

# Arab Groups Withdraw from Frankfurt Book Fair After Award for Palestinian Author Pulled

Sharjah and Egyptian publishing associations cancel attendance after Adania Shibli's planned prize scrapped

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*Arab publishing bodies have withdrawn from a German book festival after a planned award to a Palestinian author was scrapped over the [Israel-Gaza war](#).*

[Adania Shibli](#) was due to receive the LiBeraturpreis literature prize at the Frankfurt International Book Fair on Friday. It was for the German translation of her novel *Minor Detail*, which centres on a Palestinian Bedouin woman raped by Israeli soldiers in 1949. Sharjah Book Authority and the Emirates Publishers Association were set to participate in the event.

However, in a statement reported by German public broadcaster Deutsche Welle, award organisers LitProm said the ceremony was cancelled in agreement with Shibli.

"No one feels like celebrating at the moment," the statement added.

On Wednesday, the fair's director Juergen Boos condemned Hamas's attack in Israel and said "special events" were planned to "make Jewish and Israeli voices particularly visible" at the event.

It is unclear if the groups' cancellations are in response to the award's scrapping or Boos's comments.

However, Sharjah Book Authority said in an online statement:

"Given the recent announcement by the organisers of the Frankfurt Book Fair, we have decided to withdraw our participation this year.

"We champion the role of culture and books to encourage dialogue and understanding

between people. We believe that this role is more important than ever.”

Sheikha Bodour Al Qasimi, chairwoman of the Sharjah Book Authority, shared the statement on LinkedIn with her own comment.

“I strongly believe in the fundamental rights of civilians worldwide to live in safety, free from the dangers of armed conflict,” she said. “In times of crisis and conflict, I strongly advocate for the role of books, culture, authors, book fairs, intellectuals, and artists in promoting unity, de-escalating tensions, and making diverse voices heard.

“By doing so, we can improve the prospects for peace and harmony.”

The Emirates Publishers Association, which has offices in the authority’s headquarters, released a similar statement confirming it will not attend.

The Arab Publishers’ Association in Egypt, a non-profit organisation that represents more than 1,000 regional publishers, has also withdrawn.

In a letter addressed to Boos seen by *The National*, the association’s president Mohammad Rashad expressed regret “at the biased and unjust stance towards the tragic events in the region”.

“We certainly denounce any attack on a civilian from any side but viewing the case from a single angle and accepting this injustice that the Palestinian people have been subjected to for decades is a big mistake,” Rashad wrote.

“Moreover, your statements don’t reflect at all the exceptional Arab relationships that have developed over the years between Frankfurt Book Fair administrations and Arab publishers. In light of your position, the Arab Publishers’ Association has decided to withdraw its participation.”

*Minor Detail* was originally released in Arabic and translated into English in 2020.

In its statement announcing the award, before Hamas’s attack on Israel last week, the LitProm association said Shibli’s novel was a “rigorously composed work of art that tells of the power of borders and of what violent conflicts make of people”.

The work was nominated for the International Booker Prize in 2021 and America’s National Book Award in 2020.

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*Featured image: Palestinian author Adania Shibli agrees with the cancellation, German media reports. Alamy*

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