

In defense of actress Melissa Barrera, victim of McCarthyite campaign over her opposition to Israeli genocide

David Walsh
7 February 2024

Strenuous efforts are being made to blacklist actress Melissa Barrera and drive her out of the Hollywood film industry. Her crime? Speaking out in opposition to one of the most heinous crimes in modern times, the ongoing mass murder of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

The Israeli military, armed with the most advanced weaponry in the world, has attacked hospitals, libraries, universities, shelters and every location where it could find people to kill or infrastructure to destroy. Some 1.9 million people have been driven from their homes by the military terror campaign. One hundred thousand people, mostly women and children, are dead, wounded or missing. Disease, starvation and the stench of garbage and filth are everyday realities for the surviving Gazan population.

According to Oxfam, “Israel’s military is killing Palestinians at an average rate of 250 people a day, which exceeds the daily death toll of any other major conflict of recent years.” And there is no let-up in the industrial-style killing.

The aim is to “ethnically cleanse” Gaza, either exterminating the Palestinian population, the oft-stated goal of the gang of fascists who make up the Netanyahu cabinet, or driving it out of the area “voluntarily” by rendering conditions unlivable.

The response of the Hollywood establishment has been to endorse the mass homicide in Gaza and make every effort to stamp out opposition.

In November, Barrera was fired from the *Scream* franchise for speaking out against the carnage in Gaza, referring to it correctly as “genocide and ethnic cleansing.”

In a lying statement, Spyglass Media Group claimed she was dismissed because her social media posts constituted “antisemitism,” and that the production company would

not tolerate “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.”

Nothing in Barrera’s posts resembled “antisemitism” or “hate speech” in the slightest degree. As for “false references to genocide,” the Israeli murder campaign has been characterized as such by innumerable organizations, agencies and scholars. Eight hundred government officials from the US and Europe were recently obliged to release a statement asserting that there was a “plausible risk that our governments’ policies are contributing to grave violations of international humanitarian law, war crimes and even ethnic cleansing or genocide.” The International Court of Justice determined late last month that various acts alleged by South Africa “to have been committed by Israel in Gaza appear to be capable of falling within the provisions of the [1948 Genocide] Convention.” But Spyglass, in its infinite corporate wisdom, knows better.

On November 30, 1,300 British actors and artists signed a letter accusing cultural institutions of “repressing, silencing and stigmatising Palestinian voices and perspectives.” The letter included the dropping of Barrera from *Scream VII* in its list of repressive and anti-democratic incidents. The signatories included Academy Award-winning actress Olivia Colman; Harriet Walter, an Emmy Award nominee for her role in *Succession*; Olivier Award winner Juliet Stevenson; Nicola Coughlan of *Derry Girls* and *Bridgerton*; and Aimee Lou Wood, a BAFTA award winner for her role in the series *Sex Education*.

Barrera further infuriated the pro-Zionist Hollywood establishment by participating in a demonstration in Park City, Utah, during the Sundance Film Festival in January in opposition to the Gaza catastrophe.

Various publications were quick to finger Barrera in headlines for her participation: *Deadline*, “Sundance Shut Down: Pro-Palestinian Protest Closes Main Street; Melissa Barrera Among Demonstrators.” The *Hollywood Reporter*, “Melissa Barrera, Indya Moore Among Fiery Palestinian Protesters During Sundance, Chanting ‘End the Genocide.’” The gutter *New York Post* led the way with “‘Scream’ actress Melissa Barrera joins disruptive anti-Israel rally at Sundance.”

The most recent attack on Barrera comes in the wake of social media posts in which the Mexican-born performer stood by her defense of the Palestinians: “I too come from a colonized country. Palestine WILL be free.” She added, in another post: “Gaza is currently being treated like a concentration camp. Cornering everyone together, with nowhere to go, no electricity no water. People have learnt nothing from our histories. And just like our histories, people are still silently watching it all happen. THIS IS GENOCIDE & ETHNIC CLEANSING.”

In addition, Barrera posted a link urging her social media followers to donate money to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) to benefit “all the martyrs in Gaza and the West Bank.” The UNRWA, of course, has become the target of an Israeli provocation recently aimed at destroying one of the few organizations helping to feed the victims of the Netanyahu-Biden terror campaign. The intention is to bomb and starve the Palestinians out of Gaza, so that Israel can seize it.

Variety’s Tatiana Siegel jumped on this issue as part of the effort to have Barrera dumped by her talent management. Barrera, writes Siegel, “is once again under fire over a series of new social media posts involving the Israeli-Gaza conflict, prompting her representatives at WME and Sugar23 [talent management companies] to explore dropping the actress as a client.”

The *Variety* piece proceeds along these filthy lines: “Barrera’s posts quickly made the rounds across the industry and within WME, which consulted with outside advisors on the best approach to fire her given that such a break could spark backlash.”

Siegel goes on to note that at Sundance, “Barrera chanted the controversial line ‘from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free’ during a pro-Palestinian protest on Main Street. ... The Anti-Defamation League and the American Jewish Committee have called the slogan antisemitic and see it as a threat to the continued existence of Israel as a Jewish state.” Siegel adds, “WME was aware of her inflammatory rhetoric, but has continued to

represent the actress even as clients and staffers complained, sources say.”

The *Variety* article is nothing but an incitement to blacklisting, claiming that “one insider says the new posts from Barrera were deemed to be the ‘final straw’ given the widespread shock over the [UNRWA’s] ties to the Oct. 7 attacks,” and that another “source familiar with the internal debate at WME expressed dismay over its failure to move quickly on the matter.” Now Barrera is accused of “blatant terror support,” because of her donation appeal for the relief agency.

Siegel laments at the end that although “Barrera’s Hollywood prospects may have dimmed in the wake of her posts, her social media profile has skyrocketed. She now has 1.5 million Instagram followers, twice as many as she had before she called for donations to the UNRWA.”

What does this tell us? The upper echelons in Hollywood, allies of the hated Netanyahu and Biden administrations, are isolated in their support for mass murder and war crimes. In fact, Barrera speaks for tens or hundreds of millions around the world.

The atmosphere in Hollywood and the entertainment industry generally is reminiscent of the era of the “Red Scare” in the late 1940s and early 1950s. This time, the studios and networks, supported by the media outlets, are attempting to criminalize political resistance to genocide.

It is high time that the widespread opposition that exists among actors, writers, directors and others finds public expression and that voices are raised by prominent figures in the US film industry in defense of Barrera, John Cusack, Susan Sarandon and the others who have had the courage to denounce the Israeli-US criminality. History will harshly judge those who remain silent.



To contact the WSWWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact