

The political and moral divide over Gaza genocide

Prominent Hollywood figure tells staff to blacklist opponents of Israeli crimes; award-winning Canadian actress: “It’s a scary time to be an artist ... Free Palestine!”

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The political and moral divide over the mass murder of Palestinians in Gaza only widens with the announcement of each new atrocity. Every massacre committed by the Israeli military—who, in Rosa Luxemburg’s words, wade “in pools of blood, death and misery before them and behind”—is registered and endorsed by Zionism’s apologists as an additional act of Israeli “self-defense.”

In Hollywood and the film and television world, as elsewhere, the gulf over Gaza takes on, in the final analysis, a class character. The upper echelons in the entertainment industry, generally speaking, are on the side of Biden and Netanyahu. They are attempting to police public utterances and suppress the widespread opposition that exists among actors, writers and directors to the genocide through threats, intimidation and blacklisting.

Case in point: *Variety* revealed Thursday that “prominent Hollywood marketing and branding guru” Ashlee Margolis, founder of the exclusive Beverly Hills public relations and marketing firm The A List, has informed her staff not to work with anyone “posting against Israel.”

In her email, according to *Variety*, “Margolis stressed that there was a distinction between what she deemed acceptable and unacceptable social media posts about the country and its current military operations in Gaza.”

“Anyone saying Israel is committing a ‘genocide’ is someone we will pause on working with, as that is simply not true,” she wrote. “While Jews are

devastated by the loss of innocent lives in Gaza, we are feeling immense fear over the rising Jew Hatred all over the world.”

Even *Variety*, which has been busy since October smearing opponents of the homicidal Israeli operation, is obliged to admit that “the word ‘genocide’ has been used by a growing group of people who work in the industry including Joaquin Phoenix, Joel Coen and Todd Haynes.”

The article notes that an open letter in defense of award-winning director Jonathan Glazer, endorsed by Phoenix, Coen, Haynes and others, identified the signers as “proud Jews who denounce the weaponization of Jewish identity and the memory of the Holocaust to justify what many experts in international law, including leading Holocaust scholars, have identified as a ‘genocide in the making.’”

Nonetheless, *Variety* continues undeterred, “Sources familiar with the situation note that The A List has a decades-long history of advocating for fairness and the wellbeing of others.”

On its website, The A List boasts:

We are trusted brand builders with over 25 years of industry experience. Our 360-approach develops imaginative and integrated programs to help our clients positively impact their communities by driving engagement, excitement, and emotional connections.

Our mission is to inspire change and foster relationships across our network, organization and community. We believe in actively using our voice to create new opportunities for our clients to educate and participate in social, environmental and *human rights issues*. [Emphasis added]

It further brags that “we are an independent, female-owned and operated company.”

Margolis’ email referred to “Anti-Israel sentiments [that] are causing a lot of Anti-Jew Rhetoric in our own backyards” as the justification for her blacklisting. *Variety* reports that she then cynically “suggested that if outsiders ask why her firm is being unresponsive with any celebrity, influencer or tastemaker using the word genocide, they can come up with ‘some language that you are comfortable with.’”

Variety noted that some people “were taken aback by Margolis’ email and began sending it to external sources. The email was shared widely over the past 24 hours.”

Again, this emailing took place almost simultaneously with a savage Israel Defense Forces (IDF) missile attack on a school in Gaza housing displaced persons, which killed at least 40 people, including nine women and three children, and wounded 73 others. The Israeli military sent three missiles into the school in the Nuseirat refugee camp. The IDF claimed, in Goebbels-like fashion, the school was harboring “terrorists.”

Despite the efforts at industry intimidation, the pervasive opposition to the Gaza crimes among performers inevitably finds expression. At the 2024 Canadian Screen Awards last week, actress Amrit Kaur made a strong statement against the campaign to silence opposition and in support of the Palestinians.

Kaur, receiving the award for best lead performance in a drama film for *The Queen of My Dreams*, first praised director Fawzia Mirza “for casting an Indian woman in a Pakistani part.” It’s “a big deal,” she added, “pushing for unity “between two countries that were once one,” i.e., India and Pakistan. “Colonization pushed us to a place of division, genocide, and now two countries who once loved each other live in absolute vitriol,” the actress asserted.

Turning to the issue of Gaza and the attempt to block opposition to the genocide in the film industry, Kaur told the crowd at the Canadian Broadcasting Centre in Toronto:

It’s a scary time to be an artist. I am scared. I am scared to speak up. But this honor reminds me that I am an artist. To be an artist, it is my job to feel and to empathize. And for those of you who are telling us artists not to speak up in fear of losing jobs, in fear of losing careers, in fear of losing reputation, you are telling us not to be artists. And I want to say to you people that I am an artist. And I refuse to sacrifice and live in the hatred of humanity. Ceasefire Now. Free Palestine.

Those in attendance gave Kaur a rousing round of applause.

In the first few days of the actress’ acceptance speech appearing on Instagram, it was liked more than 120,000 times.



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