

Tariq Ali boykottiert Buchmesse in Italien

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Die Buchmesse in Turin (Italien) hat aus Anlass der 60. Jahrfeierlichkeiten für den 60. Geburtstag von Israel verschiedene israelische SchriftstellerInnen eingeladen. Tariq Ali kritisiert, dass sie nicht auch ebensoviele palästinensische SchriftstellerInnen eingeladen hat, sie zum selben Zeitpunkt an 60 Jahre ihrer Vertreibung aus Palästina (Nakba) gedenken.

Hier der Brief von Tariq Ali:

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Why I Will Not Participate in the Turin Book Fair

By TARIQ ALI

When I agreed to participate in the Turin Book Fair, which I have done before, I had no idea that the 'guest of honour' was Israel and its 60th birthday. But this is also the 60th anniversary of what the Palestinian call the 'nakba' the disaster that befell them that year, when they were expelled from their villages, some killed, women raped by the settlers. These facts are no longer disputed. So why did the Turin Book Fair not invite Palestinians in equal numbers? 30 Israeli writers and 30 Palestinian writers (and I promise you they exist and are very fine poets and novelists) might have been seen as a positive and peaceful gesture and a positive debate might have taken place. A literary version of Daniel Barenboim's Diwan Orchestra, half-Israeli, half-Palestinian. Such a move would have brought people together, but no. The cultural commissars know best. I have argued vigorously with some of the Israeli writers visiting the fair on other occasions and would have happily done the same again if conditions had been different. What they decided to do is an ugly provocation. It would appear that culture is increasingly bound to the political priorities of the US/EU nexus. The West is blind to Palestinian suffering. The Israeli war on Lebanon, the daily reports from the Gaza ghetto do not move official Europe. In France, we know, it is virtually impossible to criticise Israel. In Germany, too, for special reasons. It would be sad if Italy went the same way. How many times do we have to stress that criticism of Israel's colonial policies is not anti-semitic. To accept this is to become willing victims of the blackmail the Israeli establishment uses to silence its critics. There are some courageous Israeli critics like Aharon Shabtai, Amira Hass, Yitzhak Laor and others who will not permit their voices to be muffled in this fashion. Shabtai refused to attend this fair. How could I do otherwise. It is one thing to support Israel's right to exist, which I do and always have done. But from that to extrapolate that this right to exist means that Israel is given a blank cheque to do what it wishes to those it expelled and whom it treats like untermensch is unacceptable. Personally I favour a single Israel/Palestine in which all citizens are equal. I am told this is utopian. It may be but it is the only long-term solution. Because of the subject matter of my novels I am often asked (most recently in Madison, Wisconsin) whether it might be possible to recreate the best times of al-Andalus and Sicily when three cultures co-existed for a long time. My reply is the same: the only place today where it could be recreated is Israel/Palestine. We live in a world of double standards, but it is not necessary to accept them. It is sometimes the case that individuals

and groups to whom evil is done, inflict evil in return. But the first does not justify the second. It was European anti-semitism that tolerated the judeocide of the second world war of which the Palestinians have now become the indirect victims. Many Israelis are aware of this fact but would rather not think about it. Many Europeans regard Palestinians and Muslims today as they once regarded the Jews. That is the irony visible in press comments and television coverage in virtually every European country. It's a pity that the Turin Book Fair bureaucracy decided to pander to the new prejudices sweeping the continent. Let us hope their example is not followed elsewhere.

Tariq Ali is the author of *Pirates of the Caribbean: Axis of Hope*, is published by Verso. His new book, *The Duel: Pakistan In the Flightpath of American Power*, will be published by Scribner in July.