# Eurovision 2024 in Basel sparks political tensions amid calls to boycott Israel



The Eurovision Song Contest, an annual celebration of music and cultural diversity, has officially commenced in Basel, Switzerland. Expecting an audience of over 160 million viewers, this year's event, themed "United by Music," features performers from 37 countries, showcasing an eclectic mix of genres, styles, and political sentiments. The contest, known for its dazzling performances and vibrant atmosphere, also serves as a platform for pressing global issues, with this year's proceedings overshadowed by significant political tensions.

Switzerland, chosen as the host country after Swiss singer Nemo’s victory with the piece "The Code" last year, plays a crucial role in framing this year's narrative. The city of Basel, straddling borders with Germany and France, offers an intriguing backdrop for a contest that historically aims to foster unity. However, the atmosphere this year is particularly charged due to ongoing protests surrounding Israel's participation, linked to its military actions in Gaza.

As the contest unfolds, audiences can tune in via national broadcasters, streaming services like Peacock in the United States, and the official Eurovision YouTube channel. The show kicks off with semifinals set for Tuesday and Thursday, ultimately narrowing the field down to 20 acts, with the so-called “Big Five” — France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and the UK — automatically qualifying for the final on Saturday night. Each participating country will be represented by acts vying for listener votes, creating an engaging, albeit competitive environment.

Among this year's entrants, betting odds suggest that Sweden's KAJ, with an upbeat homage to sauna culture titled "Bara Bada Bastu," stands as a favourite, followed closely by acts from Austria, France, the Netherlands, and Israel. The latter's representation by Yuval Raphael, a survivor of the October 2023 Hamas attack, has ignited intense debate. Critics argue that Israel's participation amidst its military campaign in Gaza is indicative of a double standard, particularly when juxtaposed against Russia's exclusion from the contest following the invasion of Ukraine.

This tension has prompted calls for the reconsideration of Israel's inclusion from various participants and national broadcasters, including Spain and Iceland. More than 70 former Eurovision competitors, including notable artists like Mae Muller from the UK and Salvador Sobral from Portugal, have signed letters demanding a reassessment of the current participation policy. They highlight a perceived inconsistency in the treatment of nations based on their political actions.

In a bid to maintain a semblance of neutrality, the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), which manages Eurovision, has implemented a revised code of conduct. This year's rules prohibit non-national flags on stage, which has sparked further controversy. Critics argue this effectively silences LGBTQ+ voices within a contest known for its inclusive celebratory spirit. The EBU insists that such measures are intended to uphold values of universality and equality, yet the decision has drawn ire from various advocacy groups, especially given the longstanding tradition of visibility for LGBTQ+ flags at the event.

Moreover, the security arrangements for this year's contest have ramped up due to the political climate, with over 1,300 police deployed to safeguard participants and audiences alike from potential threats. The Israeli authorities have also issued travel advisories for citizens attending the event, citing safety concerns, underscoring the fraught reality woven into the fabric of this year's celebrations.

While Eurovision has historically served as a joyous communal event highlighting cultural uniqueness across Europe, its multifaceted nature reminds us of the ongoing conflicts and narratives that shape our world. The festival's dual role as both a musical extravaganza and a stage for political expression captures the essence of an engaging, yet turbulent, European identity. Despite the controversies, the sentiment remains that music can bridge divides, and this year's contest is set to offer a mix of passion, artistry, and introspection.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 (Lead Article)
2. Paragraph 5, 6 (Related Articles 2, 4)
3. Paragraph 5, 7 (Related Article 3)
4. Paragraph 6, 7 (Related Article 5)
5. Paragraph 6, 7, 8 (Related Article 6)

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

## Bibliography

* <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/basel-israel-swiss-france-london-b2749279.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
* <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.
* <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, celebrado en Basilea, Suiza, ha estado marcado por controversias. La Unión Europea de Radiodifusión (UER) ha implementado una nueva política que prohíbe a los artistas mostrar banderas, incluyendo la palestina y la LGTBIQ+, lo que ha generado críticas por parte de defensores de derechos. Esta medida contrasta con ediciones anteriores, donde el público podía portar estas banderas sin restricciones. Además, la participación de Israel ha provocado protestas debido a su campaña militar en Gaza, que ha dejado más de 50.000 muertos según cifras locales. Pese a las críticas y peticiones de países como España e Islandia para reconsiderar su inclusión, la representante israelí Yuval Raphael compite con una canción con tintes políticos. Paralelamente, la ultraderecha suiza ha intentado boicotear el evento acusándolo de promover ideologías 'woke' y valores 'satánicos', pero sin éxito tras un referéndum que aprobó el presupuesto para su celebración. La artista española Melody, participante directa en la final, ha mejorado su posición en las apuestas tras sus ensayos en Basilea, posicionándose actualmente en el puesto 17. La organización ha reforzado la seguridad debido a las tensiones políticas, movilizando a 1.300 policías y expertos en ciberseguridad.
* <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.
* <https://cadenaser.com/nacional/2025/05/08/israel-pide-precaucion-a-sus-ciudadanos-en-suiza-ante-posibles-ataques-durante-eurovision-cadena-ser/> - Las autoridades israelíes han emitido una alerta de viaje para sus ciudadanos que planean asistir a la final del festival de Eurovisión el 17 de mayo en Basilea, Suiza. Esta advertencia se debe a posibles ataques contra objetivos israelíes o judíos, motivados por las recientes manifestaciones antiisraelíes en Suiza, en el contexto de la guerra en Gaza, la cual ha causado más de 52.600 muertos hasta la fecha. El Consejo de Seguridad israelí recomienda evitar zonas de fricción, manifestaciones y cualquier situación que pueda derivar en violencia. Además, aconsejan no mostrar símbolos judíos o israelíes en público, no participar en discusiones sobre temas militares o del conflicto con Hamás, y mantenerse informados mediante una aplicación móvil específica para seguridad. En esta edición del festival, Israel estará representado por Yuval Raphael, sobreviviente de los ataques del 7 de octubre de 2023. Las tensiones en torno a la participación de Israel en Eurovisión han aumentado, con exconcursantes pidiendo su expulsión y RTVE solicitando un debate al respecto.
* <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.
* <https://time.com/6976082/eurovision-performers-palestinian-symbols/> - The 68th Eurovision Song Contest in Malmo, Sweden witnessed controversy as performers wore pro-Palestinian symbols, leading to reprimands from organizers. Opening act performer Eric Saade wore a kaffiyeh, a symbol of Palestinian solidarity, on his wrist, while Irish contestant Bambie Thug originally had 'Ceasefire' and 'Freedom for Palestine' written in Ogham script on their face and legs. The European Broadcasting Union (EBU) insisted on keeping the event apolitical and admonished both for their actions. Saade, of Palestinian descent, defended his choice as a cultural expression, while Bambie Thug changed their makeup as requested but expressed their support for justice and peace. This year’s contest faces heightened scrutiny and security amid ongoing controversy over Israel's participation, with widespread pro-Palestinian protests expected during the final rounds.