

FINDINGS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE AYBIR REPORT “ATTITUDE OF THE CULTURAL AND ARTISTIC COMMUNITY TOWARDS GENOCIDAL ISRAEL”

Full report in Turkish available at <https://aybir.org/yayinlar/rapor/kultur-sanat-camiasinin-israil-saldirganligi-karsisindaki-tutumu-dunya-ve-turkiye/>

FINDINGS

The Israeli brutality in Gaza, which has been going on for nearly eight months, is neither new for Israel and its supporters, who have drowned the region in blood and tears for more than 75 years, nor is it new for the people of Palestine and Gaza, who have responded to each and every cycle of oppression with an epic resistance every time. However, the diversity, continuity and depth of the reactions from the world public opinion to this brutality that came after October 7, a period during which not only civilians but also the entire infrastructure, especially culture, art, history and education, were targeted, are new, as is the possibility that October 7 could be a milestone for the Palestinian resistance and ultimately its liberation.

It is the duty of every conscientious person not to leave the possibility of October 7, 2023, being a milestone, so to speak, to chance, and not to leave the entire burden of the resistance to the Palestinians in general and the Gazans in particular. This report aims to contribute to the fulfillment of this duty by documenting the attitude of the culture and art community towards Gaza and recording it collectively, and by developing policy recommendations based on the report findings.

When the reactions of the culture and art community in the world and Turkey regarding the genocide committed by Israel against the Palestinian people are examined, some basic findings have been reached. The main findings that can be deduced as 12 items are as follows:

1. As in many areas such as international relations, politics, economy, etc., the pro-Israel lobby economically and psychologically dominates the fields of culture and arts with powerful organizations. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the Zionist lobby has established a monopoly in these fields.

Steps should be taken to eliminate the monopoly that the Zionist lobby has established over artists and art institutions. In order to break the monopoly established by the pro-Israel lobby, which economically and psychologically supports the genocide, in the world and in Türkiye, there is a clear need to mobilize the capital that supports peace and justice.

2. The majority of artists who are sensitive about other issues with respect to women, children and human rights and who try to raise awareness by organizing various campaigns at every opportunity have not raised their voices adequately against the massacre of innocent civilians since October 7, 2023.

The fact that some artists and professional organizations, who have taken on the role of human rights activists in many cases, have not spoken out against the massacre of women, children and innocent civilians in Palestine is a hypocritical attitude that needs to be brought to the agenda. Artists and professional organizations who participate in actions carried out under the name of so-called human rights, make statements and support activist groups should be informed about Israeli aggression, raise awareness and be encouraged to take action.

3. There are thousands of foundations, associations, initiatives etc. established worldwide to defend animal rights and protect the environment and nature. It is seen that the artists who work

in these organizations, which were established to increase social awareness and raise awareness, have not made a strong statement openly criticizing Israel, which has committed all kinds of war crimes and genocide, since October 7, 2023.

The fact that artists who organize campaigns together with animal rights activists for stray animals, participate in environmental events with environmental activists and even take part in protests that have reached the point of political violence have not spoken out against the massacre that has been happening in front of everyone's eyes for months indicates a serious duality in attitude. It is important to inform and warn artists who support these structures that serve capitalism and Zionist ideology in the background and who are the advertising face of these campaigns.

4. It has been observed that artists who want to react to the genocide implemented by Israel are afraid of being accused of anti-Semitism.

After the Second World War, Zionism came up with the idea of “anti-Semitism” in order to create space for itself in the international arena. In order to combat Zionist thought, it is necessary to prevent it from instrumentalizing anti-Semitism. The cunning of equating criticism of what Israel does as a state with a hate crime should not be given credit; publications should be made that will neutralize the accusation of anti-Semitism that the Zionist lobby uses to isolate those who do not think like it, and mechanisms should be established to provide legal support to people of culture and art.

5. It has been observed that the reactions to Israel’s aggression are mostly individual, and that there has been no institutional reaction from art and professional organizations that is strong/sufficient to affect international public opinion.

Professional organizations, institutions and organizations need various resources both to exist and to continue their existence. The Zionist lobby provides economic support to professional organizations and institutions that have the potential to create international public opinion, as well as networks that will give them international respect and reputation. Institutional structures that need the overt implicit support of Zionist lobbies in order to exist and survive are supported in proportion to their silence. Despite this system that blocks the culture and art community, it is very valuable that many artists in almost every field of culture and art show individual reactions.

6. Although there is an explicit commandment in the Jewish holy texts, “You shall not kill,” no reaction has been observed in this context from Jewish art and culture people and institutions.

Although there are groups among Jews who oppose the Israeli occupation and the war crimes it has committed, and even the formation of Israel as a state, and give reactions, albeit weakly, it is noteworthy that there has been no similar reaction from Jewish artists in Turkey and around the world.

7. It has been determined that institutional reactions against the war mostly come from Western countries, while institutional reactions from Turkey are almost non-existent.

In Europe, professional organizations and civil society organizations stand out with their deep-rooted institutional structures. In Turkey, it can be said that civil society organizations such as foundations, associations, and professional organizations have not yet completed their institutionalization process and are still managed by individual reflexes. Institutional decision-making in Turkey seems more difficult than in Europe. Apart from this, when the rate of civil society organizations in Europe is compared to the rate of civil society organizations in Turkey, it is seen that the society in Europe is more conscious and willing about civil organization.

The difficulty of the culture and arts community in Turkey in responding adequately to the genocide should be evaluated from various perspectives. In this context, the reasons behind the decrease in this support over time, despite the fact that the Palestinian cause has been embraced by different ideological groups throughout history in Turkey, should be determined. The cost of thinking differently on some political issues should not be imposed on the Palestinian Cause. In standing against Israeli aggression, minimum commonalities should be preserved and ways to increase cooperation in the fight against Zionism and imperialism should be sought.

8. Individual reactions from the culture and arts community in Turkey regarding the genocide that Israel has been implementing in Palestine are insufficient in terms of creating public opinion.

Individual reactions from artists regarding the genocide that Israel is implementing against the Palestinian people are unable to create public opinion because they are scattered and unsystematic. Since the meaning of the messages of the artists is implicit (it is not understood what they are condemning and why they are supporting which idea), the messages are insufficient in creating an agenda. In order to reach a wide audience and create a strong impact; simple, plain and clear expressions are needed.

9. When the content analysis of the reaction messages coming from the culture and arts community in Turkey is made; it is seen that the perpetrator is not clear and the messages mostly contain general expressions.

It is seen that most artists use general expressions in their reaction messages to Israel and that although the act is criticized, the perpetrator is never mentioned. It is thought that artists are hesitant to publish messages that openly condemn Israel and support Palestine. Behind this hesitant attitude of artists lies the "threat of isolation" from the pro-Israel lobby. Artists who face the threat of isolation from the pro-Israel lobby face many professional risks, ranging from not being able to act in commercials, losing their roles in TV series and movies, not being able to find a suitable hall to screen their films, not being able to find a stage for a concert organization, not being able to find a publishing house to print their books, and not being able to participate in international fairs. In addition, it is thought that some artists associate support for Palestine with supporting the Turkish government and its policies. It is seen that these artists, who lack historical knowledge about the Palestinian issue and think that everything started on October 7, 2023, either do not express any opinions about the Israeli genocide or avoid clear and explicit expressions in their messages in order not to appear to support the government.

10. It is seen that the vast majority of the reactions from the Turkish culture and arts community come from the name of Israel's bombing of the Gaza Hospital; In later times, it has been observed that most artists and institutions have remained silent in the face of Israel's genocide and massacres.

Although international law guarantees that some critical structures will not be touched even in times of war, Israel's bombing of the hospital where the wounded were being treated has been met with a great reaction in Turkey as well as in the world public opinion. Although the genocide attempt started on October 7, many artists in Turkey gave their first anti-Israel message after the bombing of the Gaza Hospital on October 17, 2023. In an environment where millions of people react by saying "this is too much to bear", it can be said that artists with millions of followers and fans react with two basic reflexes. The first of these is that the artist is disturbed by Israel's attack on the Gaza hospital, which is already reflected in the content of the message and the text. The second situation is that the artist with a large fan base thinks of making a statement in line with his general tendency in order not to receive a reaction from his fan base. This idea also makes itself felt in the published texts.

11. Russia was banned from many international cultural and artistic organizations in 2002, citing the Russia-Ukraine war as the reason. Demands to ban Israel from international cultural and artistic organizations due to the massacres it carried out in Palestine were not met.

In order to break the pro-Zionist monopoly that economically and morally supports the genocidal acts of Israel in the world and in Turkey, in the entire field of culture and art, from producers to broadcasters, capital supporting peace and justice should be mobilized and supported. For example, the failure to achieve full results in events such as Eurovision is a result of the influence of Zionist capital and lobbies on politics, media and professional organizations.

12. While there are various initiatives by western artists and institutions regarding the banning of Israel from international culture and art organizations, no initiative has been encountered from artists and institutions/organizations in Turkey.

Artists and professional organizations in different parts of Europe, who argue that art should not be associated with war, massacre and genocide, have launched signature campaigns to ban Israel from international organizations. Although the actions taken by many artists, professional organizations and representatives of civil society organizations who advocate that Israel be banned from art events on the grounds that it has clearly committed war crimes have not changed the outcome, they show that the Zionist lobby has lost ground in the field of culture and art.

While many artists, institutions and organizations in Europe want Israel to be banned from international organizations, no artist, institution or organization from Turkey has made a statement in this context. Turkey stands by the Palestinian people due to its national and moral interests. It is expected that artists and representatives of institutions and organizations participating in national and international organizations on behalf of Turkey will take a stance in line with the national interests of the country. Criteria studied carefully should be taken into consideration when assigning artists and professional organizations to participate in these organizations on behalf of the country.

POLICY, ATTITUDE AND BEHAVIOR RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the above findings, the following policy, attitude and behavior recommendations can be shared with all relevant people, especially the culture and art community.

1. In the face of inhumane situations such as massacres and genocide, where human rights are fundamentally violated and nature and all elements in nature are harmed, everyone in society is expected to be sensitive, react and prevent what is happening. The artist is the one who should be at the forefront and pioneer the society in such situations. The artist should find the power to take a stand against war crimes in the spirit, morality and philosophy that makes him an artist without needing any other reminders.
2. In order to break the pro-Zionist monopoly that economically and morally supports genocide in the world and in Turkey, in the entire culture and art field, from producers to publishers, capital that supports peace and justice should be mobilized and supported.
3. Although there have been recent breakthroughs in conventional visual news broadcasting in Turkey and the Gulf countries, there is a need to establish new platforms that have the power to feed public opinion, primarily digital networks, or to increase the influence of existing ones. Threats, pressures and mobbing aimed at curtailing the rising reactions against the Israeli genocide from the culture and art community can be neutralized with platforms, professional organizations, companies and products to be produced in this area. Moreover, the need for cultural and art investments that will pull the world out of the Zionist trap is not

limited to Gaza. In order for the efforts to yield positive results, investments of a size and dynamism that will meet the needs in the relevant areas and the establishment of institutions are essential.

4. Some culture and art people prefer to declare that they stand with the Palestinian people without stating that the Israeli administration and army are the ones who carry out occupation, massacre or genocide. Condemnations made without mentioning the owner and perpetrator of the evil are inadequate. The perpetrator of any genocide should be told openly that you are committing genocide. The culture and art circles, which have been content with incomplete condemnation until now, should clarify their stance by openly stating that Israel is committing occupation, massacre and genocide, as has already been decided by international courts.
5. Campaigns should be conducted to ensure that culture and art people who individually react to Israel's occupant, massacred and genocidal attitude receive strong public support. For this purpose, there is a need for individual sensitivities, as well as tasks that fall on civil society organizations and central and local governments:
 - a. Civil society organizations should create platforms, organize events; they should implement practices that prevent the reputation, employment and income losses of art and culture people reacting Israel's aggression.
 - b. In parallel with our country's stance against the Israeli genocide, public units, especially the Ministry of National Education, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and local governments, should take sensitive artists reacting Israel's aggression into consideration in their support for the field of culture and art.
 - c. The umbrella organizations in the field of culture and art, especially the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism, should organize events that bring together artists who support Palestine in our country and abroad.
 - d. The "sister city" agreements made by local governments in Türkiye with Israeli local governments should be cancelled. Thus, these agreements, which mainly focus on folklore, culture and art, should be prevented from being used by Israel as a tool to cover up the occupation and genocide it has been actively undertaking for over a year.
 - e. Individuals and civil society organizations should demand, through various methods within the scope of citizenship rights, that central and local government units give priority to those who react to the Israeli genocide in their cultural, social and artistic activities.
 - f. In order to isolate lawless, occupying and genocidal Israel in the international arena and to make the boycott sustainable in every way, all cooperation with Israel in the field of culture and art should be cut off. The cultural boycott will provide moral support to the Palestinian resistance and constitute a strong response against Israeli occupation policies.
6. In addition to supporting cultural and artistic people who react individually, it is extremely important to approach those who have difficulty reacting despite wanting to do so with an encouraging tone without using accusatory language. Activities and publications should be carried out with the acceptance that if the entire cultural and artistic community obtains sufficient information, they will condemn war crimes and genocide.
7. Publishing houses, production companies, directors, producers, communication institutions, organizers and professional organizations should create environments where Palestinian writers can share their feelings, thoughts, observations and experiences through festivals, biennials, concerts and exhibitions. In addition, permanent cultural and artistic works such as

movies, music, cartoons and theater should be produced that deal with Israeli brutality and the noble resistance of Palestine.

8. The difficulty of the culture and arts community in Turkey in responding adequately to the genocide is an issue that needs to be evaluated from various perspectives. In this context, the reasons behind the decrease in this support over time, despite the fact that the Palestinian cause has been embraced by different ideological groups throughout history in Turkey, should be determined. The cost of thinking differently on certain issues should not be incurred in the Palestinian Cause. Minimum commonalities should be preserved in standing against Israeli aggression and ways to increase cooperation in the fight against Zionism and imperialism should be sought.
9. Artists' reactions to Israel's occupying, massacring and genocidal attitude should be disseminated in a way that will find a response in all countries of the world. In this context, the relevant units of our institutions such as the Maarif Foundation, Yunus Emre Institute, Diyanet Foundation and TİKA, especially our Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which has representations in countries around the world, should undertake a role within the framework of legislation and conditions.
10. Sustainability is important in standing against occupation, massacre and genocide, as in every field. Measures should be taken to ensure the sustainability of the pro-Palestinian artist stance against Israeli aggression. To this end, professional organizations, cultural and art associations, and international humanitarian organizations that artists are members of should determine roadmaps. New professional organizations should be established when necessary.
11. With the organization of local and regional artists, the biggest declaration of the century titled "Global Art Objection to Israel's Aggression and Genocide in Palestine" should be prepared and announced to the public worldwide, with a certain number of artists from each country signing it.
12. In addition to continuing their reactions to Israel's occupier, massacred, and genocidal practices on an individual, local, and national scale, people in the arts and culture sector should also voice their voices louder and in a way that will yield results, in the presence of international organizations such as the United Nations, the European Union, the Arab League, D-8, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the G-20, and the Organization of Turkic States.
13. The process of moving Jews to Palestine and nationalizing them was realized due to persistent effort of Jewish capital and lobbies and the strong support of Western countries. The Israeli occupation policy, which has been going on for over 75 years, is also supported by the same forces. Therefore, it is clear that Palestine is fighting the greatest liberation struggle of our century. Support in the field of culture and arts is of vital importance in terms of strengthening the Palestinian resistance. In addition to revealing Israel's oppression, this support should also show the strength and resilience of the Palestinian resistance. With the idea that support in the field of culture and arts emphasizes this resistance and resilience and is more valuable than pointing to Israeli oppression, it is important to focus on productions and policies in the field of culture and arts in this direction.
14. The support of culture and arts people is important in continuing the product and company boycott, which so far has been the most effective reaction against genocidal Israel. For this reason, people of culture and art such as poets, writers, screenwriters, musicians, painters, theater and cinema actors should contribute to the sustainability of the boycott by sharing their sensitivities in the boycott of products and brands that support the genocide.