

# McCarthyite witch-hunt against actresses Melissa Barrera and Susan Sarandon for opposing Israeli genocide in Gaza

**David Walsh**  
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A new witch-hunt has been launched in Hollywood, targeting actors and others who speak out against the Israeli military's campaign of mass murder in Gaza. Spurious and slanderous claims of antisemitism drive this new purge of political opposition in the film industry. That opposition to crimes against humanity is associated with "antisemitism" is both reactionary and dangerous.

Mexican-born actress Melissa Barrera was fired from the *Scream* horror franchise for speaking out clearly and loudly against the ongoing carnage in Gaza, and referring to it correctly as "genocide and ethnic cleansing."

Spyglass Media Group, the film and television production and finance company, in defense of the victimization, claimed that the company's position was "unequivocally clear: We have zero tolerance for antisemitism or the incitement of hate in any form, including false references to genocide, ethnic cleansing, Holocaust distortion or anything that flagrantly crosses the line into hate speech."

Spyglass lies through its teeth. There is nothing in any of Barrera's posts on social media that even hints at antisemitism. The company is defending Israeli war crimes and passing this off as opposition to supposedly "false references to genocide"—Spyglass doesn't attempt to explain why they are "false" in the face of the driving out of 1 million or more people from northern Gaza and the killing of tens of thousands—and "hate speech."

Many of Barrera's posts are simply items taken from the news, demonstrating the character of the Israeli onslaught and pointing to the lies and anti-Palestinian, fascistic filth coming directly from the Netanyahu regime itself.

Her own comments reflect what a large portion of the world's population already thinks and feels, sympathy for the population of Gaza and revulsion at Israel's actions, contrary to the self-delusion of the isolated, wealthy Hollywood establishment, where support for imperialist violence in every part of the globe reigns supreme.

Barrera writes, for example: "I love my Jewish friends. I

stand with you in these horrible times. I empathize with your fear and pain. No one deserves to be persecuted or attacked. I know that a lot of Jewish people are not ok with what the government of Israel is doing ... Jewish children are dying. Innocent Jewish people are dying. Palestinian children are dying and have been dying for decades. Innocent Palestinians are and have been dying for decades. Not always because of bombs, but because they live in a prison and have had vital resources limited."

On another occasion, Barrera commented: "If you're wondering how the world watched when genocides and ethnic cleansing happened—this is how. We read about it and watch documentaries and think 'how did nobody do anything?!' Like this! It's happening now. Nobody's stopping it." So much for her antisemitism and "Holocaust distortion"!

The actress also explained that it is so "sad and frustrating to see so many people and most of Western media trying SO HARD to equate Palestinian Liberation with supporting Hamas. When they are NOT the same thing. They want us to believe this so they can continue brutally killing innocent Palestinians, mothers and children, under the pretense of destroying Hamas. You can condemn Hamas and still want Peace and Freedom for Palestinians. You can condemn the Israeli Gov, and the US for aiding them, and still want safety and peace and freedom for Jews around the world."

Barrera emphasized that "it is very important to also understand: Just like all Palestinians are NOT Hamas, All Jewish people are NOT the Israeli Govt. Do not blame, or hate on, a whole group of people because of what some are doing. I stand with all those caught in the crossfire. I pray for freedom and peace for you and your families."

At one point, Barrera retweeted a comment from London-based critic and journalist Hanna Flint that the latter was "Waking up to friends in the film industry telling me they are deleting their pro-Palestine posts because of a new Blacklist going round here and across the pond.

McCarthyism is back.” Barrera added: “Censorship, silencing and intimidation ...”

Indeed, powerful economic and political forces, tied in many cases to the Democratic Party and the Biden White House, are deliberately creating a new climate of fear and intimidation in Hollywood and beyond. To speak out for elementary humanity in the face of Israeli criminality, backed to the hilt by both parties in Washington, all the Western powers and the major media outlets, is to risk one’s job and career.

On Wednesday, media outlets reported that actress Jenna Ortega, Barrera’s co-star, would no longer be in *Scream VII*, due to “scheduling conflicts.” The producers, trying to keep the lid on, claimed through *Variety* that “Ortega’s departure was ‘apparently not influenced’ by Barrera’s firing, though the timing leaves room for speculation that there may be more to the story.” *Rolling Stone* added that “rumors were circulating that Ortega had asked Spyglass to end her contract due to Barrera’s firing. Ortega, too, has been vocal about the humanitarian crisis in Gaza on her popular Instagram account.” Entirely to her credit!

In addition to the attacks on Barrera and Ortega, various employees of talent and sports agency CAA have been fired for posting statements critical of Israel. One of the firm’s top agents, Maha Dakhil, was “relieved of her duties,” in *Variety*’s coy phrase, “as co-chief the motion pictures department, though she was allowed to remain an agent,” in part through the intervention of her most important client, actor Tom Cruise. Dakhil had posted on Instagram a number of scathing comments, including “What’s more heartbreakingly than witnessing genocide? Witnessing the denial that genocide is happening.”

Pressure was brought to bear on rival talent agency WME to drop musician-filmmaker Boots Riley as a client after the latter quite correctly denounced a Hollywood screening of the Israeli-made “documentary” film about Hamas’s alleged atrocities as “murderous propaganda.” Riley further warned that “when IDF and Israeli officials are at The Hague for war crimes, massacres and genocidal actions—you won’t want your name or image to have been anywhere near it.”

The coverage in the US entertainment publications like *Variety* and *Deadline* is duplicitous and prejudiced against political opposition to Israel’s crimes.

Along these lines, in its coverage of the Barrera firing, *Variety* asserted that from “power brokers to the rank and file, a growing number are incensed by the hostile rhetoric surrounding Israel and the lack of solidarity, even as some 240 hostages continue to be held by Hamas.”

After citing the comments of pro-Israel zealots in the Hollywood elite to the effect that there was “no excuse for not condemning Hamas and demanding the release of the

hostages,” the *Variety* article continued, “Some have had enough,” and passed on to Barrera’s firing.

The same piece proceeds to cite a comment from a WME agent about “the Jew-hating we’re seeing,” as though this were a proven fact, instead of a wretched attempt to deflect the outrage felt by millions at the Israeli destruction of Gaza and its murder of thousands of women and children.

The victimization of actress Susan Sarandon and its treatment by the media are part of the same social process.

Disgracefully, *Deadline* headlined its November 21 article on Sarandon’s being dropped by her talent agency, “UTA Drops Susan Sarandon As Client Following Recent Antisemitic Remarks She Made At A Rally In New York.”

What antisemitic comments? Sarandon has a long, well-known history of principled criticism of American foreign policy and the crimes committed by Washington, under both Republicans and Democrats. Again, the charge of antisemitism is defamatory and meant to divert attention from the horrifying operation in Gaza.

Backing UTA’s anti-democratic action aimed at suppressing political dissent, *Deadline* claimed that Sarandon made “controversial remarks” at a recent pro-Palestinian rally in New York City, relying on the fascistic *New York Post* for a truncated video clip. Sarandon made the point in the brief clip that because of the Gaza genocide, some American Jews were now afraid of public opprobrium and were “getting a taste of what it feels like to be a Muslim in this country.” In the clip, she goes on to appeal for people to think about their actions, “It’s important to listen, it’s important to have facts.”

The *Deadline* article goes on, in the same McCarthyite manner, to assert that Sarandon “went on to repost on X a pro-Palestinian post from Pink Floyd’s Roger Waters, who has been criticized over the years for his antisemitic remarks.” This is a foul amalgam, rooted in a scurrilous attack on Waters, an indefatigable opponent of tyranny and oppression of every kind, who of course has never made an antisemitic remark in his life.



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