

The Israel Files: WikiLeaks Docs Show Top Hollywood Producers Working with Israel to Defend Its War Crimes

By [Alan MacLeod](#)

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As Israel was launching a [deadly assault](#) on Gaza, killing thousands of civilians and displacing more than 100,000 people, many of America’s top TV, music and film producers were organizing to protect the apartheid state’s reputation from widespread international condemnation.

Together, the [Sony Archive](#) – a cache of emails published by Wikileaks – prove that influential entertainment magnates attempted to whitewash Israeli crimes and present the situation as defending itself from an impending “genocide”, liaised with Israeli military and government officials in order to coordinate their message, attempted to cancel those who spoke out against the injustice, and put financial and social pressure on institutions who hosted artists criticizing the apartheid government’s actions.

As Israel Attacks, Hollywood Plays Defense

“[Israel’s message] Must be repeated ad infinitum until the people get it,” wrote Hollywood lawyer and producer Glenn D. Feig, in an email chain to many of Tinsel Town’s most influential executives. This was in response to the unprovoked 2014 Israeli [attack](#) on Gaza, one of the bloodiest chapters in over half a century of occupation.

Named “Operation Protective Edge”, the Israeli military engaged in seven weeks of near-constant bombing of the densely populated coastal strip. According to the [United Nations](#), over 2,000 people were killed – a quarter of them children. 18,000 houses were destroyed, leaving more than 100,000 people homeless.

The Israeli military deliberately targeted civilian infrastructure, knocking out Gaza’s only power plant and shutting down its water treatment plants, leading to economic, social and ecological devastation in an area Human Rights Watch has [labeled](#) the world’s largest “open

air prison”.

Many in Hollywood expressed deep concern. “We must make sure that never happens again”, [insisted](#) producer Ron Rotholz. Rotholz, however, was not referring to the death and destruction Israel imposed on Gaza, but to the fact that many of the entertainment world’s biggest stars, including celebrity power couple, Penélope Cruz and Javier Bardem, had [condemned](#) Israel’s actions, labeling them tantamount to “genocide.”

From: Mark Canton [mailto:mcanton@atmospheremm.com]

Sent: Friday, August 29, 2014 9:16 AM

To: Silverman, Ben

Cc: Ron Rotholz; Ryan Kavanaugh; gperez@jaoli.com; Amy Pascal; Jon Feltheimer; Jim Gianopulos; Ron Meyer; jdmowbra@erols.com; Ryan Seacrest; Russell Simmons; Bart Rosenblatt; Jason Binn; Meir Teper; Gianni Nunnari; Jack Rapke; Glenn Feig; Roger Birnbaum; Jonathan Brandstein; Patrick Whitesell; Cassian Elwes; Beau Flynn; Geyer Kosinski; John Burnham; Solomon Courtney; Rabbi Marc Schneier; Ken Sunshine; Natalie Portman; Scarlett Johansson; davidfseigel@gmail.com; Rabbi Steven Leder; Rabbi Marvin Hier; Elliot Brandt; Frank Luntz; David Shane; maromk@zahav.net.il

Subject: Re: Is the Gaza War Really Over?

Well said

On Aug 29, 2014, at 9:13 AM, "Silverman, Ben" <Bn.Silverman@electus.com> wrote:

Agreed in that we should only boycott the boycotters and continue to be the advocates for an open and free society while pointing out the hypocrisy and insanity of singling out the only country in the Middle East that supports both.

On Aug 29, 2014, at 4:59 PM, "Ron Rotholz" <ron.rpics@gmail.com> wrote:

Ryan:

I don't think calling for any Boycotts re; cultural film events, when we're objecting to calls for a cultural boycotts of Israel would be helpful or advisable. Thierry Fremaux and Cannes are apolitical they do have an absolutely democratic screening policy re; subject matter. They are extremely concerned as a French festival set in the heart of traditionally right wing, anti-semitic 'Le Pen' territory about any form of anti-semitism at the festival re; films or filmmakers (while the filmmakers are in attendance). Several years ago they asked Lars Van Trier to leave the festival when he alluded to critics of his film as 'Nazis' Their policy with regard to this is absolute and commendable.

This group should be against ALL CULTURAL BOYCOTTS. Economic boycotts are another matter. I know we are all aware that Dubai and Qatar DO NOT RECOGNISE THE LEGITIMACY OF ISRAEL yet many hundreds of millions if not billions of dollars have been raised by US and European media companies from the Emirates. It is common knowledge that Qatar has financed the 'non-military' activities of Hamas to the tune of Hundreds of Millions of dollars which is why they were a key player in the recent Cairo peace talks which ended the Gaza War. In these cases we are dealing with quite high level corporate financial decisions re; investment, and vetting investment re: human rights and politics. Quite complex and controversial.

What we can do is urge the leaders of major film, tv and theater organisations, festivals, markets and potentially the heads of media corporations to issue official statements condemning any form of cultural or economic boycotts against Israel. IE: The heads of the

Cannes, Venice, Berlin, London, NY and Sundance Festivals issuing a joint statement condemning boycotts and censurings of any kind.

The same with the heads of BAFTA, BAFTA TV, both Academy's in LA, the BFI in the UK, the Cesars in France, and all theater orgs in NY and London Also issuing a joint statement.

As for the heads of studios, networks and major finance and distribution entities in the US, UK and Europe, these will be essentially corporate decisions and more complex and in many cases unrealistic. Also, in Europe and the UK, orgs like the BBC for instance is a public trust and publically funded, and it is against their charter to take a definite political position ever.

The philosophy behind this impassioned and brave and evolving group should be to speak with many but ultimately one voice within the creative global industries to press for a greater understanding of the plight of Israel within the Mid-East, a greater respect within Europe, but most importantly it must urge industry leaders in the US, UK and Europe to take an ABSOLUTE position re; the legitimacy and continued security and support for the Jewish state and its' population. NO EQUIVOCATION. Israel has a right to cultural, political and economic freedom and this right must be enforced stridently by the financial and creative global leaders in the cultural community.

Change must start from the top down. It should be unheard of and unacceptable for any Academy Award winning actor to call the legitimate armed defense of one's territory Genocide We must make sure that never happens again.

Ron Rotholz

“Change must start from the top down. It should be unheard of and unacceptable for any Academy Award-winning actor to call the legitimate armed defense of one’s territory...genocide” he [continued](#), worrying that the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement – a worldwide campaign to put economic pressure on Israel in an attempt to push it to meet its obligations under international law – was gaining steam in the world of the arts. Israel’s legitimacy rests upon political and military support from the U.S. Therefore, maintaining support among the American public is crucial to the long term viability of its settler colonial project.

Rotholz then attempted to organize a silent, worldwide pressure campaign on arts venues and organizations, including the Motion Picture Academy in Hollywood and the Sundance and Cannes Film Festivals, to stamp out BDS, [writing](#),

What we can do is urge the leaders of major film, TV and theater organisations, festivals, markets and potentially the heads of media corporations to issue official statements condemning any form of cultural or economic boycotts against Israel."

Others [agreed](#) that they had to develop a "game plan" for opposing BDS.

Of course, when influential producers, festivals and heads of media corporations release statements condemning a certain position or practice, this is, in effect, a threat: stop taking these positions or suffer the professional consequences.

Loach on the Brain

The Sony emails also reveal a near obsession with British filmmaker and social activist Ken Loach. The celebrated director's film, "Jimmy's Hall" had recently been nominated for the prestigious Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival, and in the wake of Israel's assault on Gaza, he had publicly [called](#) for a cultural and sporting boycott of the apartheid state.

This outraged many in Hollywood. Ryan Kavanaugh, CEO of Relativity Media, a film producing company responsible for financing more than 200 movies, demanded that not only Loach, but the whole Cannes Film Festival be cancelled. "The studios and networks alike must join together and boycott Cannes," he [wrote](#). "If we don't we are sending a message that another holocaust is fine with Hollywood as long as it is business as usual," he added, framing the Israeli attack on a near-defenseless civilian population as a Palestinian genocide of Israelis.

Others agreed. Ben Silverman, former co-chairman of NBC Entertainment and Universal Media Studios and producer of shows such as "The Office", "The Biggest Loser" and "Ugly Betty" [said](#) that the industry should "boycott the boycotters". Rotholz, meanwhile, wrote to the head of the Cannes Film Festival, demanding that he take action against Loach for his comments. "There is no place for [Loach's intolerant and hateful remarks] in the global world of film and filmmakers", he [insisted](#).

From: <ron.rpics@gmail.com>
Date: August 23, 2014 at 11:10:40 AM EDT
To: George perez <gperez@jaoli.com>
Subject: Fw:
Reply-To: <ron.rpics@gmail.com>

Sent using BlackBerry® from Orange

-----Original Message-----

From: ron.rpics@gmail.com
Date: Sat, 23 Aug 2014 13:20:04
To: Thierry Fremaux<thierry.fremaux@festival-cannes.fr>
Reply-To: ron.rpics@gmail.com
Cc: Brett Ratner<brettratner@ratpacent.com>; Yvan attal<yvanattal@mac.com>; James Toback<stephaniekempf@mac.com>; Brian Lourd<blourd@caa.com>; Ari emanuel<aemanuel@wmeentertainment.com>; Duncan Heath<duncanheath@independenttalent.com>; John Sloss<john@cineticmedia.com>; Howard Leigh<hleigh@cavendish.com>; <jberg@resolution-ent.com>
Thierry:

Ken Loach, at the Sarajevo Fil Fest this week called for a 'complete cultural boycott of Israel'. He urged the audience to make Israel a 'pariah' state. This was part of a ferocious attack on Israel and the US.

Mr Loach, a PalmD'or Winner, Jury member and honoured often at Cannes is a talented and valuable Cannes Film Festival attendee and insider.

Given the fact that France and Cannes do not support cultural boycotts and that anti-Israel sentiment in France has morphed into violent anti-semitism this summer, it is incumbent on your esteemed and revered festival to speak out against Mr Loach's intolerant and hateful remarks. This summer in the UK and Europe we have seen hate speech evolve into hate crime. There is no place for that in the global world of film and filmmakers.

I urge you to act in defense of freedom of speech and freedom of cultural interaction.

With Respect,

Ron Rotholz
Sent using BlackBerry® from Orange

Others came up with another way of countering Loach. "How about we all club together and make a documentary about the rise of new anti-Semitism in Europe," [suggested](#) British film producer Cassian Elwes, adding,

I would be willing to contribute and put time into it if others here would do the same. Between all of us I'm sure we could figure out a way to distribute it and get it into places like Cannes so we could have a response to guys like Loach. Perhaps we try to use it to rally support from film communities in Europe to help us distribute it there".

"I love it," [replied](#) publishing oligarch Jason Binn, "And I will promote it in a major way to all 3.2 million magazine subscribers across all on and offline platforms. I can even leverage Gilt's 9 million members," he added, referring to the shopping and lifestyle website he managed.

"Me too," [said](#) Amy Pascal, the Co-Chairperson of Sony Pictures Entertainment. Meanwhile, Mark Canton, producer of movies such as "Get Carter", "Immortals" and "300" busied himself drumming up more Hollywood support for the idea. "Adding Carmi Zlotnik to this growing list", he [replied](#), referencing the TV executive.

This whole correspondence was from an email chain of dozens of high-powered entertainment figures entitled "Happy New Year. Too bad Germany is now a no travel zone for Jews," which ludicrously claimed that the European country had become a Muslim-controlled Islamic theocracy.

From: Ryan Kavanaugh [mailto:RK@knightg.com]
Sent: Friday, September 19, 2014 12:49 PM
To: Ron Rotholz; Russell Simmons
Cc: jdmowbra@erols.com; Glenn Feig; Mark Canton; Silverman, Ben; gperez@jaoli.com; Amy Pascal; Jon Feltheimer; Jim Gianopulos; Ron Meyer; Ryan Seacrest; Bart Rosenblatt; Jason Binn; Meir Teper; Gianni Nunnari; Jack Rapke; Roger Birnbaum; Jonathan Brandstein; Patrick Whitesell; Cassian Elwes; Beau Flynn; Geyer Kosinski; John Burnham; Solomon Courtney; Rabbi Marc Schneier; Ken Sunshine; Natalie Portman; Scarlett Johansson; davidseigal@gmail.com; Rabbi Steven Leder; Rabbi Marvin Hier; Elliot Brandt; Frank Luntz; David Shane; maromk@zahav.net.il
Subject: RE: Is the Gaza War Really Over?

Dear All

We can continue to be silent and pretend this isn't happening because it is not in our country yet. We can ignore the anti semitism akin to pre ww2 Germany..now lining the streets of london, France Germany and around the world. We all may think we're protected here in the free US. We are not. It had now hit our doorstep and yet we remain silent?

This is not a joke. See below this is upcoming at the NY Met Opera..why are we allowing this to happen?

You Jews Are Always Complaining of Your Own Suffering, But You Get Fat Off the Poor, Cheat the Simple, Exploit the Virgin, Pollute Where You've Exploited – America is One Big Jew!!

September 22 Protest of Anti-Semitic Opera at NY Metropolitan Opera

You Jews Are Always Complaining of Your Own Suffering, But You Get Fat Off the Poor, Cheat the Simple, Exploit the Virgin, Pollute Where You've Exploited – America is One Big Jew!!

Those are the Words of the Anti-Semitic, Pro-Terrorist Opera at the New York Metropolitan Opera -- "The Death of Klinghoffer"

Those words are spoken by a Palestinian Arab who shoots and throws overboard an aging, wheelchair bound, Jewish passenger, Leon Klinghoffer. Klinghoffer's only crime was in being a Jew. The hate speech above was not that of a character depicted as evil and depraved. Instead, it came from someone portrayed as proud and idealistic. In the libretto the terrorists sing of themselves:

"We are soldiers fighting a war. We are not criminals and we are not vandals but men of ideals."

What's Next for the Metropolitan Opera? An opera about 9-11 or the beheading of journalists by idealistic, angry freedom fighters?

**We Need Your Help
Join Us At A Protest**
Monday, September 22, 2014
4:30 – 6:00 PM
Lincoln Center
10 Lincoln Center Plaza
Broadway & West 65 Street
New York, NY 10023

The Met's showing of the Klinghoffer opera is drawing considerable media attention, and we expect wide spread coverage of the rally. An editorial in the Jewish Voice titled "*Calling on the Jewish Establishment to Confront the Met*" is worthwhile reading.

Arutz Sheva, Israel National News, has covered the Klinghoffer opera and the planned protest."Jewish Groups to Rally in New York Against Anti-Semitic Opera."

There is also an excellent article by Rabbi Shmuley Boteach in the Times of Israel,"*Romanticizing Terror at the Met.*"

Your presence at the rally is important. Large numbers of protesters will send the world a message. Please send this message on to your friends and acquaintances who live within commuting distance of New York or who even like to spend time in New York. And send a message to Peter Gelb, general manager of the Metropolitan Opera, at pgelb@metopera.org. Let him know what you think of the presentation of anti-Semitic, pro-terrorist propaganda masquerading as art.

**Citizens Opposed to Propaganda
Masquerading as Art (COPMA)**
Robert G. Samet, Chairman
Mark H. Lazerson, Vice-Chairman
Carol Greenwald, PhD, Treasurer
Barbara Leber, PhD, Secretary
Jeffrey Ward, General Counsel
Ellen Heyman, PhD, Programming Director
<http://www.COPMA.net>
info@copma.net

"It is horrible. But in the end, it is no surprise, because apologists for Israel's oppression of the Palestinians will go to any length to prevent the people opposing them," Mr. Loach said,

when asked for comment by *MintPress*. “We shouldn’t underestimate the hatred of those who cannot tolerate the idea that Palestinians have human rights, that Palestine is a state; and they have their country,” he added.

Shutting Down Free Expression

The pro-Israel group in Hollywood also put serious pressure on American institutions to crack down on support for Palestinian human rights. Silverman revealed that he had written to Peter Gelb, the general manager of the New York Metropolitan Opera, in an effort to shut down a performance of “The Death of Klinghoffer”, an opera that tells the story of the 1985 hijacking of an airliner by the Palestine Liberation Front. “I suggest though that we each call him on Monday at his office at the Met and your point about the Met’s donors’ leverage is important,” he [advised](#) the other entertainment oligarchs, thereby shining a light on how the powerful move in secret to silence speech they do not approve of, and how they use their financial clout to coerce and strong-arm others into toeing their line. A lot of pressure was necessary, because, as Silverman explained, “as members of the artistic community it is very hard to be pro free speech only some of the time and not all of the time.”

Ultimately, the performance did go ahead, but not without a [large and coordinated protest](#) both inside and outside the Lincoln Center for Performing Arts, as individuals attempted to shut down the performance, claiming it was “antisemitic.”

Liaising with the IDF

The email conversations of many of Hollywood’s most influential individuals show that they believe they are on the verge of a worldwide extermination of Jews, and that Israel – and themselves – are the only things standing in the way of this impending fate. As Kavanaugh [wrote](#), “It’s our job to keep another Holocaust from happening. Many of you may think that can’t happen, that is extreme...[but] If you pull newspapers from pre Holocaust it seems eerily close to our world today.”

Rotholz was of a similar opinion, [writing](#) that,

It is imperative that leading figures in the LA/NY film, tv, media, digital and theater communities who support a strong and potent Jewish state develop a strategy for liaising with colleagues in London and Europe and also with the creative communities here and in Europe to promote and explain the Israeli cause.”

The Sony Archive emails also show that, not only were Tinsel Town’s top brass coordinating strategies to silence critics of Israel, but that they were also closely liaising with the Israeli government and its military.

Producer George Perez, for example, messaged his colleagues in the chain email to introduce them to an IDF colonel, [stating](#) (emphasis added),

Everyone please use this “reply all” list from here on. I have included Kobi Marom a retired commander in the Israeli army. Kobi was kind enough to give my family and I a jeep tour of the Golan Heights during our June trip to Israel. He also took us to visit an army base on the border of Israel and Syria, an area which has been in the news lately. Hard to imagine that the “kids” that we met at the base are most likely engaged in combat with our enemies.”

Seeing as the large majority of those who died were Palestinian civilians, it is unclear whether he considers all Palestinians or just Hamas as enemies of Hollywood. Perez also noted that “Kobi works closely with the Friends of the Israeli Defense Forces (FIDF) who are in need of donations,” and advised that Hollywood needed to “dig deep to help in the constant struggle for the survival of Israel.”

The group also attempted to recruit Israeli-American movie star Natalie Portman into their ranks. But the Academy Award-winning actress appeared more concerned that her personal details were being shared. “How did I get on this list? Also Ryan Seacrest?” she [replied](#), before directly addressing Kavanaugh, writing,

[C]an you please remove me from this email list? you should not be copying me publicly so that 20 people i don't know have my personal info. i will have to change my email address now. thank you”.

While Portman’s open contempt for the group of rabidly pro-Israel producers is notable, more so was Kavanaugh’s response, which revealed how close the connection between the Israeli state and Hollywood is. Kavanaugh [wrote](#) back,

Sorry. You are right Jews being slaughtered for their beliefs and Cannes members calling for the boycott of anything Israel or Jewish is much much less important than your email address being shared with 20 of our peers who are trying to make a difference. my deepest apologies...I had lunch yesterday with Israel consulate general who brought J street up to me. He was so perplexed confused and concerned when he heard you supported them that he begged me to connect you two.”

Thus, the leaked emails prove beyond any doubt that both the Israeli government and the IDF liaise with some of the most powerful people in the entertainment world in order to push forward a pro-Israel message and stamp out any deviance from that line.

Hip Hoppers for Apartheid

While their efforts at recruiting Portman fell flat, one star who responded enthusiastically was hip hop mega producer Russell Simmons, founder of Def Jam Records and the brother of Joseph “Rev.Run” Simmons, one third of Run DMC. Simmons has recently been the subject of controversy, after 20 women have come forward, [charging](#) him with rape or other sexual misconduct.

The emails reveal that promoting engagement with Israel within the African-American community is one of Simmons’ primary interests. When asked if he had any ideas how to improve Israel’s image, he [said](#), “Simple messaging from non Jews specifically from Muslims promoting peace and Israel’s right to exist...We have resources and the desire to win rather than lose the hearts of young Muslims and Jews.”

----- Original message -----

From: Russell Simmons
Date: 08/29/2014 1:56 PM (GMT-08:00)
To: Ryan Kavanaugh
Cc: Glenn Feig , Mark Canton , "Silverman, Ben" , Ron Rotholz , gperez@jaoli.com , Amy Pascal , Jon Feltheimer , Jim Gianopulos , Ron Meyer , jdmowbra@erols.com , Ryan Seacrest , Russell Simmons , Bart Rosenblatt , Jason Binn , Meir Teper , Gianni Nunnari , Jack Rapke , Roger Birnbaum , Jonathan Brandstein , Patrick Whitesell , Cassian Elwes , Beau Flynn , Geyer Kosinski , John Burnham , Solomon Courtney , Rabbi Marc Schneier , Ken Sunshine , Natalie Portman , Scarlett Johansson , davidfseigal@gmail.com , Rabbi Steven Leder , Rabbi Marvin Hier , Elliot Brandt , Frank Luntz , David Shane , maromk@zahav.net.il
Subject: Re: Is the Gaza War Really Over?

Simple messaging from non Jews specifically from Muslims promoting peace and Israel's right to exist. Should be spread. (Possibly using statements from Hamas leadership in this branding exercise) could be a unifying force. U have ken sunshine on the chain. We have resources and the desire to win rather than loose the hearts of young Muslims and Jews. Our love for innocent suffering Palestinians must be a strong part of our messaging.

With great love all things are possible

On Aug 29, 2014, at 1:29 PM, "Ryan Kavanaugh" <RK@knightg.com> wrote:

The problem is that Moore ' law is kicking in. Before the summer 50 percent of college students supported Israel, today less the 25 percent do. There are hate crimes against Jews happening in almost every major metropolitan city, now including the US.

We have let this happen. And it's our job to keep another Holocaust from happening. Many of you may think that can't happen, that is extreme. My Grandmother told me over and over again remember no one believed it could happen and everyone thought the government would not allow it to. It took 5 years before the us stepped in, and 12 million dead.

If you pull newspapers from pre Holocaust it seems eerily close to our world today.

What these resources were, he [explained](#),

We have hundreds of collaboration programs between Imams Rabbis and their congregations We have many respected imams who would join former chief rabbi metzker (spelling) rabbi Schneier and non Jews in promoting the Saudi peace plan”.

“Through this campaign we will be helping Israel,” he concluded.

Turning the Tide

Despite the best efforts of Simmons and others, however, American public opinion has, in recent years, begun to [turn](#) against Israel. Young Americans, in particular, are more likely to sympathize with the plight of the Palestinian people and support an independent Palestinian state.

Much of this has to do with the rise of social media and a new generation of activists breaking through the barriers to highlight injustices being carried out by their government. Today, Americans are more likely to see first-hand, unvarnished accounts of Israeli brutality on social media platforms. As veteran political scientist Noam Chomsky [explained](#) to *MintPress* last year, “The veil of intense propaganda [is] being lifted slowly, [and] crucial U.S. participation in Israeli crimes is also coming more clearly into view. With committed activism, that could have salutary effects.”

Nevertheless, U.S. government support for Israel continues to rise. Between 2019 and 2028, it is [scheduled](#) to send nearly \$40 billion in aid, almost all of it military, meaning that American taxpayer funds are contributing to Palestinian oppression and displacement.

Loach was even more upbeat on the issue, telling us that those who stand in the way of justice will be judged poorly by history, stating,

The denial of human rights of the Palestinians is one of the great crimes [of the modern era] and Palestinian rights is one of the great causes of last century and this century. We should all support the Palestinians. If you have any care for human rights, there is no question: the Palestinians have to be supported. And these people who oppose them, in the end, will fade away. Because history will show this was a terrible crime. Palestinians suffered ethnic cleansing of their homeland. We have to support the Palestinians, full stop.”

Those people, however, have no intention of “fading away”, and continue to organize on behalf of the Israeli government. Thanks to the leaked documents, those who care about

Palestinian self-determination have a clearer understanding of how they operate.

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Alan MacLeod is Senior Staff Writer for MintPress News. After completing his PhD in 2017 he published two books: [Bad News From Venezuela: Twenty Years of Fake News and Misreporting](#) and [Propaganda in the Information Age: Still Manufacturing Consent](#), as well as [a number of academic articles](#). He has also contributed to [FAIR.org](#), [The Guardian](#), [Salon](#), [The Grayzone](#), [Jacobin Magazine](#), and [Common Dreams](#).

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