

## Boycott the Tel Aviv International LGBT Film Festival

Palestinian queers and their allies in the [BDS movement](#) call for a boycott of the Tel Aviv International LGBT Film Festival (TLVFest) taking place between June 5-15 2019. We call on [international filmmakers](#) to withdraw their movies from the festival and respect the Palestinian call for a [cultural boycott](#) of Israel until Palestinians have their human rights respected.

Palestinians are calling for people of conscience around the world to hold Israel accountable for its violations of international law, including a call for artists not to perform or show their work in Israel. The Palestinian [cultural boycott call](#) has been heeded by a growing number of cultural figures from around the world including filmmakers [John Greyson](#), [Mira Nair](#), [Ken Loach](#), [The Yes Men](#) and [Mike Leigh](#). It sends Israel the message that there is no business as usual for as long as Israel continues to oppress and deny rights to Palestinians.

In 2018, [eleven filmmakers and artists pulled-out](#) of TLVFest in solidarity with a call for boycott from Palestinian queers, establishing a growing trend of cancellations since the start of the [Boycott TLVFest Campaign in 2017](#). South African director John Trengove [said at the time](#):

*"With the pain of the Apartheid struggle still fresh in our collective consciousness, the issue is ... a very sensitive one for many South Africans. ...knowing what I know now, I feel it is imperative that I withdraw myself from attending. ... [I]t is impossible to look past the fact that the festival (and my participation in it) could serve as a diversion from the human rights violations being committed by the state of Israel."*

The Tel Aviv International LGBT Film Festival is sponsored by entities in Israel that are deeply complicit in violations of international law. The Israeli Ministry of Culture, one of the sponsors of the festival, is a leading body in the [Brand Israel](#) project launched in 2005 to promote a positive image of Israel abroad to distract attention from the daily reality of occupation and violence against Palestinians. The Film Festival promotes the Janus-faced use of gay rights - known as [Pinkwashing](#) - to distract from and normalize Israeli occupation, settler colonialism and apartheid. The cultural boycott is therefore not about censoring artistic creations, but rather about asking international artists, such as filmmakers, not to participate in Israeli cultural events sponsored by the Israeli state, such as TLVFest, until Israel respects the human rights of Palestinians. Boycott is one of the primary tactics chosen by Palestinian civil society to put pressure on the Israeli state in a context of ongoing human rights violations and intransigence regarding Palestinian calls for justice. Help us amplify this pressure.

We ask filmmakers not to let their artistic freedom and voices be co-opted by the Israeli state and its associates, such as TLVFest and TLVPride 2019. Pinkwashing seeks to turn you, in the words of Tel Aviv Municipality LGBT spokesman Yaniv Weizman, into ["an ambassador for Israel"](#).

Your work will be featured in Tel Aviv mere weeks after Israel [carried out another massacre](#) of Palestinians in Gaza, including of children. These recent attacks function as a sharp reminder of Israel's May 2018 attacks on the [Great March of Return](#), in which tens of thousands of Gazan civilians marched for freedom and liberation. During the march, Israel slaughtered hundreds of Palestinians and injured over 12,000 adults and children; many so severely that they will require the amputation of limbs. A UN report has predicted that Israel's ongoing siege will make [Gaza unlivable by 2020](#).

Israel will be celebrating Pride and TLVFest while Palestinian families are grieving their loved ones. [With governments](#) unwilling to hold Israel accountable, pressure from international civil society, such as the one applied to apartheid South Africa, represents an effective means of support and gives hope to Palestinians - Palestinian queers included - for freedom, justice and equality.

As filmmakers who play a crucial role in giving visibility to LGBTQI communities, injustices against LGBTQIs, and LGBTQI emancipation, we hope you will join us in resisting the misleading reality Israel presents and stand firm against injustice and occupation through withdrawing your participation from TLVFest.

In solidarity,

Pinkwatching Israel

*Pinkwatching is a collective of Palestinian queers and their allies in the Palestinian-led Boycott Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement for freedom, justice and equality. We oppose attempts by Israel and complicit institutions to use gay rights to divert attention from - and justify - the continuing oppression of the Palestinian people.*