. And not to agree on everything, because that's impossible - and it's also not a very good state - but to work together towards our mutual interests.

Ralph Nader: Ido, you described Standing Together as not a nongovernmental (NGO), in other words, not a citizen group, nonprofit citizen group, advocating things. You also say you're not a political party.

You take a very interesting stand about what you do. Can you describe that? Because you say, "The leftist parties can no longer mobilize wide swaths of the Israeli public, and professional NGOs likewise, fail to provide meaningful activism for the average layperson. Standing Together

seeks to fill the void between these two groups. It's a grassroots movement rooted in inclusivity and pluralism." And you say, "We will unite the Israeli masses and propel them to action." How do you unite the Israeli masses, and what kind of action do you seek?

Ido Setter: The first thing that we try to do is to state that our future is much too important to be left in the hands of politicians. We need to take matters into our own hands, and we are responsible for our future, and we can change our future, because if we don't do that, politicians will do it for us.

As a grassroots movement, we have what we call circles of activities and circles of activists throughout Israel-Palestine. Standing Together works inside the communities, from northern Israel to southern Israel, and we do communal work. We grow from bottom up from these communities to public work and activism. The main idea is to work together, to unite on the basis of our immediate interests—for me as a secular Israeli, for someone else, as a religious Muslim. But since we share common interests, we can cooperate on and work to achieve together.

Ralph Nader: You say you have eight regional chapters throughout Israel and six student chapters. Give us an idea of some of the events that you've initiated, so we know more clearly what Standing Together does on a regular basis.

Ido Setter: It, of course, depends on the situation. In the past three months, after October 7th, it's very much related to the war but also to the inside conflicts, the inner conflicts that we recognize in Israel.

For example, we started a solidarity guard that was on the ground in various cities and erased racist slogans and made sure that no one would be hurt because he/she spoke Arabic in the street. We initiated a hotline where you can phone in and say that you were fired from your job because you were such and such, or you said such and such things about the war or about Gaza, about Palestinians, etc. Those are the main activities that we had in the past three months.

But in regular times - if there are any regular times in Israel - our work is much more communal. We fight key struggles. We had housing struggles to make rent prices more reasonable. Each circle and each student chapter chooses its own fight to fight.

Ralph Nader: We're talking with Ido Setter, who is a spokesperson for Standing Together, a group in Israel.

This must be very difficult for you now, since the October 7th Hamas attack and now the war on Gaza, which is horrendous and is turning a lot of world opinion against the Israeli regime of Bibi Netanyahu. You seek an end to the occupation. What is the final status you seek for Israel-Palestine? Is it a one-state, a two-state? What do you mean by an end to the occupation?

Ido Setter: I can't really tell what's the endpoint, whether it will be one state or two states. What I can say is that it's a state where there will be equality and freedom for both people. Right now,

what we have is the exact opposite, because the Israeli's right-wing government imagines/envisions this land as a land of only one people.

So we need to, of course, reach a ceasefire agreement, end the war, and then to move that agreement forward, because the only way for us, for Israelis, to live in security, is to have a peace agreement with Palestinians. And the only way for Palestinians to have security and live next to us is to have a peace treaty with Israel. So this is a necessity.

The important thing is to acknowledge each other's humanity, first of all. And it sounds basic, but we need to get to that stage, and then to acknowledge each people's rights—the right to self-definition and the right to life, security, and peace.

We can't really know right now whether it will be one state or two states. But what we do know is that it's imperative to start talking about it, discussing it, and move towards it, because if we don't do this, we are doomed to an everlasting war, which is the most horrible situation we can think about.

Ralph Nader: These must be very repressive times for a group like Standing Together. Netanyahu has used this massive war on Gaza as a unifying force. How are you getting along? Are you being harassed? Are you being suppressed? Is your movement growing even now? Give us an idea.

Ido Setter: I must say that even in regular times, we're not the most popular kid on the block, but ever since October 7th our movement is growing. Hundreds of new members have joined. We're going to have a big assembly. Our yearly assembly in Haifa is in 10 days. After October 7th shock everyone spoke the same tone, but now, more than 100 days after it, people start to think differently and to see it in different light.

I wouldn't say that Standing Together is being harassed, but dealing with the police is not always a treat, especially when we have a minister from the extreme right controlling the Israeli police right now, but we're dealing with them. We are holding our demonstrations and we never give up. Our motto is “where there is struggle, there is hope.” So even in these dark, difficult times, we can still find hope and we can still work to inspire hope and give hope to the public.

Ralph Nader: Are you demanding immediate ceasefire and the influx of many hundreds of trucks of humanitarian aid? I assume that a lot of Israelis, including, Israeli-Arabs, are in favor of that. Are you standing up for that?

Ido Setter: Absolutely. This must be done for the short-term. It had to be done yesterday, as they say. But for the long-term, I think that we must end the war. We must bring back the Israeli and Palestinian hostages that are being held in captivity by Hamas. We must bring them back alive, and the only way to bring them back alive is by making a deal. And we must cease the fire and stop bombing innocent civilians in Gaza.

This is for the immediate short-term, but for But long-term, I think that October 7th taught us in a very harsh way that we simply cannot continue living as if occupation and military control over

millions of Palestinians is an acceptable thing. It's not. We must move forward to a peace treaty with the Palestinian people. It's something that we need to resolve, and we need to reach an agreement. So short-term, ceasefire, bring back the hostages, stop the military operation. And longer term move forward with a peace treaty with the Palestinian people.

Ralph Nader: Given that Prime Minister Netanyahu has delayed an official investigation on how triple-tiered Israeli defense—human intelligence, technological surveillance, warnings by Israeli military of activity in Gaza before October 7th, the receipt of the formal plans of Hamas a year ago, which were ignored, is there growing skepticism here because he doesn't want an investigation, that this was something other than an unprecedented, complete, multi-tiered collapse of the defense against the Hamas attack?

Ido Setter: It's a combination of a couple of things. There is the strategic thing that happened that the military wasn't prepared, and the response was very slow, and the effect of surprise that could have been avoided.

But, if we dive into it, there's a much worse thing that has been going on, because for the last, two decades, Israeli government and Israel as a state didn't offer any kind of hope for the Palestinians. There wasn't a serious peace process, no serious talks, and basically Israeli government told the Palestinians that this is how things are going to be, so deal with it. And when you don't offer any hope, people will get to extreme places.

What happened on October 7th was a strategic collapse. But it's related to an accumulation of the past two decades where Israel didn't think that moving forward to a peace treaty or kind of a peace agreement with the Palestinian people was imperative.

Ralph Nader: Close observers in the US are puzzled in a variety of ways. One is why Prime Minister Netanyahu has said repeatedly, including to his Likud party in 2019, that his strategy, obstructing a two-state solution, is to support and help fund Hamas. He said that proudly. That was his strategy. And what's the view in Israel about his statement saying he actually supports and facilitates the funding of Hamas? And how did all these weapons get into Hamas' hands, given the embargo and the siege? What's the discussion in Israel about these puzzling contradictions?

Ido Setter: The Israeli public begins to understand that Hamas and the Israeli extreme right-wing is a mirror image of each other, because the vision of both sides for this land is that only one people occupies it. Hamas wants it to be the Palestinian people, and the Israeli far-right wants it to be the Jewish people.

Both of them, the Israeli far-right and Hamas, are the enemies to the concept of the Israeli-Palestinian peace. In that sense, there are many. Also, Netanyahu, ~~that~~ said what you quoted earlier, but also Bezalel Smotrich, Israeli's prime minister, ~~that~~ said out loud flatly, Hamas is an asset that we should nurture.

The Israeli right has been nurturing Hamas not just with Qatari money, but also with the idea that there will never be peace, that this conflict cannot be solved, and that the only way to exist here in this land is with power, to live by the sword.

So after what happened and after what we're seeing now in the past three months, the Israeli public understands that Hamas cannot be destroyed just by military means, and that we cannot leave the situation as it is, because then we're heading just for the next round, so ~~and that~~ we need to think outside of the box, as they say, and just to move forward and try something that we have never really tried in a serious manner, which is peace.

Ralph Nader: In the meantime, the deaths, injuries, sickness, infectious disease, bombardment, and sniping continues in Gaza. It's now two-thirds destroyed in terms of buildings. And there seems to be no let-up in the blockage of assistance to the desperate Palestinian families.

There was a heartrending article in the *Washington Post*, January 22nd, on mothers trying to give birth, 5000 births a month in Gaza, and there's nowhere to give birth on the roads, no medical assistance, no food, no water, no electricity. It's a desperate situation for the infirm, the elderly, the people who have had cancer, children, infants. Is there any compassionate wave starting in Israel about this massive slaughter that's going on? These are hundreds of thousands of impoverished families, children, who had nothing to do with Hamas, nothing to do with October 7th.

Ido Setter: Yes, absolutely. After more than 100 days, Israeli public may have the capacity to start to do that and to feel that.

But what we are, in Standing Together, trying to say to the Israeli public, is not only that we should feel compassion for the Palestinians, although, of course, we should be feeling compassion for them, because that's the humane thing to do, but also that nothing stays on one side of the border. Everything that happens on the Palestinian side of the border eventually comes back to the Israeli side of the border. So it's in Israel's interest to stop the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and to make sure that there is enough food and enough supplies for innocent civilians in Gaza, because this war is going to dictate our lives here for the next decade.

After it ends, and it will end one day, it will end with an agreement, and then we'll have to live together. In order to do that, we need to stop right now what's happening at the current moment in Gaza, have compassion and move in the opposite direction from where Benjamin Netanyahu and its hawkish government is trying to lead us.

Ralph Nader: And before we conclude, what would you want to say to President Joe Biden and the US Congress, which seem to be a close ally of what Netanyahu is doing? And in order for them not to ask for a ceasefire, they are engaged in hostilities now, the US, that is, against the Houthis in Yemen. And there are bombings in Iraq, Syria. It's quite a price the US is paying because in order that Joe Biden, the Congress, not demand a ceasefire, because if there is a ceasefire, there'd be no Houthi assailing of shipping in the Red Sea, there would be no missiles with Hezbollah in Lebanon. What would you want to say to them, Congress and President Joe Biden?

Ido Setter: Sometimes the best advice you can give to your friend is to know when to stop.

Ralph Nader: Well said. Netanyahu keeps saying that he's engaged in this war for total victory so the Hamas can never do again to Israel what they did on October 7th. It seems to be a war that has no strategic ending but to keep Netanyahu in power and out of the prosecution process. Is that correct?

Ido Setter: Yeah, correct. But it also has another meaning, because we must remember that although Netanyahu is the prime minister, the people who are setting the tone in his government are extremist right-wing hawkish politicians like Bezalel Smotrich who I mentioned earlier, and Itamar Ben-Gvir.

So the other purpose of this war is just to be engaged in perpetual war and eradicate any chance to build a mutual future. Nobody thinks that this war can eradicate Hamas, no matter what they say. After more than three months of unprecedented firepower that the IDF has been deploying in the Gaza Strip, Hamas is still active, and it won't be destroyed. But Netanyahu and his very extreme colleagues want just to keep this state of war and to destroy any chance to build here a future of peace and security. And we must stop that and we must offer an alternative.

This is the main thing we're trying to do these past three months is to offer an alternative. not just to say, this is very wrong. And it is wrong. It is very wrong but to say had we gone in the direction of peace two decades ago, one decade ago, maybe the October 7th wouldn't have happened. Maybe this is one of the lessons we need to learn from this, and this is a wake-up call, and we should go in this direction, instead of doing what Israel always does, which is to use power and more power. It's futile. It gets nowhere.

Ralph Nader: Well, if things continue, as the chair of the Department of Global Health at University of Glasgow pointed out, the prediction is that half a million people in Gaza will die in the current year. You're asking people to support Standing Together. How would they do that?

Ido Setter: If they're living outside of Israel, they can join Friends of Standing Together, which is a group with activity abroad. People can also donate to Standing Together so we can broaden our activities. They can support us in social media—share our posts and like our posts and echo our ideas. We need the support. We want this support, and we want to spread our ideas in Israel, and worldwide.

Ralph Nader: Can you give our listeners, who wish to support you or find out more about Standing Together, your website?

Ido Setter: Yeah. It's www.standing-together.org. It's a Hebrew and Arabic site, but you have an English tab there where you can find all the information about us in English as well.

Ralph Nader: Thank you very much. We've been talking with Ido Setter, who is the spokesperson for Standing Together, a very courageous and grassroots effort over the years inside Israel. And

we hope that the mass media in the United States will recognize what you've been doing as they go about reporting the bombing and the war on Gaza. Thank you very much, Ido.

Ido Setter: Thank you very much.

Steve Skrovan: We've been speaking with Ido Setter. We will link to his work at Standing Together at ralphnaderradiohour.com. Up next, we turn to Stefanie Fox at Jewish Voice for Peace. But first, let's check in with our corporate crime reporter, Russell Mokhiber.

Russell Mokhiber: From the National Press Building in Washington, D.C., this is your *Corporate Crime Reporter Morning Minute* for Friday, January 26, 2024. I'm Russell Mokhiber.

Last week, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau proposed a rule to rein in excessive overdraft fees charged by the nation's biggest financial institutions. The proposed rule would apply to insured financial institutions with more than \$10 billion in assets, which covers approximately 175 of the largest depository institutions in the country. These institutions typically charge \$35 for an overdraft (loan), even though the majority of consumers' debit card overdrafts are for less than \$26 and are repaid within three days. Under the proposal, banks could charge a fee to recoup their costs at an established benchmark as low as \$3 or at a cost they calculate if they show their cost data.

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 David Feldman and Ralph.

Now we turn our attention to an American grassroots movement, Jewish Voice for Peace. David?

David Feldman: Stefanie Fox is the head of Jewish Voice for Peace, which is the largest Jewish anti-Zionist organization in the world. Welcome to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*, Stefanie Fox.

Stefanie Fox: Thanks so much for having me.

Ralph Nader: Welcome indeed, Stefanie. Let's start with your describing what Jewish Voice for Peace stands for in terms of the final status of Israel-Palestine. What do you recommend there? You've come out obviously for an immediate ceasefire, opening up massive humanitarian aid for the displaced, besieged, bombed people in Gaza. What do you foresee as the permanent status over there? One-state, two-state, what?

Stefanie Fox: Thanks so much for having me, Ralph. Jewish Voice for Peace, as the largest progressive Jewish anti-Zionist organization in the world, is also very rooted as a US-based organization, and as a Jewish organization. As such, we are guided by a vision of winning justice, equality, and dignity for all people, which in the case of Israel-Palestine, obviously starts with Palestinian freedom. And we absolutely see that as a vision of a shared future.

So we from here don't take a position on one-state or two-state or the exact system of governance that will govern the people that are not us. That said, we're very clear on the principles that guide us and what we're fighting for, which is a shared future of peace, security and dignity for all people from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea, and that must start with justice, equality, freedom and dignity for Palestinians.

Ralph Nader: Tell us what you've been doing, for people who just focus on the mass media and don't hear, read, or see anything about your activities. Tell us about what you've been doing since October 7th.

Stefanie Fox: We are a grassroots organization with members all over the US in local communities, basically every community across the country, 85 places, rabbinic council, students on campuses nationwide. Together we have been mobilizing with everything in our power, our hearts, voices, souls, to bring an immediate and permanent ceasefire, and to do so with every ounce of power we've managed to build as a grassroots organization over the last three decades. That looks like, probably half a million or more calls and emails to members of Congress and the Biden administration, and a ton of action in the streets. We've been doing the largest in history Jewish solidarity and civil disobedience actions that have ever happened. We've shut down congressional offices and the highways and bridges and federal buildings, just showing up and staying with our persistence and our real moral clarity—not in our name as Jews, not with our tax dollars as US citizens. And proclaiming that business as usual just cannot happen in the midst of an unfolding genocide. So We have brought everything we can to the task.

Ralph Nader: And to what extent are you having an impact in Congress? The pro-Palestinian rights movement in the US seems to dominate the streets, but the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) and the pro-Netanyahu forces seem to dominate the suites, that is the political suites in the White House and in the Department of State, and above all, in the Congress. Are you having a discernible change of heart among any members of Congress?

Stefanie Fox: Globally, there is absolute consensus that this must stop immediately, that this is an unfolding genocide, that ceasefire now, and beyond that, that there is no military solution to decades of Israeli oppression of Palestinians, and we must seek freedom in order to end all of this horrible bloodshed.

There's a global consensus about that. What's amazing to see is that 80%, at least, of Democratic voters in the US also support an immediate and permanent ceasefire. So we have the people and the grassroots power. It is politically popular to support Palestinian rights in this way. Yet at the same time, like you said, there is the horrifying and very obvious direct complicity and partnership of the US government, Congress and the Biden administration in every bit of Israel's actions, both through exactly as you named, through impunity in every way and mechanism that the US government can manage, through continued massive funding, with or without congressional approval, and through the continued funding and fueling of more weaponry into the hands of this genocide.

Jewish Voice for Peace is opposing continued funding and arming of the attack on Palestinians in Gaza. And we are working to ensure that the power in the streets, as you said, actually translates to shifting the political calculus that upholds the US-Israel alliance undergirding Israeli apartheid. That's a longer project and one that we're right now in this horrifying confrontation with, of just how intractable it feels, but we have to really be thoughtful about noticing where those cracks are.

We started with just a handful of congressional members, and there are now at least 65 members of Congress calling for ceasefire, and that support grows by the day. We've seen congressional staffers, many Biden administration officials, hundreds speaking out, registering their dissent. We have State Department officials, like you had Josh Paul on the program coming out, even folks resigning over this moment. I keep reminding myself and our people that the surface cracks last.

All of that shaking is happening based on the power that we have in the streets and that the grassroots is building, and it is creating a crisis, but it has not moved nearly fast enough, and it has been an unthinkable, unbearably large toll on Palestinians. But all of that is true at once.

Ralph Nader: You were talking about cracks in Congress. Here's one crack that needs to be opened that AIPAC cannot really stop once it gets underway. Since 1948, there has never been a hearing by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee or the House Foreign Relations Committee inviting Israeli and Palestinian peace advocates. They've never had a voice on Capitol Hill with all the hearings that have been held since 1948.

There have been former ministers in Israel, former jurists, mayors, security units heads, who have opposed Netanyahu in Israel, and they've never had a voice in the US Congress. And there have been Palestinian peace advocates who are well-acquainted with their Israeli counterparts, and they've never had a voice.

Do you think that that should be a priority, to push the House and Senate to give these Israelis and Palestinians a voice, and that that would break the grip to some substantial degree, of AIPAC on Congress, which has stifled the voices who want to wage peace instead of war?

Stefanie Fox: I absolutely think those voices should be at the center of the conversation. Palestinians in particular have been systematically and very intentionally silenced and boxed out of conversations. And not just conversations, but political decisions and billions of dollars of taxpayer money that directly are going to slaughter their families, even as they are US citizens here.

Ensuring that Palestinian and other voices of conscience are at the center of the conversation is critical. and we're past the time for conversation. That's why we're so pleased to see things like the court case brought by the Center for Constitutional Rights on behalf of two Palestinian human rights organizations, and a couple dozen of Palestinians in Gaza and the United States bringing the Biden administration to court, not just for failing to prevent, but actually active complicity in Israel's genocide of Palestinians.

That court case will have a hearing this Friday. It's so essential that it not just be about *Oh, the US needing to think differently or talk differently about this*, but that our government is direct partners in this genocide, and it's essential that it be brought to account for that complicity. So I'm really happy that's happening.

Ralph Nader: Members of Congress, as you know, Stefanie, always have this one sentence. Israel has a right to defend itself. Of course, Israel doesn't indicate what itself is. It doesn't have firm borders other than all of Palestine. But in the last 50 years or more, over 400 more times, Palestinian innocents have been killed and injured compared to Israeli innocents who have been killed and injured in these periodic conflicts. Do you speak out by saying Palestinians have a right to defend themselves as well?

Stefanie Fox: International law is clear that nothing, no matter the circumstance, ~~the Israeli government has, under no circumstances does~~ justifies the genocide unfolding before our eyes, but also that the concept of the Israeli government "defending itself" against a population it besieges and occupies and carries out apartheid over, is not protected under international law in the way that Israel puts forward that it is.

We think it's incredibly important to understand that this did not start in October. We're looking at 75 years of Israeli colonization, apartheid, injustice, and oppression of Palestinians, and that the only way out of this horrifying moment we're in is to realize Palestinian rights and freedom.

Ralph Nader: You've been under assault by groups like AIPAC and allied groups. They've been accusing you of just about everything, including anti-Semitism. Imagine accusing Jewish Voice for Peace of anti-Semitism. But do you ever talk about the anti-Semitism against the Arab Palestinian? Give us your views on that.

Stefanie Fox: Great. I'm glad you raised this. Let me take it in a couple of directions.

First, just to speak to the semantics of the term Semite, and what does anti-Semitism mean? Just to quickly ground us, the term Semite comes out of 19th Century scientific racism. It's not really something in any moment in history that anybody has actually used to describe themselves as a Semite. It's only a racist term.

The term "anti-Semitism" does refer to the bigotry and discrimination that emerged out of that racist classification system, and at its root, comes from the same white supremacy in which anti-Palestinian racism and erasure and Zionism itself were born. The point is not that anti-Semitism is not about Jews, which it is, and of course, anti-Semitism is real. There's real hatred and bigotry and discrimination against Jews. The point is that anti-Semitism and white supremacy and Zionism emerge from the same root of exclusionary, ethno-nationalist, racialized state building, and we have to fight them all together. The answer is solidarity amongst and between our communities and a vision of collective liberation that challenges that white supremacy and ethno-nationalism.

That's just on the term itself. But what we're seeing now, you're absolutely right, it's an Orwellian nightmare. There are very intentional, systematic attempts by organizations like the Anti-

Defamation League and AIPAC, to misstate, confuse and even legally redefine the word anti-Semitism in order to conflate it with all criticism of Israel, or any effort to hold the Israeli government accountable for its oppression of Palestinians.

It should go without saying to your audiences and to all audiences, that opposition to the political movement of Zionism or to the policies of the Israeli state or any state, is no different than any attack on or criticism of a political ideology or the policies of a nation state. But there's a campaign to equate Jewishness and Jews with this rogue state actively committing genocide. And that puts Palestinians, as we see, in immense danger. And frankly, As a Jew, it's also a huge danger to Jews, because if everything is anti-Semitism, then nothing is.

At a time when white supremacists and white nationalists are going to take advantage of this moment to promote anti-Palestinian racism and Islamophobia and real anti-Semitism, misstating and misdefining it is incredibly dangerous for all of our communities.

Ralph Nader: Let's talk about the situation on campuses. We're talking with Stefanie Fox, the executive director of Jewish Voice for Peace. You're quite familiar with what's happening on campuses. Inform our listeners what happened at Columbia University recently.

Stefanie Fox: The first point to make is that a government doesn't use these tools of repression as its bludgeon to shut down the conversation if it has any ability to fight on the terms that are presented to actually have a conversation in the open.

We need to understand these massive and very terrifying tools of repression that are happening, especially on campuses, but even more broadly than that, to shut down the movement for Palestinian rights and freedom as a sign of the merits and growth and power of that movement and its rightness. That said, it's a very scary time, particularly for Palestinians and for anybody who's willing to stand up for Palestinian rights.

As you mentioned, at Columbia University just this week, not only have the student groups, SJP and our own JVP chapter been banned for no good reason, but just absolutely to try to shut down their activism, and they've been fighting that for a couple of months now. But at a protest this week about 300 student protesters were attacked with skunk, a military-grade weapon, which anybody who's familiar with the Israel Defense Force's (IDF) operations in the West Bank and beyond, knows that it's a horrifying chemical, (used to disburse Palestinian protesters). It smells like a combination of dead animal and excrement, and it soaks into the skin into clothes and is virtually impossible to wash off. It's a lung irritant that also leads to all kinds of other medical complications such as haziness and memory loss. Students, days later, are still in the hospital or suffering from those very symptoms. They were attacked and sprayed with this chemical weapon, allegedly by ex-IDF soldiers who are students at Columbia University.

And this attack took the administration days to even respond to. While we're seeing this hysteria, this real new McCarthyism, what is the conversation? Did somebody say, "There should be freedom from the river to the sea?" (Palestinian-American Congresswoman Talib) Meanwhile, Palestinian students are getting shot for wearing keffiyeh, getting attacked like this with literal

chemical warfare, are facing doxing and the loss of their jobs. It is a crisis and Palestinian lives are so dehumanized, including in the United States. It's a very scary moment for student activists who are continuing to bravely speak out.

We must be very clear-eyed that attacks against Palestinians and anti-Zionists are a wide-open door for the far-right looking to criminalize all forms of protest, to gut academic freedom, and to roll back racial justice projects. It's not like a slippery slope. It is an iced over mountain road that the Biden administration and the US Congress are just barreling down at top speed, imperiling everybody.

Ralph Nader: Certainly this whole Israeli-Palestinian conflict is having severe effects in the US, not just in terms of military budget, but also freedom of speech, as you pointed out. What can you tell us about J Street, which is a fairly large organization that developed to counter the AIPAC lobby? They retreated a bit after October 7th, but are they coming back to their original mission?

Stefanie Fox: The position of demanding an immediate and permanent ceasefire is a centrist position. And there is no justification in the world for the way in which Biden administration and US Congress, and from where we sit, Jewish communal organizations have refused to call for ceasefire. It requires a great moral reckoning for all of those institutions and actors.

The fact that it took more than 100 days and more than 25,000 Palestinians slaughtered for J Street to finally this week to say *It is no longer the time for war*. We would argue it's never the time for war after decades of oppression, occupation and apartheid, to see that then this genocide has happened, with the drums of war being beat by the political establishment and for many months has included J Street.

We welcome that they are now calling for what is a ceasefire, and there is a moral reckoning to be done with what has already occurred and what is unfolding from here.

Ralph Nader: Why would a country like Israel, in terms of this popular opinion, register over 85% support for whatever the Israeli military is doing in Gaza?

Stefanie Fox: If you look at the International Court of Justice case brought by South Africa against Israel, explaining in very detailed terms the legal case for exactly why this is genocide, echoing what Palestinians have been saying from the beginning, it really details the intent that Israeli government officials have made clear from the very beginning. "We will make Gaza an uninhabitable place, a place not fit for human life. This will be the carrying out of the second Gaza Nakba." The very direct, explicit claims that they would raise Gaza to the ground, make it unlivable, force everybody out and aim to eliminate the population in whole or part, as is the definition of genocide.

And to then see it play out directly, specifically, fully in the act being carried out here, it's a waking nightmare to watch happen. And there's no denying it They are saying what they're doing. They're doing exactly what they said they would do. And we all have to just really understand that it didn't start in October and that it won't end when we reach the soonest possible moment that we can, a

ceasefire. This is a devastating playing out of what the Israeli government has been unfolding from its inception. And we have to just stand so firmly against that and so clear-eyed about the only future that's possible here, which is one of freedom and dignity and peace rooted in those things.

Ralph Nader: Give us your view of where Congress is going to be this year on this matter in terms of appropriations, the genocide tax of 14.3 billion and other positions.

Stefanie Fox: To underscore your point, it is a US-funded, fueled and fully complicit genocide. It's not the actions of the Israeli government over separately. It is our government that is in full partnership in this genocide. So members of Congress are going to continue to hear from their constituents who are outraged and horrified and are not going to rest until this is over, and are not going to forget that this is exactly what they're doing with our taxpayer dollars and in our name.

There is a political cost that the grassroots space is going to grow build and to take out. It can't come a minute too soon, because that impunity extended by the US, for decades now, is what has led us to this moment. It is not just, oh, this didn't just happen. Genocide occurs only in the case in which the US has made it very clear that we will block all efforts to hold the Israeli government accountable for decades of occupation and apartheid and constant violence against Palestinians.

Now is the time when, as the global movement is building and rising so strongly to demand rights and freedom for Palestinians, that the US is going to have to grapple with how out of touch it is with the rest of the world and with the people right here.

Ralph Nader: Under international law, the US is considered a co-belligerent with Israel in what's going on in Gaza. It's more than just complicity, it's co-belligerency. How do you think it's going to affect the election, since Trump is probably even worse than Biden because Trump wants the Israeli regime of Netanyahu to annex the West Bank in Gaza? How do you think this is going to play with young voters or just voters? How are they going to deal with this issue?

Stefanie Fox: *The Nation* just reported on a poll that showed that voters, that they will support candidates who have been active in advocating for and calling for ceasefire over those who haven't by more than two-to-one. There is a grave need for the voices of people of conscience throughout the US to actually pierce through and make a difference in the actions of policymakers.

Like Motaz Azaiza, who's an incredible journalist who's risked his life for over 100 days broadcasting Israel's genocide to the world, said this thing a few weeks ago of like, don't call yourself a free person if you can't make changes, if you can't stop a genocide that's ongoing. And for Americans to ask themselves, *can I call myself a free person if the vast majority of Democrats are calling for this*, and yet we see no shift in US policy. There's a calling to account that is happening now and will continue to happen into the election cycle.

Ralph Nader: Steve?

Steve Skrovan: Stefanie, tell us about the Power Half-Hour for Gaza you've been doing daily.

Stefanie Fox: We have a daily space that brings together between 300 and 1000 people every single day to take action in community, to channel our grief and rage into political action together. We've called and emailed Congress more than half a million times. We've helped create protest ideas. We've written hundreds and hundreds of letters to editors. We take action every single day. It's like, what is going on? Where is our impact able to happen, and how do we move together as a community?

In addition to being in the streets, it's a great space to come, get renewed, be in community, have a political home, and take discrete action each and every day, because there's always, always, always more we can be doing to stop this genocide and advance the call for freedom.

Ralph Nader: Are you getting local media? Because you're certainly not getting much media in the *New York Times* or *Washington Post*. Are you getting local media for these daily actions?

Stefanie Fox: Yes. We have over 85 chapters and local groups all across the country, and they're woven in and a part of movement in all of those communities.

There's been quite a lot of local press that is showing the consistent call and demand on members of Congress, pushing them, and disrupting business as usual. That has definitely been a steady beat throughout all of this. None of us can ignore the way that mainstream media is covering this in a very biased way and refusing to show the incredible consensus around call for ceasefire and the need for Palestinian freedom.

Ralph Nader: David?

David Feldman: Stefanie, as an American Jew, did your position emerge fully formed as a child, or was there an evolution?

Stefanie Fox: There was certainly an evolution. Like for many Jews, I was raised to understand core Jewish values as being connected to the preciousness of human life. We say *b'tselem elohim* every single life is made in the image of God, and is infinitely and equally precious. I was both raised with that and with a kind of understanding that the Israeli government and state and Zionism itself was intended to protect and be safeguarding of Jews and a response to Jewish persecution.

Trying to come to terms over time with the real nature of Zionism and decades of persecution and colonization of Palestinians and their land in my name, and having to grapple with that harm done and how absolutely it has nothing to do with the safety of my community, for me, took years like it does for many Jews. But once I understood it, irrefutable. You can't go back.

So to be welcomed into the movement for Palestinian rights and freedom so fully and wholly, and to feel that coming together of a Jewish community centered on justice and in deep solidarity with Palestinians fighting for their own lives, is the greatest honor and privilege of my life.

Ralph Nader: Are you invited to address any synagogues?

Stefanie Fox: There is a large and growing community of faith leaders, of rabbis, of synagogues, of many, many Jews who are working to build a Judaism liberated from Zionism.

There's probably 10 synagogues across the country that are anti- or non-Zionist. There are dozens of independent spiritual communities called Chavurot that are connected or not to Jewish Voice for Peace. There is just a really burgeoning and growing movement to fight for the soul of Judaism, to fight for the future of our communities. We have millennia of Jewish tradition that predate the founding of the State of Israel and the movement of political Zionism to lean on and to extend into a future where we are not bound up and made complicit in support for a genocidal ethnostate (political unit run in the interest of one ethnic group).

Ralph Nader: Francesco?

Francesco DeSantis: I attended George Washington University, and during my time there, anti-Zionist Jewish activist students faced vicious retaliation by Zionist groups like Canary Mission. What would you say to student activists facing retaliation today?

Stefanie Fox: Your voice and your activism and your persistence is so incredibly important. It is intentional that the Israeli government and its backers and supporters have focused so fully on shutting down and silencing your voice. And it's because of what an essential role it plays in moving the dial and advancing the work toward Palestinian freedom.

There's an entire community with and behind you, and while the threats are very real, so is the moral rightness of what you're doing and the irrefutability that you are on the right side of history, and you are making a tremendous difference in advancing the cause.

Ralph Nader: We've been talking with Stefanie Fox, the executive director of Jewish Voice for Peace. Stefanie, how can people get in touch with you, support Jewish Voice for Peace? Do you want to give your website slowly?

Stefanie Fox: www.jvp.org. And join us. We were just talking about the daily Power Half-Hour. Every single weekday for a half an hour, come, channel your rage and grief and horror into meaningful political action and find a political home with us or with one of our beloved close partners in the movement.

Ralph Nader: You've really innovated in terms of civic advocacy. Most civic advocacy tends to plateau, and it just expresses itself by we protest, we demand, same old marches, without creative use of the marches to raise money, with people's cell phone or hold pictures of lawmakers that they want to persuade as they march. You've really innovated in so many ways, and I hope you keep doing that.

We've been speaking with Stefanie Fox, the executive director of Jewish Voice for Peace. Thank you very much, Stefanie, for your work and that of your associates.

Stefanie Fox: Thank you so much for having me.

Steve Skrovan: We've been speaking with Stefanie Fox. We will link to her work at Jewish Voice for Peace at ralphnaderradiohour.com.

I want to thank our guests again, Ido Setter and Stefanie Fox. 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 with "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.

David Feldman: Subscribe to us on our *Ralph Nader Radio Hour* YouTube channel. And for Ralph's weekly column, it's free, go to nader.org. For more from Russell Mokhiber, go to corporatecrimereporter.com.

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 proofreader is Elisabeth Solomon. Our associate producer is Hannah Feldman. Our social media manager is Steven Wendt.

David Feldman: Join us next week on the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour* when we're joined by Eva Borgwardt from, IfNotNow, another grassroots progressive organization. Thank you, Ralph.

Ralph Nader: Thank you, everybody.

If listeners want to join the hundreds of thousands of calls by Americans coming in in opposition to the genocide tax of \$14.3 billion that Congress is considering tapping into taxpayer money to support more weapons for the Israeli regime, just call 202-224-3121. A telephone call is more effective than an email, and most effective is a postage mailed letter.

Have them hear your voice. Stop the genocide tax. American taxpayers should never have to pay for the Israeli government's massive defense collapses that allowed October 7th to occur.