

Mr Graham Norton  
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20<sup>th</sup> February 2019

**Dear Graham,**

We are big fans of yours. You make us laugh a lot on your talk show as you invite us to experience highs and lows from other people's lives. You come across on the telly as a very decent bloke, maybe that's why you're so successful. When you put on your sad face in response to someone else's misfortune it rings true, you make it real for us, because it is self-evidently real for you. It tells us that you have a reservoir of concern for others, that you have empathy. That is why your Palestinian friends and advocates are reaching out to you. We gather you are about to be handed a hot potato, a very hot potato; commentating Eurovision 2019 in Israel.

**Here's why:**

Palestinians request an international picket line to boycott Israel, including cultural events there, as a desperate attempt to draw attention to their suffering. In 2015 some 1,000 British artists signed up.

We all condemn violence in the comfort of our living rooms but non-violent resistance is only meaningful if powerful people like you choose to join their struggle. The boycott is supported by the likes of Elvis Costello, Annie Lennox, Nigel Kennedy, Wolf Alice, Brian Eno, Roger Waters, the late Stephen Hawking... and many more have chosen to cancel performances in Israel such as Lauryn Hill, Vanessa Paradis and Snoop Dogg, a selection which could easily resemble your sofa on a Friday night!

By projecting your voice to millions from Israel, in the state which forcibly silences Palestinians, you will help to mask their suffering, sustain their pain and help to whitewash the crimes committed against them. Although Eurovision prides itself on the values of 'inclusion, diversity and unity', which we all of course welcome, there is nothing more contradictory to this than Israel's occupation, apartheid and colonialism.

**Now some facts:**

In Gaza one million children are under Israel's siege. Their access to food, water, electricity, healthcare and education is made deliberately gruelling or nigh on impossible. Israeli official Dov Weisglass's plan in 2006 was, "to put the Palestinians on a diet, but not make them die of hunger". He's succeeded, creating widespread malnutrition. There were massacres against Gaza in 2008, 2012, 2014 and one continues now. When Israel rained down terror there in 2014 it killed 547 children whilst 'battle proving' weapons for export. **This is a massacre. This is an apartheid.**

There's more: in the West Bank millions of Palestinians live under Israeli military rule. Their freedom of movement, freedom to build, work, tend crops, transport goods and even dig for water is restricted by over 5000 military laws and edicts. Forced to wait at checkpoints, their access to jobs and healthcare is restricted, even pregnant women fear having to wait; 60 women had to give birth in unsanitary conditions at checkpoints from 2000 to 2005, 36 babies and 5 women died as a result. Israel pretends it wants peace but continues to build settlements, demolish Palestinian homes and evict families in East Jerusalem. **This is settler-colonialism. This is an apartheid.**

In Israel itself, Palestinians are second-class citizens. Laws prevent them from returning to their homes making them the world's largest refugee population; one in three refugees worldwide are Palestinian. Yet Jews from all over the world are invited to Israel to buy property and are immediately granted superior status as 'Jewish Nationals' whereas Palestinians are merely 'Israeli citizens' and subjected to over 60 racist laws. Even schools for Jewish-Israeli children receive almost six times more funding than Palestinian schools, despite them all being Israeli citizens. **This is an apartheid.**

## **Why Eurovision?:**

For Israel, cultural events are always political events. Hosting Eurovision is the ultimate victory in Israel's mission to improve its public image by 'artwashing' its crimes. Here it can theatrically display itself as a diverse, welcoming and liberal society to an international audience of 180 million people, using this charade to strengthen its regime of oppression and ethnic cleansing.

From its 'Brand Israel' campaign launched in 2005 to improve its public image against a backdrop of apartheid and ethnic cleansing, to tweeting about Alicia Keys no less than eight times after she performed in Tel Aviv, to drafting messages for fans to send Lana Del Rey encouraging her to perform, the Israeli government shows time and time again it desperately relies on cultural events to maintain its system of oppression. Netanyahu let his guard slip when he lauded Netta for her 'exceptional foreign relations work'!

## **Pull the Lever:**

We all know of Nobel Peace Laureate Desmond Tutu's profound quote, "If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor," but we also know it is not always easy to live by it.

Palestinians call for your support in this, their hour of need. For this non-violent resistance may be all that we have left in this pursuit of justice.

You were the presenter of Children in Need. Do not allow your voice, laughter and wit be used to drown out the crying of children, the buzzing of drones overhead and the international calls for justice. Eurovision asks us this year to 'dare to dream'. What about Palestinian children's dreams just to sleep, study or play free from Israel's violent occupation? They deserve to dream too and not be terrorised in the night.

Let's act collectively to realise the dream, which must surely come, when Israel subscribes to the idea of equal human rights under international law for our Palestinian brothers and sisters.

Rather than have your voice speak to millions in their living rooms from Israel on May 18<sup>th</sup>, instead, why not choose to speak for the suffering by not speaking at all?

Go on, pull the lever and dump Israel's Eurovision cultural whitewash!

In hopeful solidarity,

Your Palestinian friends and advocates:

**Palestine Community Foundation**  
**Roger Waters**  
**Lowkey**  
**Ken Loach**  
**Friends of Al-Aqsa**  
**King's College London Action Palestine Society**  
**University of Leeds Palestine Solidarity Group**  
**Newcastle University Friends of Palestine Society**  
**Goldsmiths' Student Union Palestine Society**  
**University of Bristol Friends of Palestine**  
**University of Leicester Palestine Society**  
**Aberdeen University Palestine Society**  
**University of York Palestinian Solidarity Society**  
**City University of London Palestinian Society**  
**University of Wolverhampton Friends of Palestine Society**

**University of Westminster Friends of Palestine Society**  
**University of Westminster LGBTI+ Society**  
**University of Sheffield Palestine Society**  
**Brunel Palestine Society**  
**University of Birmingham Students for Justice in Palestine**  
**University of Portsmouth Palestine Solidarity Society**  
**University of Lancaster Friends of Palestine Society**  
**Bristol Palestine Solidarity Campaign (UK)**  
**Portsmouth/South Downs Palestine Solidarity Campaign**  
**Bradford Palestine Solidarity Campaign**  
**Cambridge Palestine Solidarity Campaign**  
**Three Peaks for Palestine**  
**Waltham Forest Palestine Solidarity Campaign**  
**Slough and East Berkshire Palestine Solidarity Campaign**