

SCREEN OUT ISRAELI APARTHEID!

Filmbase is hosting "Israeli Film Days" organised by the Israeli Embassy in Ireland. Given Israel's intensifying occupation and colonisation of Palestinian territory, this festival which aims at "re-branding" Israel and whitewashing its grave violations of international law and Palestinian rights should not find a home in a publicly funded Irish cultural institution.

"We see culture as a propaganda tool of the first rank, and do not differentiate between propaganda and culture."

- Nissim Ben-Sheetrit, former deputy director general of the Israeli foreign ministry

In 2005 over 170 Palestinian civil society organisations called for a campaign of Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) against Israel until it complies with international law. Palestinian artists and cultural organisations also called for a cultural boycott as part of the BDS campaign. Some 214 Irish artists – including filmmakers and actors – have also signed a "pledge" undertaking to boycott Israel.

Israel's Cultural Censorship

- In 2002, Israel prevented the Palestinian poets Zakaria Mohammed and Ghassan Zaqtan from travelling to Ireland to read their work. Also in 2002, after only three showings, Mohammad Bakri's film *Jenin, Jenin* was banned by the Israeli Film Board.
- In May 2009, Israeli soldiers prevented the opening of the Palestine Festival of Literature in Jerusalem. Last April, the venue hosting the final event of 2011 Festival was attacked with tear gas by the Israeli army.
- In May 2010, the Israeli authorities deported Spain's most famous clown, Ivan Prado, who was planning to establish a clown festival in Ramallah.
- In summer 2011, Israeli commandos assaulted the Freedom Theatre in occupied Jenin, arresting several of its members.
- This month, Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu suspended Israel's financial contribution to UNESCO, (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) which oversees the protection of the world's cultural heritage. This was "punishment" for UNESCO voting to admit Palestine, and constitutes an Israeli cultural boycott of most of the world.
- Most recently, the Israeli Communications Ministry closed down the joint Palestinian-Israeli radio station "All for Peace", claiming that its message of reconciliation "incited against Israel".



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THE POWER OF BOYCOTT



Jenin's Freedom Theatre, assaulted by Israeli military in Summer 2011

Israel seeks to impede the production and dissemination of Palestinian culture and to stifle the expression of dissident views within Israel. It sees culture as a weapon in the battle to “re-brand” itself as a civilised, cultured nation rather than a belligerent apartheid state, an occupier of Palestinian territories that deprives those under its control of all rights, and discriminates against its Palestinian citizens in countless ways.

The issue is not whether the films to be shown in Filmbase themselves constitute propaganda for the Israeli state, but that this festival is sponsored by a regime that is a serial violator of international law and humanitarian law, that has illegally annexed East Jerusalem, occupied the Palestinian West Bank and Syrian Golan Heights, and cruelly assaulted and besieged the defenceless Gaza strip.

At the first Palestine Festival of Literature, the Egyptian novelist Ahdaf Soueif commented: “Today, we saw the clearest example of our mission: to confront the culture of power with the power of culture.” Israel's "Brand Israel" campaign seeks to exploit culture to whitewash brutal power.

In 2005 a director of the Israeli foreign ministry stated that “We see culture as a propaganda tool of the first rank, and do not differentiate between propaganda and culture.”

Filmbase has sold out to the Israeli regime by offering itself as a vehicle for this propaganda. It has sacrificed the power of culture to the culture of power.

We urge everyone not to serve as tools for the Israeli government's scheme to use culture to rebrand itself. Instead we invite you to join the international boycott campaign, until the people of Palestine enjoy the same access to culture and the same basic rights that we do.



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