

# 1,500 artists call on Tate Britain to sever ties with organizations complicit in Gaza genocide

## Turner Prize winner Jasleen Kaur calls for "Free Palestine"

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More than 1,500 artists and cultural workers have signed an open letter calling on the Tate Britain, the major art museum in London, to sever its connections with “organisations that are deeply complicit with the Israeli regime” and to “take a clear stance against the artwashing of genocide and apartheid.”

Furthermore, Scottish artist Jasleen Kaur took the opportunity of receiving the prestigious Turner Prize—awarded annually to a British visual artist—in a ceremony held at the Tate on December 3 to denounce the Israeli crimes and call for a “Free Palestine.”

The extensive list of signatories includes, according to Artists for Palestine UK, “more than 60 artists closely associated with Tate (including three out of four of this year’s Turner Prize nominees, two of its judges, and many former prize winners and nominees).”

In addition to Kaur, Turner Prize winners who added their names to the protest include Charlotte Prodger, Helen Cammock and Lawrence Abu Hamdan. Well-known figures such as Jumana Manna, Sophia al-Maria, Gala Porras-Kim, Evan Ifekoya and Dala Nasser were also among the signers.

The letter begins:

For over a year, Israel has subjected the Palestinians of Gaza to a brutal onslaught of killing, maiming, displacement, and the near-total eradication of cultural heritage, homes, hospitals, universities, schools, roads, and food and water infrastructure. During this time, we, the undersigned artists, artworkers, and audiences, have been acting collectively to demand our institutions end their complicity.

The signatories point to the ruling by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) that Israel is committing “what amounts to plausible genocide” and to the finding by a UN special committee in November that “Israeli policies and practices in Gaza are consistent with the characteristics of genocide, using starvation as a weapon of war and running an apartheid system in the occupied Palestinian territories.”

The open letter appeals to the Tate officialdom to break all connections with Outset Contemporary Art Fund, the Zabłudowicz Art Trust and Zabłudowicz Art Projects, including their founders and directors Candida Gertler and Anita and Poju Zabłudowicz.

The Zabłudowicz Art Trust and Zabłudowicz Art Projects are subsidiaries of Tamares, which has well-documented economic and ideological links to Israel’s oppressive regime. ... In 2022, Tamares Telecom announced a long term partnership with Partner Communications worth \$12.6 million. This company has a track record of providing telecoms infrastructure to illegal Israeli settlements, including several on privately owned Palestinian land. In this partnership, Tamares Telecom is commissioning Partner Communications to build new cable infrastructure, which will involve building new connections with Ma’aleh Adumim in the occupied West Bank, a major illegal Israeli settlement where Tamares previously held real estate investments.

As for Outset Contemporary Art Fund, it

maintains problematic ties to the Israeli state through its governance, programming and funding, including its Israeli and UK chapters. Outset has worked with Leviev as a corporate partner; a diamond company implicated in human rights abuses whose founder has profited from illegal settlements in the West Bank.

The letter points to the Tate's brazen and transparent hypocrisy, noting that divestment

is a tactic we know Tate is already familiar with: the galleries cut ties with Russian billionaire donors and Tate International Council members Viktor Vekselberg and Petr Aven in 2022, as a response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Your Statement of Solidarity with Ukraine released on 7 March 2022 stated "We will not work with or maintain relationships with anyone associated with the Russian government." After a year of genocide in Palestine, however, you have chosen to maintain relationships with donors and organisations associated with the Israeli government and remained silent on Israel's total destruction of Gaza and its escalations in the West Bank and Lebanon.

Hundreds of pro-Palestinian protesters gathered outside the Turner Prize ceremony at the Tate on Tuesday, echoing the calls for divestment. In her remarks, Glasgow-born Jasleen Kaur dedicated her prize to

the artists, the poets, the parents, the students who show me the slow and meticulous work of organising and world building, the folk who orient their lives towards freedom in practice not theory who advocate for life, not death.

She went on to explain that from where she now stood, on the podium,

I want to echo the calls of the protesters outside, [Applause] a protest made up of artists, culture

workers, staff, students who I stand firmly with.

Kaur, wearing a Palestinian flag, expressed support for the open letter to the Tate and concluded

I've been wondering why artists are required to dream up liberation in the gallery but when that dream meets life we are shut down. I want the separation between the expression of politics in the gallery and the practice of politics in life to disappear. I want the institution to understand that if you want us inside you need to listen to us outside. We needed a ceasefire a very long time ago. We need a proper ceasefire now, arms embargo now. Free Palestine.

The sincerity of the signatories and protesters cannot be called into question. They are making common cause with the tens of millions around the globe horrified anew on an almost daily basis by the crimes of the monstrous Netanyahu regime and its US, British, French and German co-conspirators. No atrocity is too great for these governments, no act of mass murder unthinkable.

However, more than a year of mass protests must surely lead to serious thinking about politics and perspective.

Officials at the Tate, deeply embedded in the British establishment, will not be shaken by protests and open letters, even if they carry 100,000 signatures. The turn by outraged artists and others has to be to more serious, conscious, socialist opposition to the *entire capitalist social order* and to the only force that can bring about radical change, the working class.



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