

Tunis 11 December 2023

The Director of Goethe Institute  
Country: Tunisia  
Address: 6 Rue du Senegal-1002-Tunis Belvédère

Dear Andrea Jacob,

As creatives and cultural practitioners who have had some engagement with the Goethe Institute and/or German cultural organisations in the past, we are extremely alarmed by the complicity of the German government in Israel's brutal attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure in Gaza. This includes attacks on Gazan colleagues in the arts, their families and their livelihoods.

Furthermore, we are deeply dismayed at the increasing number of creative colleagues around the globe who are being victimised by German authorities and/or German cultural institutions because of their public support for the human rights of Palestinians, or for their criticism of the impunity and brutality of the Israeli state and its security forces.

We have always respected Germany's commitment to human rights generally and its commitment to freedom of expression in particular, but its diplomatic, military and financial support for Israel when it is clearly committing war crimes, and Germany's suppression of criticism of the Israeli, have led many creatives in the Global South to reconsider our positions and relationships with Germany and with its cultural institutions.

We note, among others,

1. the cancellation of the award ceremony for Palestinian writer, Adania Shibli, at the Frankfurt Book Fair
2. the pressures on the respected Indian cultural theorist and curator Ranjit Hoskote who was part of Documenta 16's search committee, but who resigned amidst a controversy linked to his support for Palestinians
3. the cancellation of the fourth Photographic Biennial in Mannheim due to Facebook posts sympathising with Palestinians by one of the curators – the highly respected Bangladeshi photographer, Shahidul Alam - which the organisers consider to be anti-Semitic
4. the cancellation of the exhibition by the – Jewish – artist Candice Breitz by the Saarlandmuseum because of her expression of sympathy for the Palestinian people

5. the reconsideration of the Peter Weiss Prize for author Sharon Dodua Otoo because of her support for the BDS position on a cultural boycott of Israel

We have also noted the silence of the German government in Israel's deliberate targeting of journalists and their families, medical personnel and international aid workers in Gaza.

We understand that Germany believes itself to have a historical responsibility to Jewish people because of the holocaust, but we do not at all understand why this should mean that Palestinian women, children, youth and civilians need to pay the price for Germany's past crimes against humanity, with Germany now complicit in new war crimes, this time, against the Palestinian people. We also understand Germany's sensitivity to anti-Semitism, but we believe that it is a fundamental mistake to equate criticism of the Israeli state and its security forces with anti-Semitism; on the contrary, we believe that the current brutality being committed by the Israeli forces will lead to a rise in anti-Semitism around the world!

As creatives and as human beings with conscience, we cannot abide by such impunity, such inhumanity and such suppression of human rights.

First, then, we ask that you convey these sentiments to your government.

But then, more specifically, in order to inform the position of creatives with conscience regarding current and future relationships with the Goethe Institute, could you please answer the following questions – either as the representative of Goethe Institute in this country or in a public statement by Goethe Institute's headquarters in Germany (and please could these answers be provided soonest, but by 20 December 2023 at the latest):

1. Does the Goethe Institute – as an institution funded by the German government – have an independent position regarding the war on Gaza, or is it obliged to abide by the position of the German government?
2. If the Goethe Institute has an independent position, what is its position regarding
  - 2.1 Israel's assault on Gaza and
  - 2.2 the suppression of freedom of expression by creatives who are critical of the Israeli state's brutality towards Palestinians
3. Does the Goethe Institute support human rights and freedom of expression for ALL people?
4. Are there limitations to freedom of expression that the Goethe Institute supports/implements e.g. does the Goethe Institute support the right of creatives to criticise and draw cartoons related to Islam, but does not support the right of creatives to criticise Israel?
5. Given the cancellation of German cultural events linked to Palestinians and Palestinian sympathisers, does the Goethe Institute scrutinise artists and potential partners now, and/or will the Goethe Institute in future scrutinise potential partners to determine if they have public or private sympathies towards Palestine and/or if they have criticised Israel?
6. Will the Goethe Institute continue to support projects that promote and defend freedom of expression?

7. Will the Goethe Institute engage with partners in the respective countries in which it is located to debate these and related issues, or are its positions non-negotiable?

We look forward to having clear positions from the Goethe Institute as soon as possible.

Yours in humanity and in the assertion of human rights for all,

Names of at least 5 creative/s and/or organisation/s supporting this letter in the country:

**Cyrine Gannoun and Basma El Euchy theatre el Hamra**  
**Habib Belhedi Ciné Theatre le Rio**  
**Sofiane et salma ouissi Association l'Art Rue**  
**Mourad Sakli Altissimo consulting Ex minister of culture**  
**Chiraz Latiri Presidente du Programme Tasir Ex minister of culture**  
**Olfa Arfaoui FeMENA Network**  
**Ahmed Amine Azouzi Expert in culture**  
**Ghazi Zagbani Espace L'artista**  
**Ayoub et Khaoula Jaouadi Association les Artivistes**  
**Selim Ben safia Association Al badil**