**Ibrahim Abu Ahmad:** If I think of the word ‘Gaza’ alone, I will have a twitch in my heart, yes. And I think part of that is also because we are part of that peoplehood as a whole. And also like me for my own family knowing that we do have extended far family members who, in ‘48, you know, my family went to one place, and they became Israeli citizens for that decision, not knowing the meaning of that decisions, while others went to other places, including Gaza. So I do know that, you know, I could have been born there, if the reality was different in ‘48. If my grandparents just went on the other side, instead of marching north, they marched south. Who knows?

**Mitch Ginsburg:** And what about you, Amira, do you also feel that kind of close connection to people in Gaza?

**Amira Mohammed:** I think what unites us is a known Palestinian suffering. It's like, the more you suffer, the more Palestinian you are at this point. And that's not just internally, it's also externally. Like people even in the West that are protesting for Palestinians aren't used to seeing Palestinians like thriving and happy. They’re used to the picture of Palestinians, unfortunately, under the rubble and dead children. And that's not what a Palestinian is: We can laugh, we can joke, we can dance, we can party. We love celebrating, we love life, and we love joy. And sometimes people like even tell us that we're not Palestinian enough, because we don't suffer enough that we're not in Gaza. Why do we have the right to talk?

**Ibrahim Abu Ahmad:** For the Jewish people, the term becoming from *Bnei Israel* to the Jewish people was not when the State of Israel was established. It was in the desert, marching. Once you create the aspiration for a statehood, for an independent living, that's when you're already a peoplehood. And no one can take that away from you. Sometimes in Israel, there’s an attempt to equivalate other peoplehoods to Jewish peoplehood, without recognizing that Jewish peoplehood is a very special peoplehood. Very different than other peoplehoods out there. And if we're going to put all the peoplehoods in the world under a Jewish criteria, there might be three-four peoplehoods in the entire universe.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** Hey listeners, I’m Mishy Harman and this is Israel Story. So as you know, we’re continuing our series of “Wartime Diaries,” which is our attempt to collect slivers of life during these difficult days.

Arab-Israelis, or Palestinian Citizens of Israel, or Palestinian-Israelis - all these definitions are obviously complicated and personal and have hefty connotations - found themselves in a very difficult place following the attacks of October 7th. There was a lot of confusion, a lot of suspicion and mainly - a lot of fear. Any statement, any post, any tweet came under extreme scrutiny.

Most people, therefore, chose to remain silent. The benefits of speaking up seemed to be dwarfed by the possible outcomes - being fired, arrested, accused of treason or support of terrorism.

But Ibrahim Abu Ahmad and Amira Mohammed are not, I guess, most people. They’re both peace activists who live in between the two societies. They’re Muslim and proud Palestinians on the one hand. But they are also Israeli citizens, both of them speak Hebrew, have many Jewish friends and either live or work in predominantly Jewish cities in the center of the country.

When many of the people around them retreated into a self-imposed post-October 7th silence, they did the exact opposite: They started a podcast. It’s called “Unapologetic: The Third Narrative.” On the show they explore their complex identities, and talk to guests - Jews, Arabs, Gazans, Israelis. The podcast has really taken off, and Amira and Ibrahim have come to model a different kind of discourse, one that challenges the binary and dichotomous definitions we’re so accustomed to hearing. Our producers Jennifer Cutler and Mitch Ginsburg sat down with Amira and Ibrahim in our studio in Jerusalem. Here they are.

**Amira Mohammed:** I always start. Go for it *[laughs]*.

**Ibrahim Abu Ahmad:** I mean, I think always ladies first but that's fine. My name is Ibrahim Abu Ahmad. I’m thirty-one, born and raised in Nazareth, and I'm a political activist and a peace activist. And I'm the co-founder and co-host of “Unapologetic: The Third Narrative.”

**Amira Mohammed:** And my name’s Amira. I am a Jerusalemite, a Palestinian-Israeli and I am the co-founder and co-host of “Unapologetic: The Third Narrative.” Both my parents are actually from Hebron, both of them. I’m the eldest, I’m the eldest daughter of a family of four kids, and my parents were… kind of went through a journey of like conservative, traditional, more liberal, and then back to conservative. They practice and observe. And yeah, we lived like a very simple life, very like, I would say, Palestinian life with like close to the family, going to grandparents to visit on *eid*. Like we’re not the family that used to go like on big adventures or to go abroad, we like prioritized family. And I’ve been thinking about it a lot, of like why… like why I think the way that I think. And then you have to go and like think about your upbringing, and kind go back into memory and into your upbringing.

**Ibrahim Abu Ahmad:** Yeah, I think I grew up the way I did very much because of who my family is, and especially who my mom is like, like my mom is a therapist. A lot of people tell me, “of course you’re the son of a therapist.” Like… Just my attitude and my way on life, and she raised me to be a humanist first and foremost. Like we were very liberal family in that sense where, you know, we’re raised not to look too much at the conflict. Especially at a young age like she tried to like steer us away from the depth of the conflict itself. Like you know me and my sister started watching like kids channel in Hebrew for instance at a very young age and like it's not like she said “oh don't do that.” It's quite the opposite like encourage us and she was really glad to see that you know I was able to establish early relations and friends who were Jewish before knowing anything about the political world and that’s for her like it was a positive thing.

**Amira Mohammed:** Yeah. Both my parents had different upbringings. My mom with her father like she understood like she… when she was younger she was exposed to Hebrew. She… her father worked in the municipality and had Jewish friends. She knew what Shabbat was. Like she didn't have that hate towards Jews. My father, on the other hand, they were struggling with finances. And they were like a big big family and like… like when you don’t have like good money that reflects kind of on the upbringing and the kids start to become trouble-makers especially the boys. And within the family there was like that trauma from the occupational forces like being arrested, being searched, being manhandled like all of that. So both my parents really sheltered us, like really sheltered us from that like I was never given… fed like that hate. And even when, even when like our house was partially demolished when I was a kid, my parents did not blame it on Jews. They didn't tell me that's what the Jews did, the Jews took your house.

**Mitch Ginsburg:** Hmmm…

**Ibrahim Abu Ahmad:** Absolutely, like… I had like, kind of like a rollercoaster emotion about both the Palestinian in me and the Israeli and me. And, you know, like I grew up very like not understanding the conflict or anything, which was a privilege in that sense. And I was super exposed to the Jewish culture, Israeli society, and it was easy for me to do that. And then understanding the conflict more and especially after the Second Intifada in 2000 because it happened right on my doorstep. The clashes that happened inside Israel. I mean, three people were killed on my street in Nazareth. And I remember asking my dad, “why aren't you down there?” Because the feeling that we had was we are being attacked. We’re being attacked by our Jewish neighbors of Nazareth Illit today known as Nof HaGalil and that the police is supporting them attacking us. So why aren’t you down there protecting us? Why aren’t you down there with the other young men, like, protecting our neighborhood?

**Jennifer Cutler:** And 23 years later, almost exactly to the day actually, was October 2023. And everything turned upside down, again. What was that like? Where were you?

**Ibrahim Abu Ahmad:** October 6th I was at a wedding. I was at a wedding in the north at a family wedding. And, you know, celebrated, danced all night, had a great time. But then we got home. And then you wake up to… to hell. And the first thing I saw was a WhatsApp message from my roommate. And it's a Jewish roommate and it's a new roommate it was someone that he moved to the apartment with me only a month before. And I just saw, like, you know, blurry eye, a text message from him saying, “can you translate this video for me?” And the first thing that popped into my head was like, ‘oh, OK, now he has an Arab roommate. So he wants me to translate videos from Arabic to him.’ Like, I have no idea what he's gonna send me. And then I see the video. And it's the video of Hamas taking control over one of the tanks. And yeah, I just… for the next few hours I would say, it was mainly phone calls. Like me calling my friends, trying to figure out if anyone was at the party that I realized there was a party going on. I was like, ‘OK, it could be any of my friends, of my Jewish friends and some my Arab friends that I know would be interested in going to a party like this.’ And then by midday, I would say, or the afternoon, I had four friends who had about six people who were missing. So it was for me trying to understand, you know, how can I help? And I was like, ‘OK, send me their pictures. Let me go on Telegram. Maybe in Arabic pages that you might not find and maybe I'll see something.’ So the second half was just looking at the horror videos and images, you know, one after the other, and having the peoples’ pictures next to me, and I’m trying to see if I can identify any of them. So I was emotionally… big big toll.

**Mitch Ginburg:** Yeah. How about you, Amira?

**Amira Mohammed:** SoI was staying at my best friend's house and then we go to the staircase because the… the safe room we didn't have a safe room but the building has a miklat has a…

**Mitch Ginsburg:** Bomb shelter.

**Amira Mohammed:** A bomb shelter, yes. And - typical - the bomb shelter was filled with the people’s stuff. So yeah, there was no room for us to go so we were stuck in the staircase. And, each and every explosion between the rocket and the Iron Dome, I heard, I felt the entire like building would would shake. And the first one I was like completely confused, like ‘what's going on?’ like… And then we start going through social media. And I don't know what to what to feel what to believe. How big is this? Like I felt fear throughout the entire thing. But my first instinct was - when I saw the fence going down - was that no one deserves to be locked up. No one deserves to live in what is known to be the biggest air present in the world. And then other footage from like people my age, people that I know, were sharing. Young girls covered with bruises and blood in a dumpster hiding. And then I started asking my friends, like “are… are you OK?” Because both, again, my Palestinian friends and my Israeli friends could go to this concert. Like could go to this festival. After I saw that, and saw like the horrific bodycam of of Hamas, then I shifted to the mentality of ‘we need to defend ourselves, like this needs to be abolished. These… these aren’t human beings and there was no mercy that day. Not not to Palestinians, not to Israelis, not to liberals, not to conservatives, everyone on that piece of land that wasn't with Hamas was seen as a target. So then I was like ‘yeah, we need to… we need to retaliate as much as we can and this should be like a moment of unity against terror. Like that’s what this should be.’

**Mitch Ginsburg:** And I’m just imagining like you in that stairwell with these conflicted emotions sort of surrounded by Jewish Israelis, yeah?

**Amira Mohammed:** Jewish Israelis talking like about Palestinians and Arabs saying like “*imhak shmam*, may, they may erase their name, erase their name.” Like “those Arabs, we don't want them. We live so close to an Arab community, we don't want to be close to them, I hope they don't come. We need like guard-dogs, we need this… And I'm sitting and no one knows that I'm like Palestinian.” Like I’m not… That's also a privilege in a way, like I can be quiet in the corner. No one knows what I am, who I am. But others like I have a friend who wears a headscarf, and I remember she was locked out of a shelter.

**Jennifer Cutler:** Hmmm...

**Amira Mohammed:** They closed the door on her and left her outside.

**Mitch Ginsburg:** Wow.

**Amira Mohammed:** During a siren like they wouldn't let her in. Because everyone’s everyone’s like charged. Everyone wants to attack because they feel attacked. So I… I understand that and then I had my friends on the Palestinian side that were like cut all ties with their Israeli or Jewish friends. Some of them who like went straight on like attacking Israel and Israelis as if it’s like an entire one entity. So it’s never easy.

**Ibrahim Abu Ahmad:** And for me, on the 7th I have the same feelings of you know, the trauma, the collective trauma and something that we're all feeling but already on the 8th, I went back to the center, picked up my stuff, picked my sister up, and a couple of friends who were also living in the center. And I drove back north cause I did not feel safe, and I'm in a place where, ‘wait, I'll get the repercussion of it.’

**Amira Mohammed:** And I remember you called me. You told me “Amira, be careful!”

**Ibrahim Abu Ahmad:** Yep.

**Amira Mohammed:** Don't speak in Arabic everywhere. Don't say you're Palestinian. Nothing. People are going nuts.

**Ibrahim Abu Ahmad:** And and that was a real fear. The first time I was outside and I spoke in Arabic, I could see it, I could see people's looks in their eye, that fear in their eye. And I never knew when that look of fear could turn to a look of anger or revenge.

**Jennifer Cutler:** So you decided to channel all those feelings into a podcast.

**Ibrahim Abu Ahmad:** The decision to start the podcast was within the first week of the war. And then I just call Amira and I'm like, “Amira, the podcast, we're doing it!” And Amira’s like, “yes.” That's exactly how it went down.

**Amira Mohammed:** Tell me when and where.

**Ibrahim Abu Ahmad:** And in my head was, ‘I'm not waiting for anyone.’ You know, like, especially now after October 7th, it became a point of no return.

**Amira Mohammed:** Yeah.

**Ibrahim Abu Ahmad:** And it's a now or never thing that we cannot wait for approval or permission in order to say what we believe and want to say.

**Amira Mohammed:** And so I would rather take this opportunity to be loud rather than silent and do something and say something.

**Ibrahim Abu Ahmad:** Absolutely. And this is why we decided on the term “unapologetic” because we wanted to be unapologetic about our identity, our views, our perspective. And we wanted to bring a third narrative, that is different from the classic ‘pro-Israeli’ and, in a way, ‘anti-Palestinian.’ And ‘pro-Palestinian’ that it’s in a way ‘anti-Israeli.’ And it’s OK, to be pro your community, your people, but also in the same breath, have empathy for the other side.

*[Mash-Up]*

**Mitch Ginsburg:** And what kind of reactions are you getting?

**Ibrahim Abu Ahmad:** I had one Israeli friend who reached out after a few episodes that we launched and was like, “you know, you're doing a great job, you're speaking really well, you know you are articulate about the way that you speak, you should do it to speak our voice.” And I had the same kind of comment from a Palestinian friend who like, you know, kind of like said it, “well, you’re using in a way the war to become popular.” And it's exactly what I told him is, “if I wanted to be popular, I would have only taken, you know, the Palestinian side.” The majority of the world, and that's the reality, is pro-Palestinian. And if I wanted to be, you know, go really viral, I would just, you know, take that privilege, talk only the Palestinian voice and have hundreds of thousands of followers and great, but that's not the goal.

The goal is to bring people to join us and to get the complex message that we're trying to bring. For us specifically we are part of a very unique community and we have a very unique identity that allows us to speak to both communities - the Palestinian and the Jewish because we’re both. We see ourselves as both part of the Palestinian people and part of the Israeli society. This is why we are Palestinian Israelis. We can understand both people, both mindsets, both perspectives, so we can find a path that is in the middle between both because we can see the two so we can march in the middle.

**Amira Mohammed:** And it might sound that we're not angry on the podcast. For me personally, of course I'm angry, of course I'm pissed. But the end goal is for a reality where everyone lives in dignity and peace. That's the end goal. And my anger is not going to bring that. It’s dialogue and conversation that’s going to build that. If the war ends tomorrow, if the war ends this week, and all we go back to is the sixth of October, then we all lost, we all like failed tremendously, and we're just continuing and waiting for another October 7th. We're waiting for bloodshed.