

‘Music of Dead, Bombed-out Buildings Must be Heard’ — Gaza Artists Hold Anti-Eurovision Concert in Building Destroyed by Israeli Attack

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At the front gate of the residential Al-Qamar building, which was flattened by an Israeli air strike a week ago, a Palestinian band arrives with their instruments. They sweep away small stones and building remnants as they prepare to start their concert. The concert in Gaza is being held at the same time as a similar concert was starting just 70 kilometers away in Tel Aviv’s Charles Clore park to kick off the week-long Eurovision song contest.

Holding a guitar, Mohammed Ukasheh, 28, launches into “Gaza Message” with his both of his drummers. The song calls for the Eurovision contest to be boycotted.

The band start singing lyrics of the Lebanese iconic singer Wadih al-Safi, under the destroyed building’s crumbling roof.

Oh, immigrants return... Homeland is precious
Listen to the voice of Palestine... The voice of blame is loudly

I will write your name my country
Above the sun, that does not sets
Nor my sons neither my wealth
Above your love, there is no love

May god brings back our happiness and laughter
And our home filled in smile and happiness

The seven-story building in the Tel al-Hawa neighborhood in the Gaza City was leveled by six Israeli missiles, when [an anonymous Israeli officer gave all tenants in the building five minutes to evacuate](#). The building had been home to more than 40 residents and commercial tenants including a beauty salon, mini market and tire store.

For the past year, there have been grisly scenes on the Gaza-Israel border where Israel has violently put down the Great March of Return. Palestinian artists called on Eurovision song contestants to boycott the international event that Tel Aviv is hosting this week.

The Gaza Strip-based Palestinian Artists Association said on a brief statement that Israel is using the event to “perpetuate oppression, promote injustice or whitewash a brutal apartheid regime”.

Image on the right: Kamel Musallam (Photo: Mohammed Asad)



The artists cited the killing of more than 60 Palestinian demonstrators at Gaza-Israeli fence on May 14 last year, just two days after Israel won the 2018 edition of Eurovision.

“How can an international event be hosted on the ruins of the Palestinian village Sheikh Munis?,” Kamel Musallam, coordinator of the concert, asked. “Our message to Europe and the US is, both are participating in Gaza bloodshed by taking part in Eurovision,” he added.

Sabreen Juma’a al-Najjar, mother of slain paramedic Razan Al-Najjar, whose killing in June prompted international outrage, was among the dozen of attendees at the Al-Qamar building.

“Israel seeks to whitewashes its lethal acts against the Palestinians by hosting such a musical event, but having a look at one single destroyed building will erase all of Israel’s reputation for democracy and morality,” Juma’a al-Najjar told Mondoweiss. “Why won’t pop superstar Madonna hold her concert at this building, or at the place where Razan was killed near the fence?” she asked.

Image below: Sabreen Juma’a al-Najjar (Photo: Mohammed Asad)



Madonna is scheduled to perform two songs in Tel Aviv to kick Eurovision off [despite calls for her to boycott the show](#).

“Why doesn’t Eurovision arrange an event to let the music of dead, bombed-out buildings, and for the voices of mothers of the slain to be heard?” Juma’a al-Najjar added.

Haaretz has [reported](#) that the Israeli military has deployed “extensive” Iron Dome aerial defense batteries and ordered its forces stationed by Gaza to act with greater “restraint” during the Eurovision competition, which will last until Saturday, May 18.

This follows last week’s Israeli attack on Gaza, where 25 Palestinians were killed in the attacks and 800 homes were destroyed. Four Israeli were killed by retaliatory strikes.

Tuesday is also the first anniversary of the United States Embassy’s move from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, and the bloody mass protest along the Gaza fence, when scores of Palestinians were killed by Israeli fire.

Wednesday is Nakba Day, when Palestinians commemorate the flight and expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees during the hostilities surrounding Israel’s creation in 1948.



A concert in the ruins of the al-Qamar building (Photo: Mohammed Asad)

Jamal abu Arar, 61, was unsure that the local concert could “deliver the message.” Abu Arar said that

“music is divided into two; romance for the rich and the killer, while the sounds of artillery and explosions are only for the poor and the victims.”

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Ahmad Kabariti is a freelance journalist based in Gaza.

Featured image: Children watch the concert in the ruins of the al-Qamar building (Photo: Mohammed Asad)

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