

Eurovision 2025—Thousands of cultural workers, music fans condemn Israel's genocide in Gaza

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Thousands of musicians, artists and music industry professionals, including many past participants in the European Song Contest (known as Eurovision), have condemned the genocide in Gaza and the Israeli government's attempt to whitewash and divert attention from its murderous campaign via its participation in the annual event.

Four thousand artists from five Nordic countries signed a declaration calling for Israel to be excluded from the 69th Eurovision, currently underway in Basel, Switzerland. In the statement the artists declared that their demands were

in response to Israel's mass killing and starvation of Palestinians in Gaza ... as well as Israel's 75-year occupation of Palestine and apartheid policies. In the meantime, the International Court of Justice has brought charges of genocide against Israel. We strongly feel that Israel should not have the opportunity to polish its public image on the Eurovision stage and thus use it to cover up and continue its human rights abuses.

The declaration goes on to condemn the hypocrisy of the European Broadcasting Union, which broadcasts the event worldwide. In the wake of mounting protests against the Israeli state last year and this, the EBU has claimed it has no power to intervene, because, it argues, the Eurovision Song Contest is non-political. This is despite the fact that in 2022 Russia was excluded from the contest following its incursion into Ukraine.

The anti-genocide declaration reads:

The EBU has so far not taken a decision to exclude Israel from the competition. This is inconsistent with, and in stark contrast to, their swift decision to exclude Russia following the invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

The call for the exclusion of Israel from the 2025 Eurovision was echoed by last year's winner, the Swiss singer Nemo. In a separate action, over 70 former Eurovision contestants signed an open letter calling for Israel and its national broadcaster KAN to be banned from the contest as a protest against Israel's "genocide against the Palestinians in Gaza and the decades-long regime of apartheid and military occupation against the entire Palestinian people."

Those signing the letter include former Eurovision winners Charlie McGettigan, Salvador Sobral and Fernando Tordo, as well as British singer Mae Muller, Canadian singer La Zarra, former Turkish representative Hadise Açıkgöz and last year's competitors Ásdís María (Iceland) and GÅTE (Norway). The last two artists took part in last year's competition, which the letter describes as "the most politicised, chaotic and unpleasant in the competition's history."

Eurovision 2024 took place in Malmö, Sweden, against a background of public protests over the genocide and the intimidation of artists attempting to defend the cause of the Palestinian victims of the Israeli onslaught.

Ireland's entrant in 2024, Bambie Thug, revealed that she was not allowed to wear her original costume for the event which featured the words "Free Palestine" and "Ceasefire" in ancient Gaelic. She told reporters "I cried with my team" on hearing that Israel would take part in the final competition.

Bambie Thug said:

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.

In 2024, also in defiance of the EBU's alleged no-politics policy, the Israeli contestant was allowed to sing the song, "October Rain," referring to the October 7 Hamas incursion. The song, renamed "Hurricane" at the last moment under pressure from protesters, was met by a chorus of booing from parts of the audience.

This year, another provocation is planned, with Israeli singer Yuval Raphael presenting the song "New Day Will Rise" on May 15, otherwise known on the calendar as Nakba Day, the annual commemoration of the ethnic cleansing of over 700,000 Palestinians in 1948. Raphael was attending the Nova Sukkot Gathering music festival attacked by Hamas forces on October 7 2023, the pretext seized upon by the fascistic Netanyahu regime to implement the long-planned Gaza genocide.

In addition to the protests by artists, the general public has made its feelings clear. At the official opening ceremony on May 11, held in front of Basel's city hall, large crowds of pro-Palestinian demonstrators assembled waving flags and calling for Israel's exclusion. Some demonstrators blocked the tram transporting the Israeli delegation.

During the first semifinal, held at Basel's city's concert hall, members of the audience raised Palestinian flags in a show of solidarity with Gaza's civilian population.

Protesters in the Swiss city have also raised the role of Moroccanoil, which has been the main financial sponsor of Eurovision since 2020. Despite its name, Moroccanoil is an Israeli-owned hair care products company.

In response to the demonstrations and protest, the organizers of Eurovision 2025 have mounted a large security operation, deploying around 1,300 police officers across the city. Additional support is being provided by the Swiss army, with French and German security forces also in attendance.

For its part, the Israeli intelligence agency Shin Bet released details on Tuesday of its own extensive security preparations to protect the Israeli delegation at the Eurovision Song Contest. Code-named "Operation Hurricane," Shin Bet agents will accompany the Israeli contestant every step of the way in Basel. The singer has also been given a special security zone for appearances at the contest.



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