

Hundreds of directors, writers, actors denounce Israeli genocide in Gaza and the film industry's “silence,” “indifference” and “passivity”

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More than 350 prominent directors, writers and actors have signed an open letter denouncing the “genocide ... taking place in Gaza” and the official inaction of the film industry in regard to the mass suffering.

Among those who signed the appeal were Pedro Almodóvar, Javier Bardem, Melissa Barrera, David Cronenberg, Costa-Gavras, Brian Cox, Marcia Cross, Alfonso Cuarón, Sophie and Ralph Fiennes, Richard Gere, Rebecca Hall, Yórgos Lánthimos, Mike Leigh, Guy Pearce, Mark Ruffalo and Susan Sarandon.

Other signatories include Palestinian directors and performers Hany Abu-Assad, Mahdi Fleifel, Annemarie Jacir, Arab Nasser and Tarzan Nasser (*Gaza Mon Amour*), Mo Amer and Israeli filmmaker Nadav Lapid. Numerous European and North American film writers and directors added their names, among them Gianni Amelio (Italy), Nuri Bilge Ceylan (Turkey), Alice Diop and Boris Lojkine (France), Xavier Dolan (Canada), Víctor Erice (Spain), Jonathan Glazer (UK), Naomi Foner Gyllenhaal (mother of Maggie and Jake Gyllenhaal), Joshua Oppenheimer and Roger Stahl (US), Radu Jude (Romania), Aki Kaurismäki (Finland) and Ruben Östlund (Sweden, *Triangle of Sadness*).

The list of actor-signatories is a lengthy one. Among the best known are Liam Cunningham, Sinéad Cusack, Charles Dance, Julie Delpy, Viggo Mortensen, Peter Mullan, Cynthia Nixon, Lena Headey, Stefania Sandrelli, Alia Shawkat, Miriam Margolyes, Simon McBurney, Sandra Hüller, Élodie Bouchez, Guy Pearce, Jérémie Renier, Harriet Walter, Lambert Wilson, Jeanne Balibar, Mathieu Kassovitz and Eric Cantona.

The open letter was published on the first day of this year's Cannes film festival. It begins by calling attention

to the fate of 25-year-old Fatma Hassouna, a Palestinian freelance photojournalist, murdered in an Israeli air strike on April 16.

The public appeal explains that Hassouna

was targeted by the Israeli army ... the day after it was announced that [Iranian director] Sepideh Farsi's film “Put Your Soul on Your Hand and Walk,” in which she [Hassouna] was the star, had been selected in the ACID [parallel, independent film] section of the Cannes Film Festival.

She was about to get married.

Ten of her relatives, including her pregnant sister, were killed by the same Israeli strike.

At the time, in response to this savage crime, the WSWS asked, “Was Hassouna specifically targeted for death by the fascistic Israeli regime and military?” There seems no plausible reason to doubt this, given the timing of the air strike and the homicidal record of Netanyahu and the IDF.

The open letter goes on to point out that more than

200 journalists have been deliberately killed [by the Israeli military]. Writers, film-makers and artists are being brutally murdered.

Moreover, at the end of March,

Palestinian filmmaker Hamdan Ballal, who won an Oscar for his film “No Other Land,” was brutally attacked by Israeli settlers and then kidnapped by the army, before being released under international pressure.

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS), which had bestowed the award on Ballal only a three weeks earlier, remained virtually and infamously silent on the assault. As the letter explains:

The Oscar Academy’s lack of support for Hamdan Ballal sparked outrage among its own members and it had to publicly apologize for its inaction.

We are ashamed of such passivity.

In fact, nearly 700 Academy members signed an open letter, “AMPAS members respond to the lack of support for filmmaker Hamdan Ballal from AMPAS leadership.” That letter pointed out that it was “indefensible for an organization to recognize a film with an award in the first week of March, and then fail to defend its filmmakers just a few weeks later.”

The letter continued:

Why is it that cinema, a breeding ground for socially committed works, seems to be so indifferent to the horror of reality and the oppression suffered by our sisters and brothers?

As artists and cultural players, we cannot remain silent while genocide is taking place in Gaza and this unspeakable news is hitting our communities hard.

What is the point of our professions if not to draw lessons from history, to make films that are committed, if we are not present to protect oppressed voices?

Why this silence?

This is a question, of course, that can be answered without hesitation. The upper echelons of the global film and television world are composed of multi-millionaires and billionaires who side with Israel, the Great Powers

and the imperialists in general. Whatever misgivings there are about Netanyahu and Trump, for example, in such circles, class allegiances are more powerful than any other factor. The general reaction of the Hollywood studios has been to brand those who speak out against the mass murder in Gaza as “antisemites” and attempt to blacklist or exclude them. This is the experience of figures such as Melissa Barrera and Susan Sarandon.

The open letter concludes:

Let’s refuse to let our art be an accomplice to the worst.

Let us rise up.

Let us name reality.

Let us collectively dare to look at it with the precision of our sensitive hearts, so that it can no longer be silenced and covered up.

Let us reject the propaganda that constantly colonizes our imaginations and makes us lose our sense of humanity.

For Fatma, for all those who die in indifference.

Cinema has a duty to carry their messages, to reflect our societies.

Let’s act before it’s too late.

The letter speaks to the sentiments of great numbers of artists and film industry professionals, and beyond them, hundreds of millions of people around the globe, horrified by the Israeli “final solution” being imposed in Gaza and the West Bank. The open letter is another expression of the vast social, political and *moral* divide that separates the handful of the world’s rulers from an increasingly restive and outraged population.



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