



By: Tomorrow's Affairs Staff

Israel's war against Hamas - global celebrities will have to take sides this time



Good foreign policy advisers will have a substantial amount of work to do if they are part of teams working for movie and pop culture celebrities. However, their engagement would be a good investment for many stars.

Hamas's terrorist attack on Israel has set off a new tsunami of conflict for influence in the "hearts and souls" market of hundreds of millions of people, more extensive than any concerned government could influence directly.

Former Real Madrid star Karim Benzema is one of the latest celebrities to face a storm of protests for taking sides in the war in southern Israel. In his case, the Palestinian side.

"Our prayers go out to the people of Gaza, victims once again of unjust bombardments that spare neither women nor children", wrote the French national football team striker on X (formerly Twitter), initiating controversies.

What will the French fans say?

In his new professional setting, Saudi Arabia, where he has started his debut season with Al-Ittihad, the worshipped football star does not risk facing repercussions for his opinions regarding the conflict in Israel.

The official state position of Saudi Arabia is similar to that of Karim Benzema, and reflects the opinion of the vast majority of the population, including football fans.

Therefore, the French football star should not worry about his spectacular contract of around \$250 million, which brought him to Saudi Arabia last summer, along with other major football stars, such as Cristiano Ronaldo and Neymar.

But Benzema will definitely lose some of his reputation with his French fans, as a large part of them side with Israel, the country with the largest Jewish population in Europe.

Karim Benzema has about 20 million followers

on X. That was where he posted his support for the Palestinians - a message in which he did not condemn Hamas's terrorism. That is almost 7 times more followers than French President Emmanuel Macron.

Millions of Benzema's fans follow him on social media for his goals and games, not for politics, which is why other millions follow President Macron.

But when the soccer star steps into the political field, he brings an enormous influence with him, even though his followers do not expect this from their favourite.

Clumsy messages

Dozens of Hollywood actors are in the same position. Music and fashion stars and reality icons dared to express their position regarding the war in Israel.

They do so almost exclusively out of concern for human suffering, opposing war as such, calling for peace and abstinence from any violence.

Their messages are, no doubt, designed with the help and control of communication experts. However, it turns out that the expertise of film, fashion or music advisors is not enough to leap into the arena of political communication.

Gal Gadot, an Israeli actress and model, got into big problems with her audience when she initially posted the statement before deleting it under the pressure of angry reactions from her homeland - "killing innocent Palestinians is horrific. Killing innocent Israelis is horrific. If you don't feel the same, I think you should ask yourself why that is".

As many as 109 million of her Instagram followers could read her position on the war but also witness her change of mind. Or was it just a withdrawal from an arena where she has no experience and reputational risks outweigh the potential image gains? Gadot later posted an apology and a message expressing full

support for Israel.

Pop star Justin Bieber (292 million Instagram followers) and actress Jamie Lee Curtis (5.5 million) had to correct their messages under pressure from followers because they initially posted photos from devastated Gaza alongside their pro-Israeli messages.

Bella and Gigi Hadid, Israeli top models of Palestinian origin, have problems convincing the public that their views are balanced, unbiased and humane. They have about 150 million Instagram followers.

Neutrality has a cost

The stars are torn between the desire to support their publicity with activism and the risk of receiving a harsh political response. However, the terrorist attacks by Hamas on Israel and the Israeli military response leave them very little room to come out of it with their image intact.

Even those who have firmly taken sides, such as Hollywood star Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson (391 million Instagram followers) or Madonna (19 million) and many others who unequivocally support Israel, will face millions of opponents who share pro-Palestinian views - for example, the numerous football stars of Arab origin in the Premier League.

The war in Israel after the Hamas terrorist attacks has polarised the global public like never before, leaving little room for the usual sugar-coated celebrity messages saying peace is better than war.

Their influence over hundreds of millions globally makes them feel obligated to take a political stand. However, at this point, they will be in trouble if they try not to take sides. Or worse, if they resort to bothsidesism, so popular in the world where they gained their global fame.