

Five countries boycott Eurovision Song Contest protesting inclusion of Israel

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Spain, Ireland, Slovenia, the Netherlands and Iceland are to boycott the 2026 edition of the Eurovision Song Contest in protest at Israel's inclusion in the competition.

Last week Israel was allowed to continue competing in Eurovision after a general assembly meeting of the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) in Geneva. The EBU, consisting of 123 public broadcasters from 56 countries, runs the Eurovision Song Contest. The meeting was called to approve rules that the organisation claimed would "reinforce trust and protect neutrality of [the] Eurovision Song Contest".

This was a ruse to ensure that there would be no vote on the participation of Israel, which carries on its genocide of the Palestinians in Gaza.

The rules were approved with EBU members voting in a secret ballot over the new measures, but without a vote on any country's participation in next year's event.

In an EBU statement that followed, the only mention of Israel/Gaza was an acknowledgment that "Ahead of the vote, there was a wide-ranging discussion where Members expressed a variety of views on participation in the Eurovision Song Contest. Many Members also took the opportunity to stress the importance of protecting the independence of public service media and the freedom of the press to report, not least in conflict zones such as Gaza."

Spain's national broadcaster RTVE, the Dutch AVROTROS, Ireland's RTE, and Slovenia's national broadcaster immediately said they would not take part in the 2026 contest. On December 10, Icelandic national broadcaster RÚV 10 joined the boycott.

The decision by the national broadcasters in the five countries with a combined population of around 78 million people is in response to mass opposition to

Israel's genocide and the complicity of the major powers in it.

Spain and the Netherlands have witnessed some of the largest protests in their histories. In the Netherlands in May this year, 100,000 protested, in June 150,000 and just weeks ago, in October, 250,000. A mass demonstration of 500,000 was held in the Spanish capital Madrid in October.

The Eurovision Song Contest is the most watched live non-sporting event in the world, regularly pulling in well over 150 million viewers. In addition to those viewing from the European nations who take part, the show is also broadcast in the US and Australia. The 2023 edition held in Liverpool in the UK attracted a viewership of 162 million people, accounting for 291 million hours watched.

Spain's decision to pull out of the contest is a major blow. Along with Germany, France, Italy and the UK, it is one of the "Big Five" nations providing the largest financial backing for Eurovision. This status grants them automatic entry to the finals.

In announcing their boycott, each broadcaster issued statements explicitly citing the genocide in Gaza, the humanitarian crisis, and the two-faced claims of the EBU to adhere to "neutrality" in the face of such crimes.

Spain's RTVE declared: "The situation in Gaza, despite the ceasefire and the approval of the peace process, and Israel's use of the contest for political purposes, make it increasingly difficult to maintain Eurovision as a neutral cultural event... We cannot celebrate music while thousands of children are being killed. Eurovision must reflect values, not double standards."

Ireland's RTÉ stated: "Ireland's participation remains unconscionable given the appalling loss of

lives in Gaza and the humanitarian crisis there which continues to put the lives of so many civilians at risk. RTÉ remains deeply concerned by the targeted killing of journalists in Gaza during the conflict and the continued denial of access to international journalists.”

The Netherlands’ AVROTROS added: “Reliability, independence and humanity are our compass.”

Slovenia’s RTVSLO: “At the EBU General Assembly... RTV Slovenia presented its position that if Israel were to participate in the Eurovision Song Contest—due to the genocide in Gaza—it would not participate in the competition... On behalf of the 20,000 children who died in Gaza.”

Stefan Eiriksson, director-general Icelandic national broadcaster RÚV said, “There is no peace or joy connected to this contest as things stand now”, adding that Israel’s participation had “created disunity among both members of the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) and the general public”.

The boycotts are the culmination of growing outrage at Israel’s participation in Eurovision, which have escalated over the past two years. Millions abhor the inclusion of Israel, which allows the country’s Zionist regime to present itself as a “normal” member of the “international community” and exploit the event to sanitise its war crimes.

At this year’s event held in Basel, Switzerland, thousands of musicians, artists and music industry professionals—including many past Eurovision participants—condemned the genocide.

Four thousand artists from five Nordic countries signed a statement demanding Israel’s exclusion “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. “They noted that the “International Court of Justice has brought charges of genocide against Israel” and protested: “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.”

Eurovision’s claim that it operates based on strict neutrality and that it is a “non-political event” are a transparent fraud.

In 2019, the Icelandic act Hatari was fined by the EBU for displaying the Palestinian flag. Belarus, an ally of Russia, was excluded in 2021 for submitting

politically charged songs and for suppressing media freedom.

Most significantly, in 2022, Russia was banned within days of its invasion of Ukraine on the grounds that its participation would “bring the competition into disrepute.”

Yet when faced with the genocidal assault on Gaza waged since October 2023, documented by international organizations and recognized as a crime against humanity, the EBU has not only refused to exclude Israel but has actively shielded it from criticism.

In 2024 and 2025, the EBU allowed Israel’s participation despite its war crimes, and in disregard for growing concern at corruption: including Israel rigging the televoting system, resulting in high public vote scores received by the Israeli entries Eden Golan (2024) and Yuval Raphael (2025).

Following this year’s competition an investigation by the EBU found that videos from a YouTube account—without any obvious links to the Netanyahu government—had been pushed to people in European countries who could vote for Israel in both the Eurovision finals and semi-finals. The videos urged people to back Israel’s Eurovision entry Yuval Raphael, reminding them that they could vote “up to 20 times”. The investigation revealed that Lapam, the Israeli government’s advertising agency, paid Google to promote the videos.

It is highly likely that there will be further boycotts of next year’s contest, given that Israel is a global pariah.

Britain has seen millions demonstrating in its cities nationally since the genocide began. The British Broadcasting Corporation is among the state broadcasters backing Israel’s inclusion, under conditions where a poll published following the EBU vote found 82 percent of respondents in the UK believe Israel should be excluded from Eurovision in 2026. Almost seven in 10 (69 percent) said that if Israel is permitted to take part, the UK should withdraw from the contest.



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