

Celebrities endorse Barcelona mayor decision to cut ties with 'Israel'

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This comes one week after Mayor Ada Colau sent a letter to Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu stating that the Barcelona-"Tel Aviv" 25-year-old twinning agreements would be cut alongside formal ties.



• Actress Susan Sarandon during her trip to Burj Al-Barajneh Palestinian refugee camp in Beirut in March 2019 (*Reuters*)

A statement of solidarity was signed by Hollywood big-names Mark Ruffalo, Susan Sarandon, Viggo Mortensen, and Alia Shawkat supporting the Barcelona mayor's recent decision to sever ties with "Israel" for the mistreatment and murder of Palestinians.

This comes one week after [Mayor Ada Colau sent a letter](#) to Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu stating that the Barcelona-"Tel Aviv" 25-year-old twinning agreements would be cut alongside formal ties.

"I have decided to temporarily suspend relations with the state of Israel and with the official institutions of that state -including the twinning agreements with the Tel Aviv City Council – until the Israeli authorities put an end to the system of violations of the Palestinian people and fully comply with the obligations imposed on them by international law and the various United Nations resolutions. We cannot be silent," she wrote.

More than 50 public and prominent figures also signed the agreement, including Arundhati Roy, Naomi Klein, Angela Davis, Brian Eno, Peter Gabriel, Marianne Faithful, Judith Butler, Ken Loach, Annie Ernaux, and Hanan Ashrawi.

The Hollywood-stamped letter stated, "We, the undersigned, oppose racism in all its forms and uphold the principles of justice and human rights in a holistic way that includes Palestinians. We are morally outraged that powerful governments react to Israel's grave violations of Palestinian rights under international law with empty gestures and expressions of 'concern,' while simultaneously arming, funding and shielding from accountability Israel's decades-old system of injustice and continuing business as usual with it."

So Madrid wants to twin with "Tel Aviv"...

Human rights groups and Palestine activists have praised Colau's decision across social media, with the organization American Muslims for Palestine posting: "It's so promising to see the mayor of Barcelona, among other leaders taking a real stand against Israeli Apartheid."

Even UN Special Rapporteur on the Palestinian Territories, Francesca Albanese, voiced her stance in a Tweet: "It only takes 'one' courageous principled person/people, to start correcting a path of injustice & make history."

However, as expected, pro-"Israel" groups demonstrated frustration, and "Israel's" Foreign Ministry once again used the anti-Semitism card as a weapon of choice to take a hit at any move in support of Palestine. The Ministry said, "The decision gives support to extremists, terrorist organizations and antisemitism," adding: "The friendship between Israel and Barcelona is long-standing, and is based on shared culture and values. Even this unfortunate decision will not damage this friendship."

In a more shocking turn of events, Madrid Mayor José Luis Martínez-Almeida not only opposed Colau's decision but additionally offered a twinning agreement with "Tel Aviv" on Twitter.

"I do not know the reasons why we were not twinned but I think this is a great opportunity to show Tel Aviv and, by extension, the entire State of Israel that Madrid is clear about where it has to be; that Madrid is clear on the right side," he said in a video posted to Twitter. "Madrid is clear that we have to strengthen our relations with a democracy, a State governed by the rule of law like Israel."

Colau said the situation of the Palestinians was an "apartheid crime", denouncing "decades of systematic violations of human rights, the occupation and illegal colonization of Palestinian territories against all the opinions of the United Nations."

As mayor, "I cannot remain impassive in the face of the systematic violation of the basic rights of the Palestinian population," the letter read.

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