

The Rise of Pro-Palestine Encampments in Calgary, “The Police Went into Full War Mode in Riot Gear”.

Robert Inlakesh

Transcript from recent show.

By [Robert Inlakesh](#) and [Michael Welch](#)
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Robert Inlakesh is a journalist, documentary film-maker, writer and political analyst, who has lived in and reported from the occupied Palestinian Territories. He has written for publications such as *MintPress News*, *Mondoweiss*, *MEMO*, *TRT*, and various other outlets. He currently works with *The Last American Vagabond*, *Press TV* and *Quds News*. Director of: [‘Steal of the Century’](#) Trump’s Palestine-Israel Catastrophe

In this interview, RObert speaks of the uprisings of many university students against the Israeli actions in Gaza. He also talks about the decision by Israel to reject the ceasefire proposal they submitted to Hamas only to reject it when Hamas agreed!

Global Research: You’re currently based in Calgary. Were you part of the pro-Palestine encampment at the University of Calgary, which was recently torn down by police?

Robert Inlakesh: Yes, I arrived there. I probably spent a good six hours there covering it.

I was filming with a bunch of the protesters and observing what was going on and wanting to document how it all played out. Of course, it took a violent turn due to the fact that the university, according to the information that I received from the students, they wanted to negotiate with the university. The university refused.

It said that we won't listen to you, called the police in. The police arrived. The private security shut down all of the buildings.

The police blocked two exits, basically kettled all of the demonstrators in. There was a protest, which came actually in March towards the university and onto the campus to support the students. Within maybe a few hours of that protest arriving, the police showed up.

This was on the first day of the encampment. It was an extremely diverse encampment. You had conservative Muslims there standing next to people from the LGBT community.

Everywhere in between, we had people from the Blackfoot, different nations within the Blackfoot. Indigenous people came, gave their blessings for it to take place, this encampment on their land, their stolen land. They stood side by side with the students.

It was all peaceful until the police decided to come threaten them. They arrived with automatic weapons. They arrived in riot gear.

They openly threatened to arrest and disband the encampment. They said that you are trespassing, even though these are students paying their tuition fees in a peaceful protest. The students actually came to the middle of the encampment.

It was all on a loudspeaker. They were discussing and debating whether they should pack up the encampment and come back at another time, or they should stay essentially and try and defend the encampment. Before they could come to a conclusion, and they almost came to one, they stood there debating for maybe 10 minutes or so.

The police decided to push into the encampment. When it was not, let's say, defended from the outside, it was easy for them to come in. They pushed through, smashed through the barriers, and began to initiate a small, let's say, clash with the student demonstrators.

They locked arms. They stood there peacefully. They shouted the slogan, there is no riot here.

Why are you in riot gear? They repeatedly shouted this. Then there was a standoff for hours and hours. It looked like, okay, it's going to end.

The students decided to come back at another day. The police told them that there will be no arrests made whatsoever. Then suddenly, as everything was being packed up, everyone was about to leave, the crowd at that point was very small in comparison to what it was before.

The police then decided to launch an attack. They went into full war mode. They shot people with rubber bullets.

They threw flashbangs down. They fired tear gas. People had gas that they got in their eyes, and some students were affected by that.

Also, they used batons. They hit an old woman in the head with a baton. They pushed another woman to the ground.

She hit her head. She apparently received hospital treatment. A friend of mine, who was organizing the demonstration, which came to support them, he was shot in the arm with a rubber bullet.

None of this was at all provoked by the students. It was completely peaceful. I was there the entire time.

The Canadian media covered this as if it was a clash, as if somehow the students had provoked this. In the CBC report, they didn't even mention the word rubber bullets, which were fired. However, they implied it, but they didn't mention it explicitly.

They were there. They saw what happened. They lied about it.

That's how they disbanded the encampment on day one. That's how they treated them. That's how the university treated their own students.

GR: There wasn't even rumors, people saying, well, they're anti-Semitic, or they make me feel unsafe.

RI: Personally, I didn't see any. For instance, there was no counter-protest there.

I didn't see anything or hear anything from students in that university that said they felt unsafe. I might be incorrect, because when I was there, there might have been Jewish students who were pro-Israeli, who were on social media and saw it and were upset by this. That might have been the case.

That's the case every single time these encampments are set up anywhere. You see that pro-Israeli students will claim that they feel persecuted. At that encampment, there were Jewish students and there were Jewish protesters.

There was a Jewish group there that came to support them in the protest that marched towards the encampment and stayed at the encampment. There were Jewish people there that were linking arms with the protesters and standing off against the police. Again, this was a diverse crowd.

You had indigenous people there. You had Black people, white people, people from all different backgrounds. You had people who were gay standing next to conservative Muslims, all in solidarity.

They put what might be in other cases causes for division aside. They united against the police to try and protect the encampment. In a call of solidarity with the Palestinians, there was nothing racist that happened there, nothing anti-Semitic that happened there.

They were very inclusive and it would be ridiculous to portray it as an anti-Semitic event. It was not at all. There was not a single person and none of those students that I spoke to would tolerate anything of that nature.

They were very explicit. If anyone makes any statements which can be interpreted as being

anti-Jewish, they're out. They're not going to be tolerated.

GR: Can you comment on any evidence of the anti-Semitism or violence that the media and university officials and some politicians are latching onto at any of the sites?

RI: They'll point to some instances where people, for instance, there was one case of a Jewish woman who's pro-Israel. I believe she was a student. I can't remember which university it was now.

I think you'll know the cases as soon as I bring it up. She claimed to have been stabbed in the eye with a Palestinian flag. The video came out, anything that contradicted what she tried to portray.

She was, of course, propelled by the media, made famous. She was put on Piers Morgan, Fox News, and CNN. They all talked to her as if she was a victim of being stabbed in the eye in an anti-Semitic hate crime.

She was there clearly trying to go in and debate people. She was judged as an agitator on that campus. There are other cases, for instance, where they point to masked people holding up signs that talk about the Qasem brigades coming to get the pro-Israeli students.

There's one case, I think, of people that were shouting something about October 7 will happen again. In terms of your classical anti-Semitic rhetoric, I don't think we've seen any of that. In fact, we've seen all of the racist slurs on the other side.

In fact, the pro-Israeli crowds have been screaming the N-word at people. They've been making, in terms of these fraternity students, these frat boys, they were making monkey sounds at Black students. They've been attacking violently in different areas like UCLA.

They attacked violently the encampment with fireworks and sticks and metal poles. We've seen that the attacks have been against the Palestinian side, the pro-Palestinian side. Also, a lot of even anti-Jewish rhetoric against the Jewish students who are standing in solidarity with the encampments, calling them as if they're not real Jews, using the slur kapos against them, which is essentially a collaborator with the Nazis during the Second World War, and a number of horrible slurs that have been used against them.

If you look at the hate crimes and the violent attacks that have been happening, it's overwhelmingly all on the side of the pro-Israeli students. They're the ones committing the bulk of the attacks. Of course, the police as well are violently attacking people.

In terms of these incidents, even if there were a handful of these incidents, and let's assume that all of these people are masked, were actually part of the pro-Palestinian encampments. Let's just, for argument's sake, take that at face value. Let's take it at face value that the woman was stabbed in the eye with a flagpole viciously, an anti-Semitic hate crime.

Let's just take that. These encampments are across the country, not just across the country, across North America, and across the West. It's spread into Japan and Korea.

There are tens of thousands of students who are out there protesting. Their message is very simple. It's not anti-Semitic.

This is just a media narrative that has been concocted in order to try and justify police

brutality against them, cracking down upon them, silencing them, and ultimately making it seem as if they're these crazy anti-Semitic Nazis who, for some reason, a ceasefire is equivalent to wanting to kill all Jewish people.

GR: It's been suggested that big money people are funding this movement. Is it possible? It's not as grassroots as it appears to be?

RI: Well, in order to support that claim, if you're going to say people are funding it, it has to be something specific, which is put out there.

I've seen nothing to back up the claim that somehow somebody like, let's say, George Soros, that's the one that they claim most of the time that George Soros had given money through Open Societies to Jewish Voices for Peace. That's an argument I've heard made, for instance. In the past, you saw that a contribution was made by Open Societies to Jewish Voices for Peace.

That was before any of this. There's no information supporting that this action has been somehow supported monetarily by people with a lot of money, these philanthropists like George Soros. There's nothing that supports that immediately these encampments have been backed by or this movement was started by somebody backed by George Soros.

It was grassroots. Even if people are receiving money in some of the encampments, trying to link this to a global movement where you see hundreds upon hundreds of campuses now around the world where the students are doing the same thing, really, is it because of some financing that could have come from Open Societies Foundation that all these students are out there willing to risk their degrees, risk their futures to be arrested, brutalized, perhaps even, in some cases, seriously injured? Are they willing to risk that because George Soros gave tens of thousands of dollars to Jewish Voices for Peace, according to a tax statement in 2018 or whatever it was? Does that make any sense? Is it plausible? No, I don't believe it is. I have not seen any information which backs that.

Of course, there's the claims from the NYPD that professionals were occupying what the protesters called Hinz Hall. They occupied a hall at Columbia and they renamed it Hinz Hall, which, of course, follows on from the tradition of other students occupying that very same hall and calling it Mandela Hall in the past in opposition to apartheid. They said there were all of these outside agitators and professionals, yet the NYPD couldn't point to having arrested any of these outside agitators.

It was asked, how many people did you arrest that were non-students? And it could not answer the question. Their representatives couldn't answer that question. And I think that's very clear why they couldn't answer that question, because it was clear that these were not outside agitators, these were students.

So that would be my comment on the funding from the outside, as I see it at this point.

GR: You wrote an article recently about Hamas agreeing to a ceasefire, but then Israel stepped away. Clearly, Israel didn't want a ceasefire.

What is exactly the military point of attacking Rafah?

RI: Well, there is a point which they have raised. It's due to intelligence chatter that they came up with the idea largely of attacking Rafah, which was to do with an alleged financing

network for Hamas operating in Rafah and the civil administration. And this came largely from discussions within the Israeli intelligence community and even the Palestinian Authority Intelligence from within Rafah.

Of course, this is just an excuse because this is the only major Palestinian population centre that they haven't raided yet. So they have claimed, the Israeli military have claimed that we eliminated the Qassam Brigades, so the armed wing of Hamas, their battalions in the north, in the centre of Gaza, we've eliminated all of them, which is nonsense, of course, they're fully functional. And right now there is a battle ongoing in Chevalier in northern Gaza, and it's probably the fiercest battle that we've seen in the entirety of the war.

And they said they disbanded all the resistance groups there, and they didn't disband any of them, let alone Hamas, the smaller ones they didn't, and they didn't manage to kill them and defeat them. They're still operational, even small groups with a lot less power than Hamas. And so the justification, essentially, for invading Rafah, the public one is, well, this is how we complete our war.

Netanyahu said since February that if we don't go in, we lose the war. And the intelligence chatter before this was, well, you know, we went into northern Gaza, and we disbanded the financing network of Hamas there, and then we went into Khan Younus, and we disbanded the financing network there, which is not even true, by the way, when they go into different areas, you'll see that they loot Palestinian banks, they loot businesses, the soldiers will even go through and steal women's jewellery, for instance, and claim that somehow this was being used for financing Hamas. Of course, there have to be financing networks, there have to be a supply chain, there has to be people from the former civil administration prior to the war, which, of course, Hamas was the elected government there.

So anyone who is a police officer, for instance, or is working in any capacity with the civil administration is technically of the quote-unquote Hamas civil administration, including the health ministry, which coordinates with the United Nations and groups, you know, international organizations around the world, is run by professional doctors, is technically Hamas, you know, because it's under the banner, Hamas is the governing force there. So in Rafah, they argued, well, we can disband this financing network. And of course, there are more people from the civil administration there, there would be more financing networks, quote-unquote, in Rafah, simply because there's more people there.

But they don't know where this is. If they knew where the, you know, some sort of structure was for disbanding Hamas, they would have already taken it out and killed them. They could do that from the air.

In terms of going into the tunnels, taking out the Palestinian resistance, freeing their prisoners, which are held in Gaza, they've not been able to do that anywhere else. Why would they be able to do it there? At the end of the day, when it came to the ceasefire proposal, which Hamas accepted, you're very right in saying that Israel didn't expect them to actually say yes to it. This was a ceasefire proposal, which was put together by the Israeli intelligence and by the CIA, and handed over to them.

And there were small amendments, very small amendments, for instance, on what days should Hamas release the Israeli prisoners? And should it be the bodies first of Israeli prisoners that have been killed in airstrikes by the Israelis themselves? Or should it be, you know, that they're alive in the first stage? These little things, which could have been

rectified very easily. And the CIA itself, well, unnamed US officials themselves, recognized that this proposal was essentially the same one that was handed to Hamas. So Hamas knew that what the Israelis were saying for the past week, Netanyahu had been saying, we need to go into Rafah.

Even if we have a ceasefire, we're going into Rafah. We can't accept a deal with Hamas. There has to be the dismantlement of Hamas in a post-war Gaza.

So of course, this denotes not having a ceasefire. If you're saying that you want to invade Rafah anyway, you can't invade somewhere during a ceasefire. That makes no sense.

And also, the deal that you're doing in the ceasefire that you're now negotiating for is with Hamas, the governing authority, or the leading faction within the Palestinian network of resistance groups. So you have to negotiate with Hamas. But the Israelis have been very clear.

They've been saying, Netanyahu has been saying, that they want to completely dismantle Hamas, and they want to continue with this goal. So you can't have both. You can't have a ceasefire with Hamas and a prisoner exchange with Hamas, but still invade and aim at dismantling Hamas at the same time.

Because who else are you negotiating with? There wouldn't be a negotiation that is even needed if Hamas was dismantled. So these two things, these two narratives, contradict each other. And that's why the U.S. freaked out.

Israel freaked out. It started launching its troops towards the Rafah crossing. They captured the Rafah crossing.

And by entering the Philadelphia Axis, they violated the Camp David Accords, which is the normalization agreement between Egypt and Israel. So technically, that's a declaration of war against Egypt. So this is what they've done.

They've committed themselves to wanting to do a ground incursion into Rafah, where there were around 1.4 million people, hundreds of thousands have fled. And of course, the death toll will be insane if they go into Rafah. But also, there will be a military defeat on many levels inflicted by the guerrilla groups on the ground.

The Palestinian resistance will have something in store for them.

GR: Robert, I think we'll have to close the conversation now. But thanks again for sharing your thoughts and analysis with our listeners.

RI: Thank you. Thank you for having me.

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