

# 1,100 artists call for boycott of Eurovision over Israel's Gaza genocide

“There are moments in time when passive silence is not an option”

**Paul Bond**  
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More than 1,100 artists have signed an open letter calling for a boycott of next month's Eurovision Song Contest in Vienna, Austria, over the inclusion of Israel “despite its ongoing genocide in Gaza.”

The letter was produced by No Music For Genocide, which calls for a cultural boycott of Israel in line with the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement. Among the signatories are Brian Eno, Roger Waters, Macklemore, Hot Chip, Peter Gabriel, Paul Weller, Sigur Rós, Kneecap, Paloma Faith, and Massive Attack. Former Eurovision winners Emmelie de Forest and Charlie McGettigan have also signed.

Eurovision is the world's biggest music event. Last year's event in Basel, Switzerland, attracted 166 million viewers.

The letter is a powerful rejection of this year's event, stating it is “being used to whitewash and normalise Israel's genocide, siege and brutal military occupation against Palestinians.” It aligns itself “with Palestinian calls for public broadcasters, performers, screening party organisers, crew, and fans” to boycott the event until the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) “bans complicit Israeli broadcaster KAN.”

There have been repeated protests at Eurovision's continued inclusion and promotion of Israel despite its genocidal onslaught against the Palestinians. Some 15,000 people protested the 2024 final in Malmö, Sweden, while 4,000 artists from five Nordic countries signed a letter calling for Israel's exclusion from the 2025 contest.

The EBU, which broadcasts the event worldwide, has insisted in the face of these protests that the contest is non-political. This letter, like last year's, highlights the hypocrisy by pointing to the different treatment given to Israel and Russia. Israel is “celebrated onstage... while Russia remains banned for its illegal invasion of

Ukraine.”

These responses, the letter states, “have removed any illusion of Eurovision's claimed ‘neutrality’.” The EBU announced in 2022 that Russia's participation would “bring the competition into disrepute,” yet, as the letter notes, “more than 30 months of genocide in Gaza—alongside ethnic cleansing and land theft in the besieged West Bank—aren't considered sufficient to apply the same policy to Israel.”

The letter asks, “How can any performer or Eurovision fan in good conscience participate... amidst US-Israeli plans for hyper-surveilled concentration camps in ‘New Gaza’? There are moments in time when passive silence is not an option.”

The letter is a moving assertion of opposition to the ongoing genocide and the cultural devastation that accompanies it, and a significant recognition of the requirement for artists to speak out.

“We refuse to be silent when Israel's genocidal violence soundtracks and silences Palestinian lives. When children in Israeli prisons endure beatings for humming a tune. When all that's left of nearly every stage, studio, bookshop and university in Gaza is piles of rubble, under which slaughtered bodies still await recovery and proper burial.

“As artists, we recognise our collective agency – and the power of refusal. We refuse to be silent. We refuse to be complicit. We call on others in our industry to join us. And we stand in solidarity with all principled efforts to end complicity in every industry.”

It concludes simply: “No stage for genocide. #BoycottEurovision.”

The letter applauds the withdrawal of broadcasters from Spain, Ireland, Iceland, Slovenia, and the Netherlands, and the national selection finalists who have committed to

refuse to go to the event. It explicitly harks back to the boycott movement against apartheid South Africa as its model.

The EBU continues to back Israel's participation in the most disingenuous and hypocritical way. In December, Eurovision Executive Supervisor Martin Green wrote to fans saying "many of you feel strong emotions at this time," but insisting the contest could only continue if it was guided "by our rules first and foremost."

This followed a vote at which a "large majority" of its general assembly members agreed there was no need for a further vote on Israel's participation. They decided that the 2026 contest "should proceed as planned [i.e. with Israel], with the additional safeguards in place."

Two-thirds of the EBU representatives opposed any further discussion of Israel's participation, with 23 percent voting against and 10 percent abstaining. The BBC said it supported the "collective decision made by EBU members," and would go ahead with the broadcast, as did German broadcaster SWR.

The "safeguards" agreed by these votes were measures designed to prevent the disproportionate promotion of songs by governments and third parties to influence voting. They also included changes to the public voting system, restricting viewers to 10 votes rather than 20. This followed accusations that the Israeli government had broken the spirit of the contest's aim to bring people together by encouraging citizens abroad to use their 20 votes for the Israeli entry.

The EBU's consistency in applying its claimed no-politics policy only to critics of Israeli genocide is clear in its stance to Israeli entries over the last two years.

In 2024, the entry was originally called "October Rain," referring directly to the October 7 Hamas incursion. Under pressure from protesters, Eden Golan's song was renamed "Hurricane" at the last minute, but still allowed to go ahead. It was met with loud booing from parts of the audience.

For the 2025 contest, Yuval Raphael sang "New Day Will Rise." Raphael had attended the Nova Sukkot Gathering festival attacked by Hamas forces on October 7, 2023, that the fascistic Netanyahu government used as its pretext for the long-planned assault on Gaza. Israeli commentators noted that the videos for the song were a "direct continuation" of that for "October Rain/Hurricane."

In a further provocation, Raphael presented the song on May 15, Nakba Day, which marks the ethnic cleansing of more than 700,000 Palestinians in 1948.

Raphael came second in the final, amid criticism of Israeli governmental lobbying for votes. Israeli President Isaac Herzog, declaring himself "fully and actively committed" to ensuring Israel is "represented on every stage around the world," said he hoped the contest would continue to promote "culture, music, friendship between peoples and cross-border cultural understanding."

Apart from the Palestinians, who should be wiped out.

The open letter drew attention to Herzog's role in lobbying broadcasters over Israel's continued participation, noting that he had also been named in South Africa's submission to the International Court of Justice for incitement to genocide.

Many of the signatories have long records of opposition to the oppression of the Palestinians, and have been targeted for this. Macklemore's consistent criticism of the genocide, for example, led to a smear campaign by *Der Spiegel*.

The sustained campaigns against artists criticising the genocide make the courage of their continued response all the more noteworthy. The Irish rap group Kneecap, who have been dragged through the courts under baseless terrorism charges, wrote on social media, "We have paid a price for speaking out—canceled gigs, legal cases, visa bans—and we would do it again tomorrow. Silence is complicity."

Massive Attack's Robert Del Naja was among the 523 people arrested this month for carrying placards reading "I oppose genocide; I support Palestine Action", after a High Court ruling that the proscription of that organisation was unlawful. Like Kneecap, Del Naja spoke of the pressures on him as a musician—"there was a lot of trepidation around how we might not be able to travel and get visas"—but felt the action was necessary.

After three years, and with growing popular support, opponents of genocide must increasingly face the underlying cause of the escalating brutality before them—the capitalist system.



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