

Spanish actors, directors denounce Israeli genocide at Goya Awards

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At the 38th Goya Awards on February 10, Spain's principal film award ceremony, various actors and directors spoke out strongly against the ongoing Israeli mass murder in Gaza.

The annual event is organized by the Academy of Cinematographic Arts and Sciences of Spain. The Academy, founded in 1986, initiated the Goyas the following year. The 2024 ceremony was held at the Feria de Valladolid venue in Valladolid, in northern Spain, and livestreamed across the country.

Juan Antonio Bayona's *Society of the Snow*, a survival thriller about the Uruguayan 1972 Andes flight disaster, received the most awards February 10, including Best Film.

As the *Morocco World News* noted with some legitimacy, in contrast "to the prevailing silence on Gaza from Hollywood, Spain's biggest stars used the Goya Awards to express their solidarity with the Palestinian people amid Israel's ongoing genocidal assault on the besieged Gaza Strip. Their stances earned praise from pro-Palestinian organizations and activists."

The *National* (Abu Dhabi) pointed out that whether "on the red carpet, sitting in the audience or while accepting their awards, many of the personalities in attendance were seen wearing a sticker that featured an illustration of a watermelon [the colors of the Palestinian flag] in the centre with the word Gaza and the slogan, 'Stop arms trade, ceasefire now.'"

The publication went on to explain that renowned Spanish actress and singer Ana Belen, "who in 2017 was the recipient of the Goya of Honour Award in special recognition of her long career in the Spanish film industry, walked the red carpet with the sticker on the palm of her hand, which she pointed towards the fleet of photographers covering the event."

Estibaliz Urresola Solaguren, writer and director of *20,000 Species of Bees*, won the award for Best New Director. The film, about a transgender girl, was submitted to the 96th Academy Awards as the Spanish entry for Best International Feature Film. In her acceptance speech, Urresola referred directly to the ongoing war crimes. While wearing the Gaza badge, she told the crowd, "If this film talks about anything, it is the importance of naming things. ... And I also wanted to take the opportunity here to name that what is happening in Gaza is a genocide and we have to ask our governments to stop it." Spanish prime minister Pedro Sánchez was in attendance at the award ceremony.

Urresola withdrew her film from the Jerusalem Film Festival in July 2023 at the urging of the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel.

Actress Alba Flores, known for her role in the popular television crime drama *Money Heist* (*La Casa de Papel*, released on Netflix 2019-2021), also wore the colors of the Palestinian flag prominently on a brooch. On the red carpet before the award ceremony, she commented, "It's hard for me to come and celebrate anything without remembering what's happening in Palestine, so at least I'm wearing a pin. Even if it's just a small thing, I wanted to acknowledge it." Before presenting the award for Best Original Song, Flores declared, "Good night and peace for Palestine, please," followed by applause from the audience.

Flores is one of over 10,000 artists and intellectuals from 30 countries who have signed a statement against the war and Israeli terror and genocide.

Actress Penelope Cruz was also wearing the Gaza badge. She and husband Javier Bardem came under intense pressure in 2014 when they signed an open

letter condemning one of Israel's previous onslaughts against Gaza.

Tellingly, and remarkably, *Variety*, the US trade publication, in its coverage of the Goyas, made no reference whatsoever to any of the comments or protests over the Gaza genocide. The name of the devastated enclave never appears once. *Variety* is one of the media outlets, along with the *Hollywood Reporter* and *Deadline*, leading the campaign in the American entertainment industry to suppress and intimidate opposition to Israel's crimes.

At the 77th British Academy Film Awards, known as the BAFTAs, held Sunday, certain modest signs of protest were present in a country where some of the most massive demonstrations have occurred. Veteran film director Ken Loach and his longtime writing partner Paul Laverty held up a sign on the red carpet from the Stop the War Coalition, "Gaza—Stop the Massacre."

Christopher Nolan's *Oppenheimer* dominated the major awards at the BAFTAs, as has been the case at US awards programs thus far, with Emma Stone winning Best Actress for *Poor Things* (Yorgos Lanthimos).

Accepting the award for Outstanding British Film, James Wilson, producer of Jonathan Glazer's *Zone of Interest*, about the building of a house right next to Auschwitz, made a brief reference to the current situation. He observed that it was pressing "right now that we should care about innocent people being killed in Gaza or Yemen in the same way [we] think about innocent people killed in Mariupol or in Israel."



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