# Eurovision 2024 in Malmö marred by political protests and controversies over Israel’s participation



The Eurovision Song Contest, typically a celebration of musical talent and cultural diversity, has devolved into a platform rife with controversy and discontent. This year’s edition, held in Malmö, Sweden, unfolded against the backdrop of rising political tensions and widespread protests, notably regarding the ongoing conflict in the Middle East. Instead of unity and celebration, the 2024 contest has faced boycotts, disqualifications, and artist condemnations that reflect a misguided prioritisation of political agendas over musical artistry.

A flashpoint in this year's contest has been Israel's participation, a subject that has long been contentious. Calls for boycotts intensified this year as artists like the UK's Olly Alexander and emerging Irish talent Bambie Thug demanded an “immediate and lasting ceasefire.” The European Broadcasting Union (EBU), however, responded with incredulity, adamant in its stance to uphold Israel's entry, citing regulations while ignoring the growing dissonance in its policies. While the EBU acted decisively to ban Russia for its actions in Ukraine, this selective adherence to their own principles raises questions about true integrity in their governance.

Public discontent was palpable outside the venues, with protestors, including notable figures like climate activist Greta Thunberg, rallying in the thousands to voice their opposition. Estimates suggest 10,000 to 12,000 demonstrators gathered, brandishing Palestinian flags and placards to highlight the humanitarian crisis—an undeniable testament that Eurovision has strayed far from its intended apolitical roots.

As tensions flared in Malmö, criticisms targeted individual performances, particularly that of Israeli singer Eden Golan. Fellow contestants publicly questioned the implications of her participation for collective safety. Golan’s insistence on her right to perform, coupled with her comments about the EBU's purported safety measures, do little to assuage the concerns of many who see these spectacles as increasingly dangerous. Security escalated during the final, with demonstrators forcibly ejected, further tarnishing the event’s reputation.

Behind the scenes, the contest experienced turmoil of its own with the disqualification of Dutch artist Joost Klein due to alleged misconduct. The backlash from his national broadcaster, Avrotros, which deemed the punishment excessive, underscores a troubling trend of prioritising punitive measures over constructive dialogue. The incident has raised serious concerns regarding artist safety and the integrity of the contest's internal governance.

Topics of expression and representation emerged with fervour as flags and symbols were scrutinised. Many attendees reported a clear bias: political expressions that aligned with certain narratives were tolerated, while LGBTQ+ flags faced swift restrictions. This inconsistency casts doubt on the EBU’s commitment to genuine inclusivity and raises alarms about a creeping political code that stifles artistic freedom.

Looking forward, the EBU is clearly feeling the heat, initiating a review process for the 2025 contest—a reaction to this year's upheaval. With suggestions for overhauling backstage conduct and safety protocols, the EBU appears to be scrambling to restore a semblance of order amidst the chaos of politicisation.

As Eurovision grapples with this complex socio-political landscape, its legacy is at stake. What was once a festival of musical celebration now risks being remembered not just for its performances, but as a battleground for competing political narratives. The onus now lies on this embattled organisation to reclaim its purpose and ensure that artistic expression is not sacrificed at the altar of political strife.

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

## Bibliography

* <https://www.irishnews.com/entertainment/why-was-eurovision-controversial-last-year-JNVB3HXX2VIM3LORBE6O6C6CI4/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
* <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/swiss-eurovision-stirs-familiar-controversy-over-israeli-entry-lgbtq-flags-2025-05-07/> - This article discusses the controversy surrounding Israel's participation in the Eurovision Song Contest 2025, hosted in Basel, Switzerland. The focus is on the European Broadcasting Union's (EBU) decision to allow Israel to compete despite calls for exclusion from various European countries and human rights advocates. Critics accuse the EBU of double standards, noting Russia's exclusion for the Ukraine invasion while Israel remains included. The article also highlights debates in Switzerland regarding Eurovision's promotion of a 'woke agenda,' particularly concerning LGBTQ+ representation, and the implementation of new flag rules limiting stage flags to national banners, effectively banning Pride flags from artist areas.
* <https://www.reuters.com/lifestyle/israel-spotlight-eurovision-semi-final-pro-palestinian-protests-loom-2024-05-08/> - This article reports on the pro-Palestinian protests in Malmö, Sweden, ahead of the Eurovision Song Contest 2024. Climate activist Greta Thunberg joined thousands of demonstrators opposing Israel's participation in the contest due to its military campaign in Gaza. The protests included waving Palestinian flags and calls to boycott Israel, with police implementing strict security around the venue. The article also mentions that the European Broadcasting Union allowed Israel to participate under modified song lyrics and that Israeli contestant Eden Golan expressed hope that her performance could unite people.
* <https://www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-68238270> - This article covers the backlash against Israel's participation in the Eurovision Song Contest 2024. It details calls for a boycott from various artists and music industry professionals in Finland, Sweden, Norway, and Denmark, accusing Israel of war crimes. The European Broadcasting Union defended its decision, stating that Eurovision is a non-political event and that comparisons between conflicts are complex. The article also mentions the EBU's stance on Israel's inclusion and the differing situations compared to Russia's exclusion in 2022.
* <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/sweden-gears-up-eurovision-final-amid-israel-protests-dutch-controversy-2024-05-11/> - This article reports on the Eurovision Song Contest 2024, highlighting Switzerland's victory with the song 'The Code' by Swiss rapper and singer Nemo. It also covers the controversy surrounding Israel's participation, with protests in Malmö against Israel's inclusion due to ongoing military actions in Gaza. The article draws parallels to the EBU's previous exclusion of Russia over the Ukraine invasion and discusses the political tensions marked by protests and debates over the event's non-political nature.
* <https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/article/2024/may/09/israel-qualifies-eurovision-song-contest-final-protests> - This article discusses Israel's qualification for the Eurovision Song Contest final despite protests in Malmö, Sweden. It details the demonstrations against Israel's participation, with thousands marching through the city center, and mentions that Israeli singer Eden Golan was voted through to the final. The article also covers the European Broadcasting Union's defense of its decision to allow Israel to compete, stating that Eurovision is a non-political music event and not a contest between governments.
* <https://www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-68996532> - This article reports on the chaotic build-up to the Eurovision Song Contest 2024, including protests over Israel's participation. It details the disqualification of the Dutch entry, the withdrawal of another from rehearsals, and a third breaking rules with an on-stage speech calling for peace. The article also covers the protests in Malmö, with thousands of pro-Palestinian demonstrators gathering to show their support for Gaza, and mentions the mixture of cheering and booing during Israeli contestant Eden Golan's performance.