

Artists call for Israel to be excluded from Venice Biennale

A newly formed activist group known as the Art Not Genocide Alliance (ANGA) has published a petition calling for Israel to be excluded from participating in this year's 60th Venice Biennale. "No Genocide Pavilion at the Venice Biennale," the online open letter demands. So far, it has over 6,500 signatories. ANGA describes itself as an international group of artists, curators, writers, and cultural workers.

The Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott (PACBI), which endorsed the letter, said: "Any official representation of Israel on the international cultural stage is an endorsement of its policies and of the genocide in Gaza."

PACBI argued that there were precedents for such a move: The Biennale banned apartheid South Africa from 1968 onwards, and in 2022 it banned Russian artists connected to the country's government, aljazeera.com reported.

The letter outlines the politics surrounding the Israel-Hamas conflict as well as the huge loss of human life in Gaza, with the number of deaths recently estimated to be as high as 250 Palestinians per day. It also notes that apartheid South Africa was banned from exhibiting at the Biennale from 1968 until 1993, when apartheid rule was abolished.



"Art does not happen in a vacuum and cannot transcend reality," the letter reads. "While Israel's curatorial team plans their so-called 'Fertility Pavilion' reflecting on contemporary motherhood, Israel has murdered more than

12,000 children and destroyed access to reproductive care and medical facilities. As a result, Palestinian women have C-sections without anesthetic and give birth in the street." "Any work that officially represents the

state of Israel is an endorsement of its genocidal policies," the letter concludes. Among the letter's signatories are Adam Broomberg, a Berlin-based South African photographer who is representing the Palestinian organization Artists and

Allies of Hebron in an official collateral event. Others include American artist Nan Goldin, Moroccan artist Yto Barrada, British artist and writer Hannah Black, Basel-based performance artist Sophie Jung, the Italian curatorial platform LOCALES Project, and Karachi Biennale CEO Nilofur Farrukh.

The letter has also been signed by the Palestine Museum U.S., which had its proposal for "Foreigners in their Homeland," an exhibition showcasing work by 24 Palestinian artists, rejected by the Biennale as an official collateral event. The show will go ahead at Venice's Palazzo Mora as an unofficial collateral event, opening on April 20.

"We think that they should allow "Foreigners in their Homeland" into the exhibit because it meets all the qualifications they were looking for," said the museum's director Faisal Saleh. He also noted that Palestine does not have a national pavilion because Italy does not recognize Palestine as a sovereign state. Of Israel's planned exhibition for the biennial, Saleh said: "This is not just an exhibition by Israeli individuals. It's the State of Israel that's making the exhibition. That is unacceptable when Israel is perpetrating a fully-fledged genocide against the people of Gaza."

The Biennale did not immediately respond to a request for comment on ANGA's petition.

Iranian artists taking part in Malaysia's Qur'an exhibition

An exhibition of Qur'anic arts is underway in Putrajaya, Malaysia, with the participation of representatives from a number of Muslim countries including Iran. According to Iran's Cultural Attaché in Malaysia Habib Reza Arazni, a number of Iranian artists have showcased their works at the expo, IQNA wrote.

Other participating countries include Iraq, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, and Nigeria, he said.

The Qur'anic arts exhibition is a major Qur'anic event in Malaysia that was inaugurated by the country's Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, he stated.

Arzani noted that the Asmaul Husna Taswasheeh group from Iran, headed by Seyed Mohammad Qassem, had a performance at the opening ceremony of the exhibition, which drew praise from the audience.

He said the Iranian artworks on display at the exhibition are in such fields as calligraphy, *tazhib* (illumination), *minakari* (painting and coloring surfaces of metals and ceramic tiles), and *qalamzani* (a type of Iranian metalwork art).

He added that the Malaysian prime minister visited Iran's pavilion at the expo and was gifted a silk-woven rug with his photo on it.

He referred to the calligraphy of Qur'anic verses by the participating artists from different Muslim countries and said Iran's Khodabakhsh Chaman, for example, beautifully calligraphed verses from Surah Al-Balad.

The exhibition was launched on February 23 and will run through March 3.



Iran ready to facilitate health tourism with Qatar: *Minister*

Iranian Health Minister Bahram Einollahi expressed Iran's readiness to facilitate health tourism with Qatar.

During a meeting at the Middle East Forum on Quality and Safety in Healthcare in Doha, Einollahi highlighted the importance of regional cooperation in combating diseases, emphasizing

Iran's capability to assist various countries in the region, particularly in infectious disease management. In addition, Einollahi underscored the readiness of Iranian universities and medical science faculties to engage in scientific, research, and educational partnerships with Qatar, reported IRNA. He proposed enhancing

cooperation in health tourism, exchanging professors and students, implementing health measures, and jointly addressing health challenges.

In response, Qatari Health Minister Hanan Mohamed Al Kuwari expressed Qatar's eagerness to strengthen regional and collaborative ties with Iran in the health sector.

Al Kuwari emphasized that the exchange of professors in medical sciences between the two countries would contribute to advancing public health and medical knowledge.

Furthermore, she advocated for facilitating health tourism initiatives, demonstrating a mutual commitment to expanding cooperation in the health domain.

Iran, Afghan artisans to display works in Tehran



Arts & Culture Desk

A group exhibition of *tazhib*, which is an art of illuminated manuscripts, titled "Daughters of Shahmama," featuring 40 artworks by Iranian and Afghan artists, will be held at Tehran's Niavaran Cultural Center. Supervised by Shakila Alemi and supported by the Art Credit Fund, the third *tazhib* exhibition will take place at Niavaran Cultural Center from March 2, ISNA wrote.

Nineteen Iranian and Afghan girls will showcase 40 artworks, aiming to motivate and boost the self-confidence of female artists. The group also seeks to promote the growth and elevation of the art of *tazhib* while fostering cultural cooperation between Iran and Afghanistan. *Tazhib*, an ancient art, has long history in Afghanistan.

The opening ceremony, scheduled for February 29, will be attended by Saad Khan, the head of the ECO Cultural Institute, among others. Art enthusiasts can visit the exhibition from March 2 to 8.

India picked special guest for 35th TIBF



India will be the special guest at the 35th Tehran International Book Fair (TIBF) to be held from May 8 to 18, announced the head of the TIBF. Iran's Deputy Culture Minister for Cultural Affairs Yaser Ahmadvand said that the cultural agreement, focusing on books, was signed between

the officials of the TIBF and the New Delhi World Book Fair. This cultural exchange is expected to foster dialogue between the cultures of Iran and India. In return, Iran will be the special guest at the New Delhi World Book Fair in 2025, as outlined in the agreement.