

# Letter to Catherine Ringer: Please don't sing for apartheid !

Paris, September 9, 2019

Dear Catherine Ringer,

You are scheduled to perform in concert on December 19th in Tel Aviv, a city built on the ruins of seven Palestinian villages; the recognized capital of Israel, symbol of its policy of apartheid, and the scene of its artistic whitewashing attempts to which we hereby call on you to refuse to contribute to.

You are an icon for us. We have always loved your hoarse voice, your freedom, your humor, your gravity tinged with derision. You have breathed new life into French music thanks to your openness to all influences.

Do you really plan on singing the greatest hits of Les Rita Mitsouko, the magical duo that you formed with Fred Chichin, in Tel Aviv? To end your tour there would be highly symbolic.

Today, we call on you to refuse to be used in the service of a policy of cultural whitewashing of Israeli apartheid.

Your beautiful song « Obstruction » (Perseverance) seems to have been written for the Palestinian people. This song speaks of exile, asphyxiation, rage, courage, « stay or go, live or die » and ends with a magnificent hope: » Stars bloom, the songs of hope ... »

The perseverance of the seven million Palestinian refugees who will not be able to attend your concert because Israel refuses them the right to return to their country.

The perseverance of Gaza's residents who have been blockaded by Israel for more than 12 years, lacking water, electricity and food, enduring an unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe.

The perseverance of Palestinians in the West Bank who are subjected to separation walls, checkpoints and daily humiliations, and whose access to water depends on the goodwill of Israel and who are subject to the presence of more than 600,000 settlers.

The perseverance of Palestinians from Jerusalem whose city has been illegally annexed by Israel since 1967, and whose homes are regularly seized and demolished.

And yet there is hope in your support of a campaign initiated by Palestinian civil society and supported by the most progressive elements of Israeli society.

This non-violent BDS campaign (boycott, divestment, sanctions) initiated in 2005, is inspired by the campaign against apartheid in South Africa. It does not target individuals, but a political regime and its institutions.

The call for boycott by the BDS campaign is intended to expose the ongoing violations suffered by the Palestinian people, and struggle for the equal rights of Israelis and Palestinians.

As you know, Israel has been flouting the human rights of many of its inhabitants, the Palestinians, and international law for many years.

In recent years, Israel has entered a logic of permanent war. Having passed the « Nation-State of the Jewish people » law which confers constitutional status on its apartheid regime, Israel has now set about to annex East Jerusalem with the support of Donald Trump, and soon the Golan Heights and the West Bank, despite international law.

For more than a year, every Friday, Israeli snipers have

deliberately targeted unarmed Palestinian protesters in the besieged Gaza Strip, including doctors, journalists, children, and people with disabilities.

Israel's cultural policy is no exception to this phenomenon. Indeed, the Minister of Culture Miri Regev routinely brings artists « disloyal » to Israel into line, like the rapper Tamer Nafar, the poet Dareen Tatour, the Theatreal-Midan, the Palestinian Puppet Festival and others.

Is this not the worst time to play in Israel, when you would be legitimizing by your presence, an extreme right-wing regime?

We have no doubt that you would refuse to perform, for example, in a municipality run by a fascist party. It therefore makes sense to apply this same logic and ethic to questioning your decision to hold this concert in Israel.

We understand your concern for objectivity and parity, but as an ambassador for French culture, please do not lend your image in the service of discrimination, ethnic cleansing and military occupation.

Remember the words of Desmond Tutu: « to remain neutral in the face of injustice is to choose the side of the oppressor. »

Dear Catherine, we simply ask you not to sing for apartheid!

We would like to discuss this further with you, perhaps before or after one of your concerts when your tour goes through our cities in September, October or November.

In the meantime, we would like to send you a book written by Eyal Sivan and Armelle Laborie entitled « A legitimate boycott », which will provide you with valuable information on the legitimacy of the cultural boycott.

While we wait for a favorable response from you, we are happy to share any additional useful information.

Sincerely,

Yves (Clermont-Ferrand, September 24), Dror (Paris, September 27-29), Juliette (Marseille, October 10), Elise (Rennes, November 7), André (Cenon, November 8), Perrine (Strasbourg, November 12), Olivier (Grenoble, November 13)

For the BDS France Campaign