

Press Release Swiss Artists

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Categories: Boycott culturel

We Refuse to be Complicit More than 150 artists in Switzerland pledge to boycott the state of Israel

The Swiss BDS group, supporting the Palestinian Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) call, announces that over 150 artists and cultural actors in Switzerland joined to pledge their support to the boycott of Israel, denouncing the apartheid and colonization regime Israel imposes on Palestinians:

“We refuse to be complicit. Conscious of our political responsibility as artists and as citizens, we express our support for the boycott, and we pledge not to present our works in Israel, for as long as persist the occupation and the colonization of the Palestinian territories, for as long as equality is denied Palestinian who are citizens of Israel, and for as long as the right of return of the refugees is refused.”

Among the signers are the internationally acclaimed filmmakers and Cannes Laureates Claude Goretta and Alain Tanner, the theater directors François Rochaix (winner of the Swiss Theater Prize “Anneau Hans Reinhart”) and Jean Grädel (Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres), as well as the actor Jean-Luc Bideau (formerly of the Comédie française), choreographers Fabienne Berger et La Ribot, and international performance artists Yan Duyvendak et Massimo Furlan. Also among the signers violoncellist François Guye (Soloist of the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande) and painter Guido Nussbaum (noted in 2011 for his lifework by the Swiss federal office of Culture).

This is the first time in Switzerland that a large group of artists and cultural agents responds to the call of the Palestinian Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI). The signers of the declaration commit to forego artistic events in Israel as well as projects that seek to improve Israel's image and cover up its apartheid policies. The declaration is directed at the state of Israel and its proxies, and does in no way target Israeli artists as such.

During the course of 2011, the Swiss BDS group called on artists, cultural institutions and the public to boycott the festival Culturescapes Israel, and the related Swiss Season inviting Swiss artists to Israel. Both of these projects contravened the PACBI boycott guidelines and were the largest Israeli propaganda effort ever launched in Switzerland through the domain of culture.

We are energized by the success of the campaign, which facilitated an intensive and respectful debate among artists and within civil society in Switzerland regarding the way Israel uses culture to further its politics of colonization, called attention to the Palestinian struggle for fundamental rights, and raised awareness to the strategy of boycott and our responsibility to use it. The artists' boycott pledge is one of the

results of this debate. The Swiss BDS group continues to push forward this conversation and calls on artists and cultural agents in Switzerland to join the boycott of Israel and contribute to the rising international non-violent campaign of putting pressure on Israel until it complies with international law.