

Press Information on the Protests against Israel's Participation in the Song Contest

16.Mai



15.5. Song Protest: Nakba-Tag



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“No Stage for Genocide”: Broad mobilization against Israel’s participation in the Eurovision Song Contest in Vienna

Under the slogan “No Stage for Genocide,” numerous international mobilizations are taking place in Vienna against Israel’s participation in the song contest. The event is normalizing the ongoing genocide and displacement. It is a sign of complicity by the EU and Austria in war crimes.

On May 15, the “Song Protest” will be organized as an artistic counter-event at Maria-Theresien-Platz. More than 50 artists and international speakers will take part. The event is supported, among others, by Roger Waters and Michael Barenboim. On May 16 at 14:00, a large demonstration is planned at Christian-Broda-Platz. The protest will move toward the Stadthalle, where the Eurovision Song Contest is taking place. The goal is to drown out the event with the call “No Stage for Genocide!” So far, around 2,500 people have signed the online petition “Save the Song Contest – Exclude Israel NOW!” Initiator Rafael Eisler emphasizes: “With Israel’s participation, the Song Contest risks engaging in artwashing. We therefore demand Israel’s exclusion.”

The Spanish Minister for Youth and children, Sira Rego, is sending a solidarity message: ““The genocide continues before the eyes of the world. The complicity of the Eurovision organizers in allowing the whitewashing of this violence through Israel’s participation is deeply shameful. The people of Europe refuse to be complicit in the normalization of barbarity.”” A message of solidarity also comes from French Member of the European Parliament Rima Hassan. Topoke, moderator of the Song Protest and a Congolese-Austrian artist, emphasizes: “International solidarity, especially from the Global South, shows the strength of resistance against oppression and apartheid.”

The Song Protest also aims to make Palestinian culture visible on Nakba Day, which is being systematically erased through genocide. Noura Hashem will represent an element of this culture at the protest with “BISAN Dabke.” The Jewish anti-Zionist activist, filmmaker, and professor Haim Bresheeth, who is in Austria for the Mauthausen commemoration, stresses in connection with Nakba Day: “There is a direct link between 1948 and today. Israel is a settler-colonial state. It uses violence to seize more and more land and restrict all the rights of Palestinians. As people who were once displaced, we, as anti-Zionist Jews, clearly oppose the ongoing displacement and destruction.”

Press conference:

May 12, 10:00 a.m.

Spektakel, Hamburgerstraße 14

1050 Vienna

Song Protest on May 15: The Stage Against Genocide

On May 15, Nakba Remembrance Day, artists and activists are organizing the “Song Protest” starting at 4:00 PM—a “stage against genocide” in public space. The exact location of the mobile trailer stage remains uncertain due to bureaucratic hurdles but will be announced in time.

At the center of the Song Protest are Palestinian voices and those of artists and activists in solidarity. The Palestinian diaspora choir Shadat commemorates the displacement and ethnic cleansing in Palestine during the Nakba, as well as Israel’s ongoing land appropriation. The well-known violinist Michael Barenboim will also take part in the Song Protest. His participation has been confirmed, among others, by Dinis Mota, who had been considered as a Portuguese candidate for the Eurovision Song Contest but joined the protests due to Israel’s participation. The Song Protest is also supported by international figures such as Roger Waters.

Large demonstration on May 16 toward Wiener Stadthalle

On May 16 at 2:00 PM, a demonstration involving a wide range of groups will take place at Christian-Broda-Platz and proceed toward the vicinity of the Wiener Stadthalle—the venue of the Eurovision Song Contest. Under the slogan “No stage for the legitimization of genocide – Freedom for Palestine,” the organizers are countering what they describe as a propaganda show with a mass demonstration: “It should be the chants of ‘Free, free Palestine’ that leave a lasting impression on the Eurovision Song Contest,” the call states. Katrin Glatz, a child psychologist who has worked in Gaza, will speak during the demonstration and the Song Protest about the trauma experienced by children in Gaza.

Networking with Europe-wide protests

The Vienna mobilization is supported by a wide range of groups and activists and is part of a broader European mobilization. This includes, among others, the concert “United for Palestine” on May 12 in Brussels, the festival “EnDvaSvetova” in Slovenia, and the festival “La Musica contro il Silenzio” in Florence on May 15.

Call for the Song Protest – No Stage for Genocide (May 15)

On Nakba Day, international bands, musicians, and activists will sing and perform for the freedom and the right to self-determination of Palestinians.

Every day, Palestinians are being killed in the Gaza Strip, vital aid supplies are being withheld amid the destruction, and well-known humanitarian organizations are being banned. At the same time, violence by the occupying forces is escalating in the West Bank and Jerusalem. Nevertheless, Israel is being given a stage as part of the song contest, as if there were no starvation, no ethnic cleansing, no occupation.

Art as resistance

The Eurovision Song Contest thus becomes part of a propaganda apparatus through which genocide is normalized. Art and culture are not apolitical—they can also serve resistance. Just as the international boycott movement contributed to the fall of apartheid in South Africa, today there is a need for a boycott of Israel—including in the arts.

Five European countries—Spain, Ireland, Slovenia, Iceland, and the Netherlands—are already boycotting the song contest. ESC trophies are being returned in protest. This demonstrates the effectiveness of civil courage. While the ESC excluded Russia from the competition, international law apparently does not apply in the case of Israel.

We will not let this stand.

On May 15, the day commemorating the ethnic cleansing of Palestine (Nakba), which in 1948 led to the violent displacement of 750,000 Palestinians—our solidarity event will take place. With loud voices, we bring an alternative to the stage. International artists and activists come together to stand up for justice and to commemorate the Nakba.

The Song Protest demonstrates that culture does not have to serve propaganda but can contribute to resistance against systematic injustice.

Exclude Israel from the Song Contest! No stage for genocide!

The call has been signed by around 400 artists and activists. In addition, more than 1,000 well-known artists have supported the boycott call launched by the international BDS movement.

Supporters include:

1. Roger Waters, musician, co-founder and bassist of Pink Floyd, known for his influential music, legendary albums, and global socio-political engagement. He co-founded the iconic rock band Pink Floyd in 1965.
2. Sira Rego, Spanish minister for Youth and Children, Izquierda Unida
3. Michael Barenboim, a French-German classical violinist and violist, known for both his solo career and his involvement in major international music projects, and for combining classical repertoire with 20th- and 21st-century music.
4. Sira Rego, Spanish Minister for Youth, Izquierda Unida
5. Yanis Varoufakis, economist, author, and former Greek finance minister, co-founder of DIEM25
6. Rima Hassan, French Member of the European Parliament
7. Helga Baumgarten, Professor (emeritus), prominent scholar of Middle East politics, author, Stuttgart, Germany

8. Ramzy Baroud, internationally published journalist, author, and political commentator, Palestine/United States
9. Miguel Ríos, one of the most well-known figures in Spanish rock since the late 1960s
10. Alberto San Juan, actor, playwright, and theatre director, winner of the 2007 Goya Award for Best Actor for "Under the Stars"
11. Rodrigo Sorogoyen, Spanish director and screenwriter, known for award-winning films such as *The Realm* and *As Bestas*, internationally recognized and nominated for an Academy Award
12. Marcus Staiger, widely known in German hip-hop journalism and political media, journalist, author, activist, Berlin, Germany
13. Ulrike Guérot, political scientist, author, and former professor of European politics, Germany
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Moderation:

Nina Maleika

Singer, host, and activist. She previously hosted MTV Unplugged, among others.

Topoke

Patrick Bongola, Austrian-Congolese rapper, musician, and political activist.

Program of the Song Protest:

Musical/Artistic contributions:

Shatat

Palestinian diaspora band with 18 members

Ahmed Eid

Palestinian musician, runs an aid project in Ramallah

Michael Barenboim

German classical violinist and violist

Dinis Mota

Portuguese musician who had been considered as a candidate for the song contest and withdrew due to Israel's participation

Anna Grob and The Leftovers

Vienna-based punk and grunge band

Banda POPolare dell'Emilia Rossa

Metalworkers' band from Modena that co-organized the general strike

IZRAA

Vienna-based singer with roots in Lebanon, Palestine, and Tunisia

Maika Makovski

Spanish singer, musician, and composer

Célia Mara
Brazilian-Austrian singer and composer

Drag Sau
The Dragsau collective is a drag collective consisting of people with disabilities
Speeches and political contributions:

Katrin Glatz Brubakk
German-Norwegian child psychologist and trauma expert who has worked in Gaza

Lidón Soriano
Spanish activist from the largest solidarity organization RESCOP (Red Solidaria contra la ocupación de Palestina)

Sami Ayad
Doctor, Nakba survivor, member of the Palestinian community

Dalia Sarig
Jewish anti-Zionist initiative Vienna

Ronnie Barkan
Co-founder of "Boycott from Within," Israeli dissident, and co-organizer of the First Jewish Anti-Zionist Congress in Vienna

Helga Baumgarten
German political scientist, retired professor at Birzeit University north of Ramallah in the West Bank

Mauricio Lizarazo Prada
Tour manager and producer, founder of Pachamama Culture and co-founder of Salon de Baile at the Fusion Festival

Rafael Eisler
Activist of the Global Sumud Flotilla and social media journalist

Call for the Demonstration No Stage for Genocide – Freedom for Palestine | Vienna
Demo 16.05.2026

While Palestinians in the Gaza Strip are being killed daily despite an alleged “ceasefire,” while aid supplies continue to be withheld, homes, schools, and infrastructure lie in ruins, there is no drinking water available in Gaza, and displacement in the West Bank continues to escalate, Israel is being offered a propaganda stage as part of the Song Contest—as if there were no genocide, no apartheid, no occupation.

This once again shows that art and culture are part of the propaganda through which genocide is justified and normalized. They are part of a media apparatus that erases Palestinian experiences, defames and criminalizes Palestinians and the Palestine movement, while Israel is given the opportunity to polish its image amid the glitz and glamour of the Eurovision Song Contest. Through the mass mobilization of the international Palestine movement, which culminated last year in political general strikes in Spain and Italy, five European countries—Spain, Ireland, Slovenia, Iceland, and the Netherlands—have already announced a boycott of the Song Contest. The ESC trophies of Nemo and Charlie McGettigan are also to be returned in protest against Israel’s participation.

This shows how important it is to maintain pressure on those in power against supporting Israel. As part of the international solidarity movement, we therefore demand the exclusion of Israel from the Song Contest in Vienna and reject the unconditional support of politics and media for genocide and occupation. According to official estimates, hosting the Song Contest will cost the city of Vienna around 23 million euros—23 million that the city is saving elsewhere, for example in minimum income benefits for child supplements, public transport, or alternative cultural and political initiatives such as the Amerlinghaus. Repression and racism against the movement and the “general suspicion” against Muslim people in Austria are intended to cover up the government’s attacks on the social system and democratic rights. Let us show that in Austria, too, the majority stands against complicity with oppression and genocide. Let us counter the propaganda show with a mass demonstration: it should be the chants of “Free, free Palestine” that leave a lasting impression on the Eurovision Song Contest. Let us mobilize together against the whitewashing of Israeli genocide in front of the Eurovision Song Contest venue.

We demand:

- Exclusion of Israel from the ESC; no propaganda stage for perpetrators of genocide and imperialists. Sanctions against Israel, and an end to Austria’s complicity in genocide and Israel’s oppression.
- An end to all political, economic, and military cooperation that supports the occupation. Genocide, war crimes, apartheid, and illegal
- Self-determination instead of foreign rule – immediate and complete end to the illegal occupation and settlement activities, and an immediate end to displacement in the West Bank. No Austrian police or soldiers to Gaza!
- Lifting of the Israeli blockade on humanitarian aid deliveries to the people in Gaza. Stop the Israeli blockade of goods and resources for rebuilding destroyed infrastructure.
- Accountability and prosecution of those responsible for genocide and violations of international law. Release of all arbitrarily detained Palestinians from Israeli prisons.

Supporting organizations:

<https://www.grossdemowien.at/2026.05.16/>

Speakers include:

1. Sala Abdel Shafi, Palestinian ambassador
2. Katrin Glatz, child psychologist, formerly deployed in Gaza with Doctors Without Borders
3. Lidón Soriano, Spanish activist from the largest solidarity organization RESCOP (Red Solidaria contra la ocupación de Palestina)
4. Wilhelm Langthaler, Palestine Solidarity Austria
5. Andreas Wimmer, Voices for Neutrality
6. Sonja Kopf, Revolutionary Communist Party (RKP)
7. Echo Vinasha Lex, Linkswende
8. Andreas Wimmer, founder and spokesperson of "Voices for Neutrality"
9. Richard Walter, participant in the Global Sumud Flotilla, who was unlawfully detained by the IOF in international waters off Greece

Moderation:

- Ruba Darwish, Palestine Solidarity Linz
- Franziska Harbich, Palestine Solidarity Austria