# Eurovision 2024 in Basel ignites cultural celebration amid political controversies and security tensions



The 69th Eurovision Song Contest has kicked off in Basel, Switzerland, embodying the extravagant celebration of music and culture that the event is known for. With 37 countries represented, the contest promises a week filled with vibrant performances, eye-catching costumes, and the anticipation of results that millions will watch around the globe. Last year's winner, Swiss singer Nemo, with his operatic anthem “The Code,” has set the stage for an event that attracted over 160 million viewers in 2022, revealing the unique blend of pleasure and scrutiny this annual spectacle entails.

Basel was chosen as the host city for this year’s event due to its strategic location bordering Germany and France, creating an accessible hub for Eurovision's diverse audience. The competitions commence with semifinals on Tuesday and Thursday, filtering through to the final, where 20 acts will vie for the coveted title. The “Big Five” countries—France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and the U.K.—along with the host Switzerland, automatically secure their spots in the finale, underscoring their influential roles within the contest.

While the competition is largely viewed as a celebration, it is not without its controversies. This year, calls for protests and debates surrounding Israel's participation linger over the event, rooted in the ongoing armed conflict in Gaza. Despite Israel’s representation through its public broadcaster, KAN, the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) faces heightened scrutiny. Critics, including over 70 former Eurovision participants, argue that the EBU’s decision to allow Israel to compete illustrates a troubling double standard, especially in light of Russia’s exclusion following its invasion of Ukraine. Many feel that the political climate surrounding Israel’s involvement contrasts sharply with the festival's professed values of inclusivity and universality.

The conflict, which has resulted in over 60,000 deaths according to various sources, adds a layer of complexity to the contest. Israeli contestant Yuval Raphael, a survivor of the October 7 Hamas attacks, performs a piece dubbed “New Day Will Rise,” reflecting resilience amid turmoil. Critics argue that allowing such participation trivialises the ongoing humanitarian crisis and call for discussions about the future of Israel's involvement in Eurovision. Some national broadcasters, including those from Spain and Iceland, have formally requested a reevaluation of Israel’s role in the competition.

In response to the sustained tensions, the EBU has implemented a new policy limiting the display of flags at the event, a decision that has drawn ire from LGBTQ+ advocates who view it as a direct affront to their visibility within Eurovision. Previously permitted, the display of non-national flags, including those symbolising pride and solidarity with Palestine, is now restricted, framing the event’s messaging within a narrow interpretation of political neutrality. This has sparked criticism from various sectors, compounding existing frustrations over perceived censorship and the marginalisation of pivotal social issues within this supposedly apolitical contest.

Security measures for the event have been ramped up, with 1,300 officers deployed to ensure safety amidst the anticipated protests. The mood in Switzerland is charged; far-right groups have even attempted to boycott the festival, branding it as an endorsement of 'woke' ideologies. Nevertheless, support from Swiss citizens, as evidenced through a recent referendum, indicates a robust backing for hosting Eurovision, suggesting that cultural celebration may overshadow the pervasive political unease surrounding it.

As the contest draws nearer to its remarkable finale on Saturday, audiences across multiple platforms, including national broadcasts and streaming channels, are preparing to engage with this iconic celebration of music. The votes cast and the performances witnessed will not only determine the champions of Eurovision 2023 but also reflect broader cultural sentiments towards representation, identity, and the complex interplay of politics within the sphere of entertainment.

## Reference Map

1. Paragraph 1: (1), (2)
2. Paragraph 2: (1), (2)
3. Paragraph 3: (1), (4), (3)
4. Paragraph 4: (1), (5), (6)
5. Paragraph 5: (1), (3), (4)
6. Paragraph 6: (5), (6)
7. Paragraph 7: (5), (4)
8. Paragraph 8: (1), (7)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/basel-israel-swiss-france-london-b2749279.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://apnews.com/article/27895fca2545096c4489de24718b6440> - The 69th Eurovision Song Contest is underway in Basel, Switzerland, following Swiss singer Nemo's victory with 'The Code' last year. The event features acts from 37 countries, with semifinals on Tuesday and Thursday narrowing the field to 20 finalists. Switzerland and the 'Big Five' — France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and the U.K. — are automatically in the final on Saturday. The show airs via national broadcasters, Peacock in the U.S., and the Eurovision YouTube channel. Viewers in participating countries vote via phone, text, or app, while non-participants can vote online, contributing a 'rest of the world' score. Bets favor Sweden's trio KAJ with 'Bara Bada Bastu,' followed by acts from Austria, France, the Netherlands, and Israel. Israel’s involvement remains controversial due to its war in Gaza, prompting calls for its exclusion. The European Broadcasting Union defends Israel’s participation, citing representation by the public broadcaster KAN. Recent changes to the code of conduct aim to ensure political neutrality and inclusivity, restricting non-national flags—affecting LGBTQ+ representations—while allowing more flexibility for audiences. Protests and heightened tensions are expected, reflecting ongoing political debates around Eurovision participation.
3. <https://elpais.com/television/2025-05-12/llega-eurovision-2025-nueva-politica-de-banderas-que-perjudica-a-las-lgtbi-acusado-de-woke-y-satanico-por-la-ultraderecha-y-con-israel-entre-las-favoritas.html> - Eurovisión 2025, celebrated in Basel, Switzerland, has been marked by controversies. The European Broadcasting Union (EBU) implemented a new policy prohibiting artists from displaying flags, including the Palestinian and LGBTQ+ flags, which has generated criticism from rights advocates. This measure contrasts with previous editions where the public could display these flags without restrictions. Additionally, Israel's participation has sparked protests due to its military campaign in Gaza, which has resulted in over 50,000 deaths according to local figures. Despite the criticism and calls from countries like Spain and Iceland to reconsider its inclusion, Israeli representative Yuval Raphael competes with a politically charged song. Meanwhile, Swiss far-right groups have attempted to boycott the event, accusing it of promoting 'woke' ideologies and 'satanic' values, but failed after a referendum approved the budget for its celebration. Spanish artist Melody, directly participating in the final, has improved her position in the betting odds after rehearsals in Basel, currently ranking 17th. The organization has enhanced security due to political tensions, deploying 1,300 police officers and cybersecurity experts.
4. <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/swiss-eurovision-stirs-familiar-controversy-over-israeli-entry-lgbtq-flags-2025-05-07/> - Switzerland is set to host the Eurovision Song Contest in Basel for the first time since 1989, promoting the theme 'United by Music.' However, controversy surrounds the event, focusing on Israel’s participation following its military campaign in Gaza, which has led to widespread criticism and calls for exclusion by officials in Spain, Slovenia, and Iceland, and human rights advocates in Switzerland. Israeli contestant Yuval Raphael, a survivor of the October 2023 Hamas attack, represents the country. Critics accuse the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) of double standards, noting Russia's exclusion for the Ukraine invasion while Israel remains included. Additional debate in Switzerland involves conservative opposition to what they see as Eurovision’s promotion of a 'woke agenda,' particularly regarding LGBTQ+ representation. Last year’s winner, Nemo, a non-binary Swiss singer, exemplified the show’s support for gender diversity. However, new flag rules this year limit stage flags to one national banner, effectively banning Pride flags from artist areas, disappointing LGBTQ+ advocates. Security has been heightened, with over 1,300 police deployed. Despite controversies, organizers emphasize Eurovision’s legacy of unity through music, with director Martin Green affirming its role as a moment of joy and inclusivity.
5. <https://cadenaser.com/nacional/2025/05/08/israel-pide-precaucion-a-sus-ciudadanos-en-suiza-ante-posibles-ataques-durante-eurovision-cadena-ser/> - Israeli authorities have issued a travel alert for citizens planning to attend the Eurovision final on May 17 in Basel, Switzerland. This warning is due to potential attacks against Israeli or Jewish targets, motivated by recent anti-Israel demonstrations in Switzerland amid the Gaza war, which has resulted in over 52,600 deaths to date. The Israeli Security Council recommends avoiding areas of tension, protests, and any situation that could lead to violence. Additionally, they advise against displaying Jewish or Israeli symbols in public, refraining from discussions about military topics or the conflict with Hamas, and staying informed through a specific mobile security application. In this edition of the festival, Israel will be represented by Yuval Raphael, a survivor of the October 7, 2023 attacks. Tensions surrounding Israel's participation in Eurovision have increased, with former contestants calling for its expulsion and RTVE requesting a debate on the matter.
6. <https://los40.com/2025/05/09/los-dos-bandos-de-eurovision-2025-quienes-estan-a-favor-y-quienes-estan-en-contra-de-la-participacion-de-israel-en-el-festival/> - The 2025 edition of the Eurovision Song Contest in Basel, Switzerland, is marked by strong controversy over Israel's participation amid the Gaza conflict, which has caused over 60,000 deaths. Comparisons with Russia's exclusion in 2022 after invading Ukraine have led to criticism of the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) for allowing Israel's presence. Opposition includes over 70 former contestants like Salvador Sobral and Charlie McGettigan, as well as citizen protests in European cities and calls for a boycott by parties like Podemos in Spain. On the other hand, supporters of Israel's inclusion, such as the EBU, argue that Eurovision is an apolitical event and that the Israeli broadcaster KAN meets technical criteria. Israeli representative Yuval Raphael, a survivor of the October 7 attacks, has been interpreted as a symbol of cultural resistance. Figures like Damiano David, vocalist of Måneskin, highlight the complexity of demanding political stances from artists. The debate reflects a deep division between politics and music in the festival's context.
7. <https://apnews.com/article/c534fab03cf9a1393992432c32d41e51> - The European Union has expressed strong disapproval of the Eurovision Song Contest's decision to ban its flag from the event's final. EU Commission Vice President Margaritis Schinas criticized the organizers, the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), for undermining a symbol that unites Europeans. The EU plans to discuss the issue with the EBU as this controversy persists after the contest, alongside other issues including protests relating to the Gaza conflict, Israel’s participation, and the disqualification of a Dutch contestant possibly leading to charges for Joost Klein. Despite these issues, the contest concluded with Swiss singer Nemo winning with the song 'The Code,' which promotes acceptance of a non-gender identity.