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Silence Shatters: Juliette Binoche Takes A Stand for Fatma Hassona

At the 78th Cannes Film Festival, jury president Juliette Binoche delivered a powerful tribute to Fatma Hassona, a Palestinian photojournalist killed in Gaza, transforming her tragic death into a poignant artistic statement of remembrance and resistance.

The cinema community is taking a powerful political stand for Gaza as nearly 400 top film personalities criticize the cinema world for its “silence”. In this atmosphere, Juliette Binoche, president of the jury committee at the Film Festival, paid a prolonged tribute to Palestinian Photojournalist, Fatma Hassona.

“The night before her death, she learned that the film in which she appeared had been selected here at Cannes. Fatma should have been among us tonight,” said Binoche in her speech as jury president during the opening ceremony of the 78th Cannes Film Festival, drawing applause from the audience.

A day before Binoche's homage, a letter titled “In Cannes, the horror Gaza must not be silenced” was published, signed by nearly 400 world-class film personalities. Notable signatories included Ralph Fiennes, Susan Sarandon, Mark Ruffalo, Javier Bardem, Pedro Almodóvar, Yorgos Lanthimos, Richard Gere, Guy Pearce, Cynthia Nixon and many more.

The letter condemned the targeting of civilians by Israel, stating, “More than 200 journalists have been deliberately killed. Writers, film-makers and artists are being brutally murdered.”



Fatma Hassona was a 25-year-old Palestinian photojournalist killed by an Israeli air strike in Gaza, which also claimed the lives of ten of her relatives, including her pregnant sister. Her life and work were featured in the documentary film “Put Your Soul on Your Hand and Walk” by Iranian director Sepideh Farsi, selected for screening at the 78th Cannes Festival.

The film's premiere was met with an emotional standing ovation. Director Sepideh Farsi appeared on stage, holding Fatma's photo, and tearfully stated she had proof that Fatma's death was a “targeted killing”, explaining that “Two missiles fired from a drone sliced through her building and exploded on the floor where Fatma lived, as they had been programmed to do”.

Binoche’s remarks came after she faced criticism earlier in the day for not immediately addressing her stance on an open letter condemning the film industry’s silence over the war in Gaza and the killing of Hassona. At a press conference, she had responded cryptically to questions about her position, hinting she would address the issue later-which she did during the ceremony. Her speech referenced not only Palestinian suffering but also the Israeli hostages taken during the October 7, 2023, Hamas attack, highlighting the complexity of the conflict.

This is not the first time the world of cinema has expressed solidarity with Palestine. Cannes and other international festivals have increasingly become platforms for political discourse, with artists using their visibility to draw attention to global conflicts and humanitarian crises.

At the 75th Berlin Film Festival in February 2025, Hong Kong director Jun Li gave a pro-Palestinian speech that sparked controversial reactions from the audience, despite precautionary measures by the festival and a subsequent police investigation by the Berlin Regional Criminal Office. The Berlinale was the pretext of a longer political crisis in the art world in Germany and across Europe.

Binoche's full remarks captured the essence of artistic resistance. She spoke of creating softness against immense suffering, quoting Fatma Hassona's own poetic words: “My death went through me / the bullet of the assailant went through me / and I became an angel / in the eyes of a city / immense, bigger than my dreams.”

“Art remains. It's the powerful testimony of our lives, our dreams, and we the viewers, we embrace it. May Cannes, where everything can change, contribute to that” Binoche concluded.