

Ben Affleck, Cate Blanchett, Mark Rylance, Bradley Cooper, Jessica Chastain, Brian Cox and others call for a “ceasefire in Gaza and Israel before another life is lost”

David Walsh
7 November 2023

A group of prominent actors, writers and musicians has signed an open letter urging President Joe Biden and the US Congress to “call for an immediate de-escalation and ceasefire in Gaza and Israel before another life is lost.” The group, “Artists Call for Ceasefire Now,” points to the fact that “5,000 people have been killed in the last week and a half—a number any person of conscience knows is catastrophic. We believe all life is sacred, no matter faith or ethnicity and we condemn the killing of Palestinian and Israeli civilians.”

The signatories include actors Andrew Garfield, Ben Affleck, Mahershala Ali, Mark Rylance, Bradley Cooper, Brian Cox, Cate Blanchett, Ewan McGregor, Florence Pugh, Jeremy Strong, Jessica Chastain, Richard Gere, Sandra Oh and Tom Hardy. Musicians and performers such as Jennifer Lopez, Selena Gomez, Ani DiFranco, Boots Riley, Brian Eno, Cat Power, Drake and Michael Stipe also added their names.

The latest protest against the violence in Gaza appeals for “an end to the bombing of Gaza, and the safe release of hostages. Half of Gaza’s two million residents are children, and more than two thirds are refugees and their descendants being forced to flee their homes. Humanitarian aid must be allowed to reach them.”

It cites the comments of UNICEF spokesperson James Elder that children and families in Gaza “have practically run out of food, water, electricity, medicine and safe access to hospitals, following days of air strikes and cuts to all supply routes.” Elder further

explained that Gaza’s sole power plant had exhausted its fuel, “shutting down electricity, water and wastewater treatment. Most residents can no longer get drinking water from service providers or household water through pipelines.... The humanitarian situation has reached lethal lows, and yet all reports point to further attacks. Compassion—and international law—must prevail.”

Biden and the members of Congress are entirely impervious to demands for compassion and the US ruling elite has flouted international law, in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Syria, Yemen and beyond, leading to the deaths of millions, for decades. It is the primary source of violence on the world stage, Israel is one its accomplices.

The list of signers also includes filmmakers Adam McKay, Ryan Coogler, James Schamus, Mira Nair, Michael Moore, Peter Berg, Jordan Peele and Alfonso Cuarón; writers Tony Kushner and Wallace Shawn; musician-performers Patti Smith, Peter Gabriel, Annie Lennox, Macklemore and Mandy Patinkin; comics Jon Stewart, Ramy Youssef, Rosie O’Donnell, Mo Amer, Wanda Sykes, Margaret Cho and Judah Friedlander; and model Gigi Hadid.

The list of actors who added their names is extensive, among them Alan Cumming, Alia Shawkat, Alyssa Milano, Amber Tamblyn, America Ferrera, Channing Tatum, Connie Britton, Cynthia Nixon, David Cross, David Oyelowo, Elliott Gould, Jessie Buckley, Joaquin Phoenix, Joel Edgerton, John Cusack, Kirsten Dunst, Kristen Stewart, Mark Ruffalo, Michael Shannon, Milla Jovovich, Rachel McAdams, Riz Ahmed, Rooney

Mara, Rosario Dawson, Sarah Snook, Shailene Woodley and Susan Sarandon.

The “Artists Call for Ceasefire Now” concludes by asserting, “We refuse to tell future generations the story of our silence, that we stood by and did nothing. As Emergency Relief Chief Martin Griffiths told UN News, ‘History is watching.’”

The opposition of artists to the Israeli onslaught continues to mount.

On November 3, Nicholas Galanin, a Tlingit and Unangax? multi-disciplinary artist and musician from Alaska, and Merritt Johnson, American contemporary artist, announced they had asked the National Gallery of Art in Washington to remove their sculpture from a major exhibition of Indigenous art, “The Land Carries Our Ancestors,” which runs until January 15, 2024. The exhibition is curated by artist Jaune Quick-to-See Smith.

According to *ArtNews*, the work by Galanin and Johnson “is a large sculpture of a child whose 17th-century dress is cut away to reveal animals’ mouths being pried open. According to the artists, it is meant to portray a figure who has ‘endured hundreds of years of colonization, corporatization, commodification, and subjugation.’”

The artists wrote on Instagram that it was with deep regret that they had to “ask for our work be removed from the National Gallery due to US government funding of Israel’s military assault and genocide against the Palestinian people.” Galanin and Johnson went on, “We’re calling on the Federal Government to demand an immediate ceasefire, cut military aid to Israel, and lift the siege on Gaza.”

In Naples, Italy, photographer and artist Eduardo Castaldo, according to *Euronews*, “has already made a name for himself as a fervent supporter of the Palestinian cause, using his artwork to raise awareness of the plight of those living in Gaza and the West Bank. It consequently took little time for the 46-year-old Neapolitan activist to summon his creative resources upon the Israeli-Hamas fighting.”

Castaldo remodeled a “Just Do It” Nike ad into a pro-Palestinian poster titled #ResistTheOccupation. In the midst of installing the work on a city street, the artist was taken in by police, subject to four hours of questioning and fined 400 euros.

Castaldo wrote on Instagram: “This is Napoli today, our latest artwork in solidarity with Palestinian resistance. We’ve been forcedly taken to a police station while making this piece; they kept us for hours. We will not stop. Israel cannot colonize art because art needs truth to exist.”

Hyperallergic reported October 25 that artists who publicly opposed the Israeli genocide were facing repercussions. “Amid the ongoing violence, an outpouring of fundraisers and open letters have provided artists with ways to publicly voice their support for the besieged region.” Since then, the online arts magazine “has spoken with multiple artists, all of whom asked to remain anonymous, who said they had received threatening phone calls and emails from their collectors and galleries after publicly showing support for Palestine.”



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