

Open Letter to the Prague City Council, the Prague 8 Municipal Council, and Other Political Representatives in Opposition to Discrimination, Censorship, and Abuse of Power

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Dear Councillors,

We, the undersigned, wish to express our deep concern regarding the increasing efforts by Prague municipal representatives to exert control over the independent cultural sector. In 2024, there were multiple instances where mechanisms intended to prevent extremism—tools that are otherwise necessary and justified—were misused to target the independent cultural sphere and civic initiatives.

At the same time, we want to make it unequivocally clear that we strongly distance ourselves from any form of hatred or anti-Semitism, ensuring there is no misinterpretation of our position.

On September 12, 2024, the Prague City Council adopted Resolution No. 16/12, which expanded the contractual conditions for subsidy recipients in the fields of culture and education to include the following clause: “Applicants who support anti-Semitism, terrorism, racism, or xenophobia must not be involved in any way in events financed by the subsidy in question” (point IV of the resolution). This resolution was introduced in response to the unofficial participation of pro-Palestinian activists in the Prague Pride 2024 parade (point III of the resolution).

On December 18, 2024, the Prague 8 Municipal Council adopted Resolution No. Usn ZMC 045/2024, which called for the application of a similar contractual condition—specifically, the exclusion of applicants supporting anti-Semitism, terrorism, racism, or xenophobia—from all subsidy contracts issued by the municipality (point 2 of the resolution). This resolution was accompanied by a statement from the Prague 8 Municipal Council, which declared that it “condemns the factual support of pro-Palestinian and anti-Israeli terrorism by the Světova 1 z. s. association” (point 1 of the resolution).

The resolution provides no justification or reference to specific factual circumstances. However, recordings of the Council meeting reveal that the Council deemed the display of a Palestinian flag in the window of the Světova 1 gallery—a symbolic gesture of solidarity with the civilian population of Palestine—as an act of supporting terrorism.¹

¹ Palestine and its population have long faced one of the most serious humanitarian crises of our time, resulting from systematic human rights violations and restrictions on basic freedoms (see the [UN report of 8 November 2024](#) documenting that almost 70% of the verified deaths in the Gaza war are women and children).

Supporting and promoting terrorism is a grave criminal offense, as are actions that suppress individual rights and freedoms. However, it is essential to clearly distinguish between legitimate human rights advocacy and acts of terrorism or hate speech. Defending human rights and expressing solidarity with oppressed communities are fundamental to democratic values and should never be misinterpreted as endorsing terrorism or anti-Semitism. Mischaracterizing such advocacy undermines justice, silences critical voices, and creates a chilling effect on those who seek to challenge injustice. Safeguarding this distinction is vital to protecting freedom of expression and ensuring an inclusive, democratic society.²

We find it both unacceptable and highly concerning that a city council or municipal district council, based solely on its own subjective assessment, has decided and publicly declared that the actions of a grant recipient or any other entity constitute support for terrorism. Such determinations are judicial in nature and fall outside the authority granted to municipal councils under Act No. 128/2000 Coll. on Municipalities. This represents an arbitrary and uninformed abuse of power by political representatives lacking the necessary legal expertise. Such actions are particularly troubling in the context of the cases cited, including the labeling of the display of a Palestinian flag as support for terrorism, which sets a dangerous precedent.³

Equally concerning is the inclusion of the aforementioned conditions in the subsidy programs of the Prague City Council or city districts, without a guaranteed objective and transparent mechanism for their implementation. **If local governments and political representatives retain the authority to make such determinations, it could lead to unprecedented abuses of power and political interference in cultural institutions, ultimately threatening the fundamental right to freedom of expression.**

We would also like to emphasize that the resolutions mentioned above encourage an atmosphere of fear and self-censorship among cultural, academic, and civil society actors. The measures adopted work to undermine the public expression of independent critical voices, which are essential for the functioning of a democratic society and are protected by the fundamental constitutional right to freedom of expression.

² In 2024, there were further examples of politically motivated censorship interventions in the cultural and academic sphere. In the Czech Republic we can mention the [forced closure](#) of part of the exhibition Space as Evidence at the Jaroslav Fragner Gallery (formally part of the Czech Technical University). The forced closure of the exhibition was due to the presence of the Lebanese architecture and urban studies research laboratory, presenting research on critical mapping of destruction and violence in the Middle East.

³ We base our view on, among other things, the decisions of courts that have recently sided with initiatives facing similar charges. The ruling of the [Supreme Administrative Court of 28 August 2024](#) contradicted the decision of the Prague City Council to dissolve and preventively ban pro-Palestinian rallies on the grounds of chanting slogans in support of Palestine. The second example is related to the statement of an expert on terrorism from Masaryk University in Brno, Prof. JUDr. Miroslav Mareš, PhD, who commented on the case of the [display of the Palestinian flag at UMPRUM](#) by stating that "no law of the Czech Republic has been violated if it is the flag of a subject that is recognized by the Czech Republic as a specific subject of international law to which the Czech Republic has diplomatic relations...". This has been the case for the Czech Republic since 1988.

Based on the points outlined above, we respectfully request that you:

1. Revoke Resolution No. Usn ZMC 045/2024 of the Prague 8 City Council and Resolution No. 16/12 of September 12, 2024, of the Prague City Council.
2. Ensure transparency and fairness in the allocation of public subsidies.
3. Safeguard the protection of freedom of expression and the autonomy of cultural workers from political abuse of power.
4. Uphold the human rights of all individuals, without discrimination.

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