

May 29, 2014

Mayor Jim Watson
Deputy City Manager Steve Kanellakos
Ottawa City Hall
100 Laurier Ave W
Ottawa, ON K1P 1J1

Dear Mayor Jim Watson and Deputy City Manager Steve Kanellakos,

As members of the Canadian and international visual, media arts and cultural communities, we are grateful to you for upholding our Canadian values of freedom of artistic expression. We are deeply disturbed by the recent Israeli Embassy's attack on these democratic values and encourage you to defend them in the face of complex global politics.

Your recent exhibition, *Invisible*, at the Karsh-Masson Gallery in Ottawa's City Hall, a solo exhibition by Toronto based Rehab Nazzal, collects and compiles traces of Palestine and its military occupation by Israel. Using video, sound and photography, many from Israeli sources, Nazzal provides a necessary voice of witness in the long history of loss in Palestine and to the contemporary reality of Palestinians.

We are shocked that the Embassy, a diplomatic representative of a foreign state, would publicly critique and misrepresent the work of Rehab Nazzal through a press release. We are even more disturbed that they would seek to change the art selection process at City Hall or apply restrictions to the process.

On May 22, 2014 Israeli Ambassador Rafael Barak met with Mayor Jim Watson to make claims that the exhibition is "glorifying terrorism." On the same day, the Jewish Federation of Ottawa and the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (the advocacy arm of the Jewish Federations of Canada) issued a statement calling for the removal of the exhibition.

We are writing to commend you for upholding the principles of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and of free expression. We are pleased that the exhibition will continue as planned.

We are, however, concerned that the long standing tradition of arms length funding and arms length adjudication developed over many years through the public sector will be threatened. We support the committee process you have developed whereby a committee of art professionals makes curatorial decisions with autonomy. The Canada Council for the Arts and many other councils and public bodies follow this selection process.

Artists, curators, and galleries must remain free to make and show art that deals with issues of contemporary social and political significance, including those of social justice. Canada must not allow a foreign state and its diplomatic body to assert this level of political influence and to censor artwork. Freedom of expression must be defended.

The Undersigned,

1. Nahla Abdo, Professor, Ottawa
2. Reem Abdul Qadir, Social Worker and Advocate, Toronto
3. Hala Al-Madi, Artist, Ottawa, ON
4. Conrad Alexandrowicz, Professor, Victoria
5. Issam Alyamani, Journalist, Toronto
6. Basil AlZeri, Artist, Toronto
7. Zainab Amadahy, Writer, Toronto
8. Sriram Ananth, Writer, Toronto
9. Heather Anderson, Curator, Carleton University Art Gallery
10. Michael Ashley, Artist, Ottawa, Canada
11. Hadeel Assali, Filmmaker, NYC
12. Masooma Azhar, Artist, Educator, Toronto
13. Gina Badger, Visual Artist, Editor, Toronto
14. Sharlene Bamboat, Artist, Toronto
15. Alana Bartol, Artist, Windsor
16. Sarah Bassnett, Professor, London, Ontario
17. Ron Benner, Visual Artist, London, Ontario
18. Florencia Berinstein, Artist, Toronto
19. Naomi Binder Wall, Writer, Toronto
20. Elizabeth Block, Potter and Craftswoman, Toronto
21. Majdi Bou-Matar, Theatre Artist, Kitchener
22. Bill Brown, Writer, Art Collector, Ottawa
23. Gerda Cammaer, Filmmaker, Professor, Toronto
24. Wendy Coburn, Artist, Associate Professor, Toronto
25. Carole Condé + Karl Beveridge, Visual Artists, Toronto
26. Christine Conley, Curator, Professor, Ottawa
27. Michael Davidge, Artist, Ottawa
28. Judith Deutsch, Psychoanalyst, Columnist, Toronto
29. Bonnie Devine, Visual Artist, Toronto
30. Susan Edelstein Curator/Art Gallery Director, London, Ontario
31. Majdi El-Omari, Filmmaker and Producer, Montréal
32. Mary Ellen Davis, Filmmaker, Art Instructor, Montréal
33. FAG Feminist Art Gallery, Toronto
34. Dionne Falconer, Toronto
35. Michael Farnan, artist, Victoria Harbour
36. Andrea Fatona, Curator and Professor, Toronto
37. Lois Fine, Writer, Toronto
38. Elle Flanders, Filmmaker, Toronto
39. Victoria Freeman, Writer, Toronto
40. Richard Fung, Filmmaker, Academic, Toronto
41. Rebecca Garrett, Artist & Videographer, Toronto

42. Lorraine Gilbert, Professor, Ottawa
43. Susan Gold Smith, Artist, Windsor
44. Sue Goldstein, Artist, Writer, Activist, Toronto
45. Francisco-Fernando Granados, Artist, Writer, Teacher, Toronto
46. John Greyson, Film/Video Artist, Professor, Toronto
47. Cathy Gulkin, Filmmaker, Toronto
48. Freda Guttman, Artist and community activist, Montréal
49. k.g. Guttman, Artist, Montréal
50. Rawi Hage, Novelist, Montréal
51. Max Haiven, Professor, Halifax
52. Gita Hashemi, Artist, Curator, Writer, Educator, Toronto
53. Jamelie Hassan, Visual Artist, London, Ontario
54. Nasrin Himada, PhD Candidate, Montréal
55. Mike Hoolboom, Artist, Toronto
56. Randy Innes, Scholar, Instructor, Ottawa
57. Annemarie Jacir, Filmmaker, Palestine
58. Edwin Janzen, Visual Artist and Writer, Montréal
59. Jake Javanshir, Property Inspector, Toronto
60. Kelly Jazvac, Artist, Professor, London, Ontario
61. Ingrid Jenkner, Curator, Lecturer, Halifax
62. Thamilini Jothilingam, Artist, Toronto
63. Reena Katz, Artist, Toronto
64. Jennifer Kawaja, Filmmaker, Producer, Toronto
65. Ali Kazimi, Filmmaker, Writer, Associate Professor, Toronto
66. Dave Kemp, Artist/Photographer, London, Ontario
67. Natalie Kouri-Towe, Academic, Toronto
68. Louise Lalande, Facilitator, Artist, Ottawa
69. Loree Lawrence, Artist, Arts Administrator, Toronto
70. Paul Leduc Browne, Professor, Gatineau
71. Min Sook Lee, Filmmaker, Adjunct Professor, Toronto
72. Candace Livingstone, free speech advocate, Toronto
73. Keith Lock, Filmmaker, Toronto
74. Deirdre Logue, Artist, Toronto
75. Jennifer Macklem, Artist, Ottawa
76. Dania Majid, Human Rights Lawyer, Film Festival Programmer, Toronto
77. Ghadeer Malek, Writer, Toronto
78. Nahed Mansour, Artist, Toronto
79. Laura Margita, Artist, Director, Curator, Ottawa
80. Deborah Margo, Visual Artist, Ottawa
81. Dr. Laura U. Marks, Professor, Vancouver
82. Robert Massoud, Event Convener, Toronto
83. David Merritt, Artist, Professor, London, Ontario
84. Anna Miransky, Psychotherapist, Toronto
85. Alexis Mitchell, Artist, Toronto
86. Allyson Mitchell, Artist, Toronto
87. Monique Mojica - Actor/Playwright, Toronto
88. Vicky Moufawad-Paul, Curator, Toronto
89. Dorit Naaman, Israeli-Canadian documentary filmmaker, Kingston
90. John O'Brian, Author and Professor, Vancouver

91. Ananya Ohri, Toronto
92. Bruce Parsons, Artist, Professor, Toronto
93. Ian Iqbal Rashid, Filmmaker, London, UK
94. Kim Renders, Theatre Artist, Professor, Kingston
95. Patricia Reynolds, Educator, Musician, Ottawa
96. Angela Robertson, Community Health Worker, Advocate, Toronto
97. Clive Robertson, Media artist, Art Historian, Kingston
98. Kirsty Robertson, Associate Professor, London, Ontario
99. Christopher Rohde, Filmmaker and Programmer, Ottawa
100. Samah Sabawi, Playwright, Melbourne, Australia
101. Trish Salah, Writer and Professor, Winnipeg
102. Eugenio Salas, Artist, Toronto/London, ON
103. Jayce Salloum, Artist, Vancouver
104. Julian Samuel, Documentary Filmmaker, Montréal
105. Raheleh Saneie "Rah", Video and Photo Artist, Montréal
106. Alan Sears, Professor, Toronto
107. Lisa Deanne Smith, Curator, Toronto
108. Gabriella Solti, Artist, London, Ontario
109. Christine Sprengler, Associate Professor, Art Historian, London, Ontario
110. Michael Springate, Writer, Vancouver
111. Jason St-Laurent, Artist and Curator, Ottawa
112. Stefan St-Laurent, Artist, Curator, and Adjunct Professor, Ottawa
113. Laura Taler, Artist/Filmmaker, Ottawa
114. Toronto Palestine Film Festival
115. Rinaldo Walcott, Professor, Toronto
116. Kathy Wazana, Documentary Filmmaker, Toronto
117. Samantha Wehbi, Associate Professor, Toronto, Canada
118. Michelle Weinroth, Writer, Translator, Educator, Ottawa
119. Justin Wonnacott, Professor, Ottawa
120. Kelly Wood, Artist, London, Ontario
121. b.h. Yael, Filmmaker/Artist, Professor, Toronto
122. Diana Younes, Artist, Yoga Instructor, Lawyer, Toronto
123. Rachel Zolf, Writer, Toronto
124. Alize Zorlutuna, Artist, Toronto/Vancouver
125. Sami Zubi, Artist, Ottawa