

Eurovision Song Contest hit by mass protest against Israel's Gaza genocide

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This year's Eurovision Song contest solicited an outpouring of opposition to Israel's genocide in Gaza. Mass protests, a boycott campaign and actions taken by presenters and artists were prompted by Israel's participation in the contest, with Eden Golan performing a song legitimising the Zionist regime's crimes even as the Netanyahu government prepares a ground invasion of Rafah.

The event in Malmo, Sweden, was surrounded by tens of thousands of demonstrators from midweek up until Saturday evening's final.

With over 15,000 protesting outside the final held at the Malmo Arena Saturday evening, the 68th annual event was held under a regime of censorship, intimidation and police repression to try and keep an estimated 180 million viewers globally from being troubled by the reality of what demonstrators called the Genocide Song Contest.

Malmo was placed under lockdown, with the *Times of Israel* told by "defense sources" that "The head of Israel's Shin Bet security agency led a delegation of officials from the VIP protection department to Malmo in Sweden last week to coordinate security arrangements for Israel's participants in the Eurovision Song Contest..."

Every move made by Israel's entrant, Eden Golan, during her two weeks in Malmo was shadowed by a convoy of 100 armed police officers, backed up by Israel's Shin Bet security services.

Protesters brought homemade placards and banners including one depicting a dead child in a shroud, lying atop a coffin, reading, "Eurovision is celebrating genocide". Thousands of armed police were mobilised, arresting and removing many protesters from the vicinity of the arena, including renowned Swedish climate change protester Greta Thunberg.

The European Broadcasting Union (EBU) refused demands that Israel be excluded from the competition, pontificating about its supposed non-political agenda—a

pose made ludicrous by the decision two years ago to ban Russia from competing over the war in Ukraine. This stance was made more ludicrous by Israel submitting a song, *October Rain*, referring to the October 7 Hamas incursion that was allowed to take place and then used as a casus belli for a military campaign that has decimated Gaza, killed over 35,000 Palestinians and left a further 80,000 injured.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu praised 20-year-old Golan for performing despite "contending with an ugly wave of anti-Semitism." The reality is that intimidation was directed against audience members and other participants in order that she could perform her propaganda in support of mass murder and ethnic cleansing.

Any expression of support for the Palestinians was banned inside the Malmo Arena, including the Palestinian flag and the wearing of keffiyehs. Despite this every appearance by Golan throughout the competition was loudly booed, accompanied by chants of "Free Palestine!"

Eric Saade, a former Eurovision contestant from Sweden whose father is Palestinian, opening the semi-final stages of the competition Tuesday, appearing on stage with his wrist wrapped in a keffiyeh. Saade wrote on social media that the EBU was "disgraceful," saying it had disseminated "Israeli propaganda."

On Thursday, as well over 10,000 people protested in Malmo, Eurovision's broadcast of the second semi-final was interrupted on Belgium state TV by broadcasting union members with an onscreen message condemning Israel's "human rights violations" and in support of Palestinians. VRT's coverage was interrupted by a protest message on the screen which read:

"This is a union action. We condemn the human rights violations of the Israeli state. Israel is also destroying the freedom of the press. That's why we temporarily interrupt

the transmission.

“We are convinced that the State of Israel is committing genocide and it is therefore scandalous that there is an Israeli candidate in the Eurovision song contest.

“We hope to send a signal to the Israeli government to stop the fighting and killings, allow international observers and the press to enter [Gaza] and sit down for a negotiated solution.”

An action was taken again on Saturday during the final with the union members stating on X “we condemn human rights violations”.

Britain has seen some of the largest demonstrations in the world against Israel’s genocide, with hundreds of thousands regularly protesting in London. This was reflected in a massive response to the call for a boycott of the event that saw the BBC lose almost a quarter of its viewers of Eurovision compared with last year—an average of 7.64 million people, compared to 9.98 million.

Around the UK, high profile Eurovision viewing parties, massive in the LGBTQ+ community—including the largest in London—were called off.

At a press conference Golan was asked by a Polish journalist: “Have you ever thought that by being here you bring risk and danger for other participants and the public?” The moderator, Swedish presenter Jovan Radomir, sat alongside Golan, said to her, “you do not have to answer that question of you don’t want to.” At this point Netherlands’ entrant Joost Klein, who had been sat with his top over his head as a protest at Israel’s involvement, asked, “why not?”

Ireland’s entrant, Bambie Thug, revealed in an Instagram post that “After my first dress rehearsal, I was asked to remove both free Palestine and ceasefire in Ogham [an ancient form of Gaelic] from my outfit.” The artist added that the EBU “eventually agreed” to let the word ceasefire remain, but “About an hour before my call time, I was informed that they had an internal meeting and ceasefire was no longer acceptable, and if I didn’t remove this I would not be allowed on stage.”

Bambie Thug said, “I cried with my team” on hearing that Israel would take part in the final of the competition. “I am pro-justice and pro-peace and this will never change, I only hope with a platform I can reach more people’s ears. My heart and prayers are with the people of Palestine.

“To be clear, being pro-Palestinian does not mean I am antisemitic, it means I am anti-war, anti-occupation, anti-oppression, and anti-killing of innocent civilians and children!! Everyone born into this world should have the

right to a home, safety, water, food, freedom, and compassion.”

Alessandra Mele, Norway’s points spokesperson, withdrew from that role for the final. The 21-year-old, who competed for Norway last year, said she could not participate while there is a “genocide going on”. Last year’s runner-up, Kaarija, declined to represent the jury this year stating, “I have decided not to participate as the spokesperson for the Finnish jury in tonight’s Eurovision finale.”

Greek singer Marina Satti was seen theatrically yawning and falling asleep at the Eurovision press conference when Golan was speaking.

In response to a call for a boycott, nine participants—the UK’s Olly Alexander, Ireland’s Bambie Thug, Norway’s Gate, Portugal’s Iolanda, San Marino’s Megara, [competition winner] Switzerland’s Nemo, Denmark’s Saba, Finland’s Windows95man, and Lithuania’s Silvester Bel—issued a statement calling for a ceasefire in Gaza, and stating that they did not feel comfortable being silent.

During the final on Saturday evening, extraordinary measures were put in place to try to sanitise the event of any opposition. Golan was subjected to a torrent of boozing, but the *Times of Israel* reported that “Boos during Golan’s performance were muted by anti-boo technology deployed by the EBU.”

It reported that “During the jury vote awarding portion of the competition, Israel’s representative, Maya Alkulumbre, was loudly booed by some in the audience, and some even booed each time any country awarded any points to Israel.”

A contest staged as a showcase for Zionist apologetics saw Golan’s by turns turgid and melodramatic dirge come fifth, thanks to a sizeable public vote. The *Jerusalem Post*, anxious to counter the outpouring of support for the Palestinians, described this as representing the voice of “the silent majority.” It was a vote by a reactionary and animated minority wanting nothing more than to declare their sympathy with the perpetrators of a horrific crime.



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