

Transcript

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 Compere: **NICK RHEINBERGER** Summary ID: **W00038946663**

Item: **GEORGE BISHARAT, PROFESSOR, HASTINGS COLLEGE OF LAW IS LECTURING AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG TONIGHT AND HE SPOKE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY A COUPLE OF DAYS A GO. HIS TOPIC WAS ABOUT A BOYCOTT OF ISRAELI PRODUCTS AND SERVICES BECAUSE OF WHAT HE CLAIMS IS THE BEHAVIOUR OF ISRAEL IN CERTAIN PLACES. VIC ALHADEFF, CEO, NSW JEWISH BOARD OF DEPUTIES JOINS THE SHOW TO REPLY TO COMMENTS.**

INTERVIEWEES: VIC ALHADEFF, NSW JEWISH BOARD OF DEPUTIES

Demographics:	Male 16+	Female 16+	All people	ABs	GBs
	2400	2100	4500	1100	2600

NICK RHEINBERGER: Now a couple of days ago we had an interview with a fellow called George Bisharat. He's a professor from the Hastings College of Law in San Francisco. He's lecturing actually at the University of Wollongong tonight and he spoke at the University of Sydney a couple of days ago.

His topic was about a boycott of Israeli products, Israeli services, and in some cases even Israeli intellectuals, because of what he claims is the behaviour of Israel in various places. First of all, its treatment of the Palestinians lately and its building of the wall, which he mentioned was against international law.

The New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies has heard about that interview and would like to put their points forward after reviewing the transcript.

Vic Alhadeff is the CEO of the Board of Deputies and joins us now.

Vic, g'day, how are you going?

VIC ALHADEFF: G'day Nick, good to be with you.

NICK RHEINBERGER: What stuck out for you when you were looking at that interview?



VIC ALHADEFF:

There were a number of points, Nick. And talking about the boycotts which you referred to, the reality is that calling for a boycott of Israel does nothing to advance Palestinian rights or Palestinian statehood. If we are serious about wanting to assist the Palestinians to achieve a state - and we all do - sanctions against Israel are counter-productive.

The West Bank, which is where the bulk of the future state of Palestine will be, has an economy which grew last year around six or seven per cent; and that's despite the financial crisis.

And granted, that's off a low base, but it has a prime minister, a gentleman named Salam Fayyad, who's pragmatic, an economist and he's doing an admirable job in building up the infrastructure and building up the economy. Now the point is, is that the West Bank economy is integrated with the Israel's economy.

Apply sanctions to Israel and it's going to be the Palestinians, who we claim we're trying to help, who are going to be suffering more. If we genuinely want to make a difference, we should be pressing for democracy within the Palestinian authority for equal rights for women within Hamas, for free media.

That is what will make a difference and that's where our energy should be directed. Not by calling for knee-jerk response such as sanctions which won't help anybody, least of all the Palestinian people.

NICK RHEINBERGER:

Well, what is the best way, do you think, for the international community to make their feelings known if they feel that Israel is being unfair and is overreacting in some of their dealings with the Palestinians?

VIC ALHADEFF:

The reality is, is that there is offers of peace on the table right now. There's an offer of peace whereby - which includes sharing Jerusalem, where East Jerusalem will be a capital of Palestine, West Jerusalem will be capital of Israel, where 95 per cent of the West Bank will be seated over, will become the future state of Palestine.

NICK RHEINBERGER:

This is almost like East Berlin, West Berlin.



VIC ALHADEFF:

It is, essentially it is.

NICK RHEINBERGER:

In the era when it was split in two.

VIC ALHADEFF:

Well the thing is, is that while the while the offer might not be ideal and can always be tinkered with and improved, the sad reality is, is there is no partner for peace on the other side of the table.

And that comes down to the fact that there is a civil war going on right now between the two entities which make up the Palestinian authority, Fatah and Hamas.

And as long as they are not squabbling with each other, but literally killing each other, they don't have the mandate, none of them has the mandate or the will in fact to come back to the peace table and talk peace with Israel.

NICK RHEINBERGER:

We did talk a little between George Bisharat and myself about the history and how that affects the present. One is that Israel has of course suffered horrible atrocities in the past and is now in a position of power with nuclear weapons and support from the international community, that perhaps they're revisiting some of those atrocities on the Palestinians. What do you say to that?

VIC ALHADEFF:

The issue is this: Israel is one third the size of Tasmania. We're talking about a country the size of the Kakadu National Park. To its north it has a terrorist army called Hezbollah, which has 50,000 missiles directed as we speak. To the south we have Hamas which is openly committed to its destruction. I only have to Google its charter and it's openly spelt out.

And to its east is Iran, which has threatened to wipe it off the map while pursuing nuclear capabilities. What Israel does is defend its citizens, as any democracy has a right and a duty to do, and it does so while extending its peace to its neighbourhood. In terms of the allegation about atrocity against the Palestinian people, that is totally rejected.

If we're talking about Gaza, Israel withdrew from Gaza in 2005 - every soldier, every settler - in the expectation that it will be able to live in



peace alongside a future state. In return they got 10,000 rockets fired at them in the next 10 years. So they are right on both side and wrong on both sides in this conflict.

But at the end of the day what we have here is Israel with its hand out. It has a peace treaty with Jordan. It has a peace treaty with Egypt. It has withdrawn its settlements from Sinai, from Gaza, from parts of the West Bank in the interest of peace.

It is ready to do that again for peace. What it is waiting for is one of the Palestinian partners to come to the other side of the table and say yes, let's talk peace. It wants to talk peace directly to the Palestinians.

The Palestinian leadership right now is saying let's have these proximity talks, where they talk to the Americans, the Americans go to the Israelis. That is absurd. They should be sitting down directly face to face and say, let's get on with it. And that is what Israel is waiting for the Palestinian leadership to do.

NICK RHEINBERGER:

One thing that you've pointed out to me - and I'd like you to explain it to people listening - is right back in the history of the state of Israel, that the state of Palestine was proposed back then. Can you just go through that history as you perceive it?

VIC ALHADEFF:

That's an excellent point, Nick. Because the United Nations, which brought Israel into being, and what exactly happened there, what you're referring to, 1947 the United Nations looks at this whole region - which we know today as Israel and Palestine - and says we need to create two states, Israel and Palestine.

What we call today the two-state solution was conceived way back in 1947. So let's divide it up, Israel and Palestine, there we have two states. The Jewish world said thank you very much, we accept that. The Arab world tragically said no, we want it all. And the morning that Israel came into being, seven Arab armies set out to destroy Israel.

So there's the tragedy. If the Arab world had said yes way back then in 1947, we would have a state of Palestine today, 62 years old, living in peace alongside of Israel.



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NICK RHEINBERGER: What would they have in terms of land area, for instance, compared to now, what they've been offered now?

VIC ALHADEFF: Well that's an interesting question, because what was offered then to the state of Israel, the Jewish state of Israel did not even include Jerusalem which is the heart of the Jewish world. And yet so desperate were the Jewish people to be able to establish a state of Israel they accepted it. And Jerusalem would have been an international city. So borders...

NICK RHEINBERGER: Would it have been the split city, the Berlin of today that - do you think that would have happened about the same time?

VIC ALHADEFF: Jerusalem would have been an international city, so in theory everybody would have had access to it.

NICK RHEINBERGER: Right, and the borders would have sort of met in the middle in a way on the...

VIC ALHADEFF: Effective...

NICK RHEINBERGER: ...the temple on the mount.

VIC ALHADEFF: Well, effectively, I don't know if there would have borders, but it would have been international. The borders that have shifted - since then there have been tragically half a dozen wars between those days '47, '48 and today. So as happens with wars, borders shift and borders change. So the borders we're looking at now are different from what it was in '47.

But your point is very well made. In '47 the UN tried to set up Israel and Palestine, go off and have a nice life. And that two-state solution which the UN offered then is essentially what is being offered now. And it's that same refusal which we saw in '47 which we are seeing to this day, and that's where the tragedy starts and ends.

NICK RHEINBERGER: Mmm, yeah, the one thing we need to get a united voice on the Palestinian side.



VIC ALHADEFF:

We need to a united voice. And to make that united voice happen, the key element in that happening is that Hamas, which controls Gaza, needs to rip up its cabinet. Its cabinet states openly that Israel will exist only until Islam will obliterate it.

Now that is a genocidal charter. And so there needs to be a united voice. In so doing, Hamas needs to rip up its charter, because until it does there is no way that it is going to accept living alongside a state of Israel or having a state of Israel in existence at all.



NICK RHEINBERGER: All right, Vic Alhadeff, very good to talk to you today. Thanks very much for coming on the morning show.

VIC ALHADEFF: Pleasure Nick, thank you.

NICK RHEINBERGER: Vic Alhadeff, the chief executive of the New South Wales Jewish Boards of Deputies.

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ABs = Managers, administrators, professions. GBs = Grocery buyers.
