

# Walid Raad Denied Art Prize for Refusing to Denounce BDS Movement

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Another translation from an article in german newspaper FAZ (source: <https://www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/kunstpreis-aachen-schon-wieder-bds-16418276.html>):

## "Aachen Art Award: BDS again

Also this week there was chaos in Germany. It was once again about three letters, which have been at stake very often since May, since the Bundestag decided to boycott a boycott movement against Israel and against Jews from Israel. These three letters, which abbreviate the movement, have been in newspapers for months, on the Internet, are discussed, insulted and protected: One will probably still be allowed to say ...

What is it? On Monday, the city of Aachen said that it no longer wanted to honour the Lebanese-American artist Walid Raad with its art prize, even though it had already been decided last year. Because this artist was "repeatedly involved in measures to boycott Israel's culture". On Wednesday, the Association of Friends of the Ludwig Forum, which is also awarding the prize, said that the boycott evidence was not valid enough and that Raad was awarded the prize - only without the city, i.e. also without municipal money and without a party in the museum.

Of course, one had to remember another case, another prize: the Nelly Sachs Prize. The Pakistan-British writer Kamila Shamsie was supposed to receive it this year, but she didn't because she publicly boycotts Israel and Israelis. But of course it was something else: The Nelly Sachs Prize is named after Nelly Sachs, after a Jewish woman, after a poet who wrote the famous Shoah lines: "O her chimneys, O her finger / And Israel's body in the smoke through the air!

A small, big difference

The Aachen Art Prize is named after Aachen, a city in which the synagogue was torched in a normal November night and by normal Aacheners and from which trains brought Jews into camps and into stoves with chimneys Sachs had written about. That was already a small, big difference.

What didn't make any difference, however, were the arguments about prizes and prize winners. The arguments against and for it. Martin Eimermacher wrote in "Die Zeit" about the Nelly Sachs Prize event: "Shamsie says her books cannot be translated into Hebrew because she does not accept an Israeli as a publisher. That, of course, is her right. And it is also the good right of the jury not to award her a prize for it (...)."

On the Walid Raad and Aachen case, Elke Buhr wrote online on "[Monopol](#)" that the boycott of the boycotters was wrong: "Because in fact, in the future, almost all artists from the Arab world would have to be

excluded from the discourse here, because one can assume that the overwhelming majority of them would never distance themselves from the BDS (...)"'. Perhaps Buhr was not aware that with this sentence she was simply incapacitating all Arabs by depicting them as if they wanted to harm Jews by nature. Paternalism at its best.

It is coming to terms with the past

But the best thing, and this is not meant ironically, was and is the chaos that is raging over Germany. Because now almost every day there are discussions, arguments with and about Jewish hatred running through the country. And you can watch Germany live as it finally wrestles with itself again and makes an effort. What you see since the Bundestag boycotted this movement with the three letters was actually radiated for years, forgotten and to the end: It is coming to terms with the past.

The executive producer of the new, important and good show is the movement itself, which actually wants to achieve the opposite: a silence about Jewish hatred.

It didn't work. Fortunately. And in the next episode, at the next price, there will be a sequel. We will switch on again and watch."

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And here's the translation from the [monopol article](#) mentioned and linked to in the post above:

### **"Boycott is contagious: Discussion of Walid Raad's BDS connection**

The city of Aachen does not want to award its art prize to the artist Walid Raad - because of his connections to the boycott movement BDS, which is critical of Israel. A comment

The artist Walid Raad has made an international name for himself with his thoughtful and poetic work on the legacy of the war in his homeland

Lebanon. In the West, Raad, who now teaches in New York, is one of the most prominent mediators of the art of the Arab world: his archives of the Atlas Group, an imaginary foundation that deals with the memories of the Lebanese civil war, caused a sensation at Dokumenta 11 in 2002, followed by major solo exhibitions in Berlin and elsewhere, and he is a founding member of the Akademie der Künste der Welt in Cologne. One might think that he is a more than worthy candidate for the Art Prize of the City of Aachen, which is traditionally awarded together with the Kunstfreundeverein of the Ludwig Forum and the Aachener Wirtschaft.

Now, however, the city of Aachen has withdrawn from the award ceremony: because of Raad's connections to the BDS movement, which wants to use "boycotts, disinvestments and sanctions" to dissuade the State of Israel from its repressive policy towards the Palestinians. "We have to assume, after appropriate research, that the designated prize winner is a supporter of the BDS movement and has participated several times in measures for the cultural boycott of Israel", said Lord Mayor Marcel Philipp (CDU) according to Dpa. Raad did not sufficiently distance himself from the movement.

### BDS classified as anti-Semitic by Bundestag

The rejection of the BDS is becoming the official line in Germany: in May the German Bundestag had classified the BDS as anti-Semitic in a resolution, the state of NRW has already decided not to provide any more space for the movement.

Now the BDS activists in Germany are really not very pleasant contemporaries. What toxic effect their campaigns can have on local cultural events could be seen at the 2018 Pop Culture Festival in Berlin: The BDS called for its boycott because an Israeli singer there was supported by the Israeli Embassy with a small travel allowance - in the end, all bands from the Arab world cancelled. International understanding is different. But is it really a good idea to react to the boycott with more

and more boycotts and to exclude from the outset all those who have ever been associated with the BDS?

Yes, the BDS is also supported by Hamas, among others, which does not recognize the right of the State of Israel to exist. And yes, parts of the BDS hold views that have been classified as anti-Semitic. But the decision of the Bundestag to equate the BDS with anti-Semitism was even criticized by numerous well-known Israeli and Jewish intellectuals.

Aachen had hardly any other choice

In a letter to the federal government initiated by the historian Amos Goldmann and signed by some 240 scholars and cultural workers, the Bundestag had allowed itself to be instrumentalized by the ultra-right Israeli government, which tried everything to make any criticism of Israel's actions against the Palestinians appear anti-Semitic. The goals of the BDS - end of the occupation of the Palestinian territories, equality of Palestinian citizens of Israel and the right to return of refugees - are documented under international law, even if the latter is "worth discussing".

The official line of the parties in Germany now makes it almost impossible for municipalities or state institutions to cooperate with BDS supporters - the city of Aachen had little choice but to uninvite Walid Raad again. Nevertheless, it is wrong. In fact, almost all artists from the Arab world would then have to be excluded from the discourse here in the future, because one can assume that the overwhelming majority of them would never publicly distance themselves from the BDS as a pro-Palestinian initiative.

Preserving biennials and museums as places of encounter

And you would also lose many, many other artists from the USA, Great Britain and many other countries. Do you want to check before an

international biennial whether the invited artists from all over the world might be in contact with political initiatives whose aims you don't share? Can you do that? Or shouldn't you rather concentrate on whether the works on show express what you want from art?

Boycott is a highly contagious virus. Unlike the music business, the art scene in Germany has so far been spared BDS boycott calls. Biennials and museums are places where artists can meet who are otherwise separated by cultural and political walls - like Israelis and Palestinians.

The harder the lines of conflict, the more important is the alternative space of culture that makes conversations possible. We should do everything we can to preserve this space."

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