

**Transcript of the interview of H.E. Dr. Zarif with the Charlie Rose Show  
February 13, 2007**

**Show: THE CHARLIE ROSE SHOW**

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**CHARLIE ROSE:** When we come back, we'll talk to the Iranian ambassador to the United States, Javad Zarif. Thank you very much, Michael. Thank you, Ray. Thank you, David.

Back in a moment. Stay with us.

Joining me now here in New York is Javad Zarif. He's Iran's ambassador to the United Nations. He's been at that job since 2002. He has been dealing all this time with a complicated relationship between Tehran and Washington.

I should make note of this fact: It is official now that he will be leaving the job of Iran's ambassador to the United Nations, where he has many friends here in the United States and journalists and also other members of the diplomatic community and people in Washington, to go back to Tehran -- to do what?

**JAVAD ZARIF:** I'm a civil servant, so the government will decide what I'll do. But I'd like very much to teach.

**CHARLIE ROSE:** Foreign policy? Because you've had -- you earlier, before this assignment, you were within the Foreign Ministry.

**JAVAD ZARIF:** Yes, I was deputy foreign minister, but I also taught at the University of Tehran. I teach international law.

**CHARLIE ROSE:** When will this take place?

**JAVAD ZARIF:** Probably sometime in the spring.

**CHARLIE ROSE:** It is inevitable I would ask this. Is this because you have some conflict with policy, and the administration in Tehran wants to go some direction that is against your advice?

**JAVAD ZARIF:** Not necessarily. In diplomatic service, you rotate the posts. And I have served here for five years. And usually people serve for three to four years. So I've already overserved.

**CHARLIE ROSE:** When they talk about axis of evil in the president's speech, what impact did that have? Because it is said in this article by Michael Hirsh that I referred to earlier in this program, "The Hidden War With Iran," he looks at the history of the diplomatic maneuvers and suggests that there was some motion, and then all of a sudden that speech disrupted everything.

**JAVAD ZARIF:** Iran had played a very active role in stabilizing Afghanistan, in helping the Afghan people to form a new government and in helping the reconstruction of Afghanistan. And after Iran pledged over \$500 million for the reconstruction of Afghanistan, hardly a week after that, Iran was -- President Bush made his famous speech, in which he called, in that rather unacceptable format, labeling various countries and bunching them together.

**CHARLIE ROSE:** Iraq, Iran and North Korea.

**JAVAD ZARIF:** Which made no sense, and which showed that the United States, again, did not recognize cooperation, did not recognize possibilities, and simply was moved by -- I simply have to guess -- politics of constituencies.

**CHARLIE ROSE:** The United States, did we come close -- before I tell you what they think of you? I mean, of Iran's attitude about America -- did they come close? I mean, was there some sense that you thought the ball was rolling?

**JAVAD ZARIF:** Well, Iran was certainly helpful in Afghanistan.

**CHARLIE ROSE:** No, there's no question about that.

(CROSSTALK)

**JAVAD ZARIF:** And the United States reciprocated by making Iran a part of the axis of evil. So I don't think we ever came close as far as the U.S. attitude was concerned.

**CHARLIE ROSE:** You are the one when you saw the decree about the formation of the Afghan government, said there's no mention of the word "democracy" here.

**JAVAD ZARIF:** And no mention of the word "terrorism."

**CHARLIE ROSE:** And no mention of the word "terrorism."

**JAVAD ZARIF:** Yes.

**CHARLIE ROSE:** You said that to the people who were writing the document.

The United States says the problem here is that your government supports Hezbollah, Hamas, Islamic Jihad, all kinds of organizations that are more interested in terrorism than in contributing to peace. And they are agents for your aspirations.

**JAVAD ZARIF:** First of all, nobody in the international community is agent for the aspirations of another country. If you look at the background, the history, the atrocities that have been committed against the Palestinians and the Lebanese people, they have enough grievances to fight for their own cause and they don't need to be agents for anybody.

But the problem...

**CHARLIE ROSE:** But you offer financial support to them.

**JAVAD ZARIF:** But the problem in the United States is, it equates itself with the international community. It would be useful and certainly instructive for the United States to look at the international community and see if the majority, even if a sizable minority, consider these organizations that the United States so freely considers as terrorists like the United States' terrorist organizations.

We need to ask how the United States is dealing with organizations that it itself considers terrorists. Let us not debate how various countries in the world -- and I tell you that the overwhelming majority of the countries in the world do not consider groups that are fighting for their national liberation, fighting against foreign occupation, as terrorists.

Application of standards by one or two countries against their enemies, labeling of their enemies as terrorists will not take us anywhere. Addressing the issues that are at the heart of the Palestinian problem, at the heart of the Lebanese problem -- the fact that Lebanon was occupied by Israeli forces for over two decades, the fact that a resistance was formed in order to resist that occupation, the fact that 33 days of war was imposed on the Lebanese people, a huge number of civilians were murdered in Lebanon, and the United States did not even allow a cease-fire resolution to be adopted in the Security Council. These are the realities in the Middle East. If we're labeling one group or another as terrorist and labeling this or the other country as supporters of terrorists, it will not resolve the problem.

**CHARLIE ROSE:** Fair enough, I agree with that. But here are the two points that ought to be said. Number one is that those organizations have engaged in terrorist activities, as would be defined generally by many people in the world, not just Israel and the United States. Those organizations have engaged in those activities. That does not mean that they don't have other aspirations -- to be part of a democratic government in Lebanon and in Palestine.

**JAVAD ZARIF:** Let me address a question to you -- and I'm not in the business of addressing questions, asking questions -- that's your job...

**CHARLIE ROSE:** And I'm not in the business of answering them. Before you go too far.

**JAVAD ZARIF:** But in the Lebanese war last summer, over 1,000 Lebanese civilians were deliberately targeted. They called that -- if you define terrorism as killing of innocent civilians...

**CHARLIE ROSE:** Do you think they were deliberately targeted?

(CROSSTALK)

**JAVAD ZARIF:** Just look at the proportions. In Lebanon, over 1,000 people were killed. According to Israeli sources, only 140 or less of them were resistant combatants.

On the Israeli side, about 100 and some people were killed. The overwhelming majority, close to 100 of them, were soldiers.

Now, apply the definition of terrorism and see who is committing terror against civilians.

Why is it that you give -- some people give the authority to a regime that has occupied other people's territory? The authority to designate whoever it doesn't like, whoever is opposing it as terrorist. Let us apply the same criteria to everybody. Let us condemn killing of innocent civilians.

**CHARLIE ROSE:** What role does Iran want to play in the region, in the world?

**JAVAD ZARIF:** Well, Iran is a country that is interested in stability in its own immediate neighborhood. And that is where our national security interests lie. We want stability in our immediate neighborhood, and that is why we have called time and again for creation of a security and cooperation framework in the Persian Gulf, a region which has seen three wars in the space of three decades, one of which was launched against Iran and Iran suffered from for eight years.

So we are interested in stability. We want to play a constructive role in the international community. We have played a constructive role in the international community, and we believe that everybody should base their outlook, should base their approach to international issues not on the outdated outlook....

**CHARLIE ROSE:** Was Iran in any way supplying money or weapons or people in Iraq to take sides in that sectarian conflict, to the Mahdi Army specifically?

**JAVAD ZARIF:** No, you see, we have said from the very beginning that sectarian conflict in Iraq is the product of the thinking of people like Abu Musab Zarqawi, the al Qaeda ring leader in Iraq. We opposed it then. We oppose it now.

You should look at the statements that are coming out of Tehran. Did we once mention a word defining or encouraging sectarianism? Not sectarian violence even, any word defining or encouraging sectarianism in Iraq? But you've heard words from others who are encouraging, defining, agitating. You've heard the word "Shia crescent." You've heard other words. The scare tactics...

**CHARLIE ROSE:** Shia crescent, that word came from a Muslim leader.

**JAVAD ZARIF:** Shia crescent, unfortunately, was used in order to advance a political agenda, but also led to this scare tactic. It is a scare tactic. There is no Shia crescent.

**CHARLIE ROSE:** OK, but...

**JAVAD ZARIF:** We believe that Iran has no interest -- let me say it categorically. Iran has no interest in sectarian violence in Iraq. In fact, Iranian interest is most harmed by sectarianism in the....

**CHARLIE ROSE:** Then why aren't you doing more to bring more stability to the region? Why aren't you...

**JAVAD ZARIF:** We have offered to help and support the government of Iraq in bringing stability to Iraq. The president of Iraq, announced a couple of weeks ago that Iran had, in fact, made proposals in order to help bring security and stability in Iraq.

You see, we have no interest in undermining the Iraqi government. This is a friendly government. And we are probably one of the very few who can claim that everybody in the current Iraqi government is a friend. We have...

**CHARLIE ROSE:** The current Iraqi government is primarily a Shia government. Primarily a Shia government...

**JAVAD ZARIF:** No, no, it's not.

**CHARLIE ROSE:** Well, primarily it is. And the Sunnis are...

**JAVAD ZARIF:** You see...

**CHARLIE ROSE:** ... in conflict because they're not happy with their representation.

**JAVAD ZARIF:** No, no, you see, the current Iraqi government is a government that has been established based on the Iraqi constitution. But I don't want to quarrel with you, because I do not represent Iraq. I represent Iran.

But the point is that if we help violence, if we support violence in Iraq, what we are undermining is the current Iraqi government.

**CHARLIE ROSE:** OK, let me ask you this...

**JAVAD ZARIF:** Which we support. We do not want to undermine the current Iraqi government. And let me tell you that the current Iraqi government is composed of a Kurdish president, a Shia prime minister and a cabinet that is composed of Shias, Sunnis and Kurds and other minorities, and a Sunni speaker of parliament.

And we have excellent relations with every single one of them. We have good relations with everybody in Iraq. We have no interest, absolutely no interest, in undermining the Iraqi government.

**CHARLIE ROSE:** Do you have any interest in a civil war?

**JAVAD ZARIF:** No, we don't.

**CHARLIE ROSE:** OK, then...

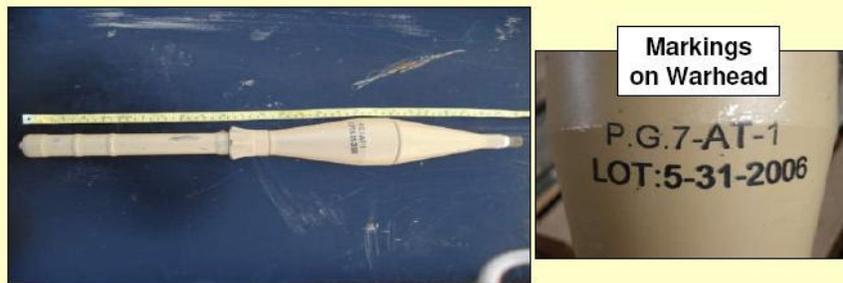
**JAVAD ZARIF:** A civil war in Iraq is detrimental to our national security.

Now, let me address a question that you might want to ask me. Do we have an interest in getting America bogged down in Iraq? And I'll tell you that the U.S. is doing more than enough to get itself bogged down in Iraq without any help from anybody. So we do not need to do anything in Iraq which would ultimately undermine our friends in Iraq.

## Iranian Anti-Tank Rocket Propelled Grenades



New PG-7AT-1 rounds seized November 24, 2006 in Baqubah



Seized in al-Bayaa district of Baghdad January 23, 2007

It doesn't make sense. The evidence that has been produced -- in fact, fabricated -- is preposterous. It doesn't -- I mean, the dates, if you look at the evidence, the dates that are used in these mortars are written in American date format, putting month first and date second, whereas nowhere in the world people use month first and date second. Everywhere in the world, except for the U.S. -- and those who fabricated this evidence should listen and learn. Everybody else in the world uses date, month, year. That is the order in which...

**CHARLIE ROSE:** And so that says what to you?

**JAVAD ZARIF:** It says that this evidence is fabricated.

**CHARLIE ROSE:** This evidence...

**JAVAD ZARIF:** As was the evidence that was fabricated before the Iraq war in order to launch an aggression. This evidence is fabricated, and it points to a very dangerous policy that is being pursued by this administration.

**CHARLIE ROSE:** What is that dangerous policy pursued by this administration?

**JAVAD ZARIF:** That dangerous policy is to create a crisis, to escape forward. That is, to blame somebody else for the results of an adventurism which everybody knew would lead to this disaster.

We are sorry that this disaster has taken place. We are not happy that the U.S. has fallen into this quagmire, because it has taken the entire region with it. So there is no point for us in being happy about the U.S. being in this...

**CHARLIE ROSE:** Here is one argument made by journalists before. One of them, in fact, said -- made this point. That Iran today feels like it's on the ascendancy within the region, and that it is less interested in helping America or in bringing stability by some kind of dialogue with America. Does Iran want a dialogue with America today? To suggest, both of them could play a constructive role in bringing stability to Iraq?

**JAVAD ZARIF:** Unfortunately, each time....

(CROSSTALK)

**CHARLIE ROSE:** ... the United States leaving.

**JAVAD ZARIF:** You see, each time that Iran has expressed readiness for dialogue, the United States has taken that readiness of Iran to mean that we want to divert attention from some other issue, to mean that we want to put pressure, to -- even -- to paraphrase Secretary Rice, to extort.

This is the attitude that the United States has come with into this conflict. The fact is, a dialogue is useful if the parties want to find solutions. If one side is looking for a crisis, and there is every indication in the policies that they are following, in the fact that they're producing evidence, that they're fabricating evidence, that they're not interested in finding solutions, but in fact, in looking for a crisis. We believe -- we are in the region. We don't have an option. We don't have an option of leaving. We are stuck in the region. Insecurity in Iraq will mean insecurity for Iran.

**CHARLIE ROSE:** If, in fact, the United States would leave in a month, just take that, all of the troops out of Iraq, what would happen in your judgment?

**JAVAD ZARIF:** I think we need not address a hypothetical question. We need to....

**CHARLIE ROSE:** Would you like...

(CROSSTALK)

**CHARLIE ROSE:** Well, this is not a hypothetical question. Would you like for the United States to leave in six weeks? Would you?

**JAVAD ZARIF:** You see, what we need to do is for the United States to, first of all, take the minimum step of making a commitment that it is not going to stay permanently in Iraq. This commitment this administration has not been prepared to make over the last several months. And in fact, it has taken steps in order to convey exactly the opposite.

It is also important to give a prospect to the Iraqis that one day, and gradually, their country is going to be governed by Iraqis.

You see, the problem is, occupation, as I said, has its own momentum, has its own dynamics.

**CHARLIE ROSE:** The president has even said occupation is not a good thing.

**JAVAD ZARIF:** Well, it's one thing to say occupation is not a good thing and then go to the Congress and ask for money in order to build permanent bases in Iraq.

**CHARLIE ROSE:** I'm not sure they're asking for permanent bases.

**JAVAD ZARIF:** They did ask...

**CHARLIE ROSE:** They're asking for money in order to bring stability in Baghdad.

**JAVAD ZARIF:** No, no, I'm talking about last year, when they asked for money to build permanent bases in Iraq and it was not approved.

The point is: is this administration prepared to make this simple statement that it is not going to stay permanently with its military in Iraq? It has not been prepared to say that. Is it going to accept to withdraw from Iraq and give Iraqi security to the Iraqi forces? I believe that would, in fact, dry up the fertile ground that the insurgents are using in order to...

**CHARLIE ROSE:** So you're saying there's something magical about the United States saying we do not want any permanent bases in Iraq?

**JAVAD ZARIF:** I think....

**CHARLIE ROSE:** ... Iran would therefore do everything it could to...

**JAVAD ZARIF:** It has nothing to do...

**CHARLIE ROSE:** ... contribute to stability...

**JAVAD ZARIF:** It has nothing to do with Iran. This has something to do with the Iraqis. What I'm saying is that this administration is not only not prepared to withdraw, it's not even prepared to state that it will not stay permanently in Iraq in a military form. This administration has not even been prepared to say that.

**CHARLIE ROSE:** This administration has said that if the Iraqi government asked them to leave, they will leave. Period. If the government of Iraq asks us to leave, we will leave. The president of the United States said that.

**JAVAD ZARIF:** No, no. The president of the United States has not created the necessarily environment for the Iraqis in order to be able to take their security into their own hands. This is an issue for the Iraqis to decide.

What I'm telling you is the logic of occupation. What I'm telling you is what occupation will lead to and what the United States needs to do.

What you see the United States doing is simply increasing its forces in the region, rather than decreasing, rather than withdrawing. Even against the advice of U.S. bipartisan the Iraq Study Group. Not the advice of the rest of the world, but the advice of an American bipartisan group. That is the problem...

**CHARLIE ROSE:** Well, at least in the United States, there's a healthy debate going on about that surge, and you find a Congress that wants to debate it. I mean, it didn't happen in the last couple of weeks, as many people would have hoped for, but you clearly are going to see, you know, the great debate about what the United States ought to do, and whether they ought to be sending more troops and how much money and whether they should be putting a cap. All that is taking place right now.

Now, you know, let me make sure I'm on the record understanding from you -- no Iranian money, no Iranian guns, no Iranian support for -- going into Iraq, and no weapons made in Iran are being used in Iraq? Is that what you're saying, unequivocally, yes or no?

**JAVAD ZARIF:** What I am saying unequivocally is that Iran is not supporting the insurgency or sectarian violence in Iraq.

**CHARLIE ROSE:** But are you...

**JAVAD ZARIF:** Iran is not sending weapons to Iraq...

**CHARLIE ROSE:** Of any kind? No?

**JAVAD ZARIF:** Of any kind to Iraq. Iran has good relations with the government of Iraq, and I do not believe that producing, fabricating this type of evidence...

**CHARLIE ROSE:** Fair enough.

**JAVAD ZARIF:** ... in a locked room will help to resolve the situation in Iraq.

**CHARLIE ROSE:** And I've heard you out about whether you think it's fabricated, and I'm moving on to the other point, though. You said the Iranian government does not...

**JAVAD ZARIF:** I'm saying Iran.

**CHARLIE ROSE:** So there's nothing to be gained by saying there's a difference between the Iranian government and some other force within Iran who is making these bombs and transplanting them?

**JAVAD ZARIF:** No, Iran does not have a policy. This is not Iranian policy...

**CHARLIE ROSE:** And it discourages anybody in Iran from doing it?

**JAVAD ZARIF:** It's not in our interest. I said it's not in our interest to undermine the current Iraqi government. Time and again, the Iraqi officials have refuted these allegations. But the U.S. goes about inside Iraq arresting Iranian diplomats, trying to sort of extract confessions out of them. This is not how you reach solutions.

**CHARLIE ROSE:** Do you think they're doing it because they want an excuse to go to war with Iran?

**JAVAD ZARIF:** I am not privy to the discussions in Washington. This is a question...

**CHARLIE ROSE:** No, I'm asking, what does your government think about American intentions vis-a-vis Iran?

**JAVAD ZARIF:** I don't believe that U.S. is a monolith, as Iran is not a monolith. There are various views in Washington, and certainly there are those who want greater adventurism, who want to have an escape forward in Iraq, who believe that they have succeeded in Iraq. Unfortunately, we have heard statements from very high officials in the United States that Iraq has been a success,

**CHARLIE ROSE:** Listen, you know more about America than most Iranians. You really do. You've been here. You know people. You've had lots of conversations with journalists and officials as well. You know that -- you know that this war in Iraq is

not popular in America. You know we just had an election. You know what -- that for Democratic candidates who want to run for president, almost unanimously, are talking about...

**JAVAD ZARIF:** Unfortunately, when the war...

**CHARLIE ROSE:** The war has been bad...

(CROSSTALK)

**CHARLIE ROSE:** ... has gone badly, and if they had a chance to vote for it again, they wouldn't have voted the way they do.

**JAVAD ZARIF:** Yes, but we don't usually get to live again. Unfortunately, when the war started, because of the process of demonization, because of the process of production of erroneous evidence, the war was not unpopular. Now that people see the results that we had predicted -- we had predicted these results even before the war started, publicly.

**CHARLIE ROSE:** All right. This is another argument that's made. Do you -- you can't tell me whether you fear the United States might be setting up some kind of incident that would give them an excuse to attack Iran. Do you fear that?

**JAVAD ZARIF:** There are certain people in Washington who may be thinking of that. We hope that finally, rationality will prevail in Washington and this type of behavior will stop, because we believe that the logic needs to be changed. Force will not bring results. It didn't bring results in Iraq, will not bring results elsewhere. It would just simply get the United States further and further bogged down in this quagmire that it itself created, unfortunately.

**CHARLIE ROSE:** At this moment, are we closer to some kind of conflict than we have been? Is everything working in the opposite direction of achieving some kind of dialogue between Iran and the United States that would be for the benefit of Iran, the United States and the Middle East?

**JAVAD ZARIF:** I believe there is no interest at this time in Washington in a search for solutions. I believe if there was an interest in Washington in searching -- in looking for solutions -- if you look for solutions, you may find it. If you look for crises, you may get to a crisis. So what I see in Washington is not an interest and an attempt to search for solutions.

**CHARLIE ROSE:** What they say is we see in Tehran no interest to search for solutions.

**JAVAD ZARIF:** Well, if they make that claim, they have to corroborate that. They have to substantiate it against the behavior that Iran has shown. In the nuclear issue, in Iraq, elsewhere, Iran has always shown that it is ready to find solutions. Unfortunately, the United States is simply looking for excuses.

**CHARLIE ROSE:** You know what the North Koreans did yesterday with respect to their nuclear policy. You know what the news is. I mean, is it -- can you imagine circumstances in which you might hear the same thing from the Iranians?

**JAVAD ZARIF:** Iran does not have a military nuclear program. Iran has put on the table various proposals that would remove any possibility that Iranian program could be one day diverted to non-peaceful use. Unfortunately, the United States, as I said, is not searching for solutions and is not willing even to look at those possibilities, simply stating a demand that it knows cannot be met by Iran. And that is why it is pushing everything towards a crisis. And I hope that crisis can be averted through some sort of rationality prevailing, that we might do better if we change this logic of complete reliance on this military might that has not produced any results for the United States, and see if through dialogue, if through cooperation you might find better solutions.

**CHARLIE ROSE:** You've recognized that over the last several years, you know, there have been -- it's not just the United States, it's the quartet countries, it's the United Nations, and it's a whole lot of other parties -- have not been satisfied, have not been satisfied with the reaction of your government in being forthcoming about a nuclear program. Is that a fair statement?

**JAVAD ZARIF:** I don't think so, because throughout the negotiations, Iran has presented proposals that unfortunately have not been even discussed, because the United States simply rejected them.

**CHARLIE ROSE:** It's the United States' fault because of all -- notwithstanding the fact that -- the United States has allowed the quartet to go -- to lead the negotiations and allowed others to lead the negotiations.

**JAVAD ZARIF:** Yes, but the United States was this elephant in the room, which was there and nobody could deny its presence.

The United States has prevented, even if you look at the background of the negotiations. You will see that proposals have been put on the table. And if there was an attempt to find a solution, you would come and say, OK, this part of the proposal is nice, this other part is not good. The third part could be modified in a certain way. But that was not done, because the U.S. insisted on certain pre-conditions.

Even today, if you ask Secretary Rice, she is insisting on a pre-condition that everybody knows will not be met. And that is why she is saying that if this condition is

met, I'm willing to do X, Y and Z, because she knows and she prays that that the pre-condition is never met.

**CHARLIE ROSE:** Two points I want to make. Do you agree that this relationship between the United States and Iran, in terms of many of the issues in the region, is of paramount importance?

**JAVAD ZARIF:** I believe the United States and Iran are two important players.

**CHARLIE ROSE:** And they ought to be talking. And they ought to recognize that if they're not talking, it could be leading towards disaster.

**JAVAD ZARIF:** We ought to recognize that we need to search for solutions rather than to look for crises. If we search for solutions, then modalities could be found. Modalities of direct dialogue, modalities of dialogue within the United Nations, dialogue in the format that the Europeans have proposed. There are various ways of conducting dialogue.

But the modality is not important. Importance should be given to objectives. Whether we want to find a solution. If we want to find a solution, I can assure you that the nuclear issue could be resolved in a relatively short period of time, because we don't have a nuclear weapon program.

**CHARLIE ROSE:** Let me ask you this, just for the record. I mean, there is -- it is said that many people in Iran now believe that all the talk by Ahmadinejad about the Holocaust was detrimental to Iran and to that government.

**JAVAD ZARIF:** Well, as you said about Washington, Tehran is not a monolith. Iran is not a monolith. There are variety of views in Iran. People express their views. But I believe that the question that was asked by the president, what the Palestinians had to do with this atrocity that was committed, is a pertinent question. The Palestinians did not commit a crime.

**CHARLIE ROSE:** But there was a genocide.

**JAVAD ZARIF:** There was a genocide, and it must be condemned. And it should never happen again. It should never happen again to Jews, and it should never happen to Palestinians. Genocide is bad regardless of the victims. And we need to state that, to make that clear, and to practice objection to genocide regardless of the victims.

**CHARLIE ROSE:** Why doesn't your president say that?

**JAVAD ZARIF:** I think he has. I think he has.

**CHARLIE ROSE:** No, he hasn't.

It's great to have you here.

**JAVAD ZARIF:** Good talking to you.

**CHARLIE ROSE:** I wish you good luck in whatever your new assignment is, teaching or working within your government, and hopefully you will be a voice for dialogue.

I do thank you. You have been a guest on this program many times, and I appreciate every time the dialogue that we've had, and I look forward to coming to your country for conversations with other people.

**JAVAD ZARIF:** I hope so.

**CHARLIE ROSE:** Thank you for joining us. We'll see you next time.

END