

STRIKE ACTION

BIENNALE ON STRIKE: FOR PALESTINE, FOR WORKERS' RIGHTS

Today is a day of strike action and mobilization: for Palestine, for workers' rights, and in defense of dignity in cultural labour.

A total of 237 curators, artists, and art workers exhibiting in 2026 Art Biennale have joined the campaign launched by ANGA (Art Not Genocide Alliance), which since 2024 has conveyed the refusal of artists, artworkers and curators at sharing a stage with Israel in the world's most renowned contemporary art exhibition. The call demands divestment and an end to impunity in the face of ongoing war crimes and genocide, within a global climate of expanding imperialism, escalating militarization, and widening war fronts supported by the United States and numerous European governments.

ANGA has called the cultural sector strike alongside Biennialocene, Mi Riconosci?, Sale Docks, and Vogliamo Tutt'altro — Italian activist organizations that for years have fought against the appalling conditions of labour in the cultural sector, including precarity, poverty wages, outsourcing, invisibilised labour, and inadequate or nonexistent contracts. The strike also opposes the diversion of public resources away from welfare, education, and culture toward military spending and securitisation. As stated in the strike notice issued by the unions ADL Cobas, USB, and CUB, all of this is taking place while massacres and systematic violations of human rights continue to be legitimised, in part through the labour of thousands of workers within the cultural sector.

The Venice Biennale presents itself as a neutral space of culture and international exchange. It is not neutral. Cultural institutions cannot continue to separate art from the political and material conditions that sustain it. There can be no business as usual while Palestinians continue to face mass killing, displacement, siege, and occupation, and while cultural workers themselves are pushed into increasingly precarious conditions.

This pavilion/ artist(s)/ performer(s) joins the strike in solidarity with Palestine and with all cultural workers fighting for justice, dignity, and collective power.

ANGA states: "The Biennale and the Italian government continue to support Netanyahu's government, wanted by the International Criminal Court (ICC) on allegations of war crimes and crimes against humanity related to the Gaza war. Israel, which this year cannot rely on its historic pavilion in the Giardini, is being officially 'hosted' by the Biennale, which has decided to offer it space at the Arsenale. Why is the red carpet being rolled out for a state responsible for genocide, apartheid, and ethnic cleansing?"

Mi Riconosci? declares: "The ecosystem of precarious labour that grows around the Biennale event and the workers directly outsourced by the Foundation, is also a nexus of precariousness and exploitation in cultural labour, conditions further worsened by the war economy and the militarization of a country complicit in genocide. Poor and inadequate contracts, bogus self-employment schemes, and zero access to welfare are the norm."

STRIKE FAQs

Q: Why are you striking?

The strike is a day of mobilisation against the presence of the Israeli pavilion and in defence of dignity in cultural work. Built over months of organizing, it rejects both the normalization of Israel's presence in cultural spaces and the economies of genocide in culture, while also denouncing the ecosystem of precarious labour that grows around the Biennale event. **The strike highlights how the same political and economic systems funding war abroad also erode welfare, labour protections, and public culture locally.**

Today, all workers have the legal right to refuse work and join the strike, and ANGA is calling on participating artists, curators, and cultural workers to close national pavilions and exhibition spaces and **join the public demonstration at 4:30 pm, starting from Via Garibaldi.**

No artist or cultural worker should be asked to share a platform with a state perpetrating genocide, that has used starvation as a weapon of war, systematically destroyed civilian infrastructure, and repeatedly targeted hospitals, journalists, schools, universities, and refugee camps. Palestinians should not be forced to endlessly prove their humanity while enduring decades of occupation, displacement, siege, and state violence. The strike is a refusal of that normalization, and an insistence that cultural institutions and those who sustain them cannot remain neutral in the face of mass atrocity.

Q: What about the United States? and other States perpetrating violence?

This campaign is strategically focused on the demand to exclude Israel from the Venice Biennale because **targeted action creates points of real political pressure. Organising around a specific institutional demand is a tactic, not a moral hierarchy of suffering or responsibility.** Israel's assault on Gaza is enabled materially, militarily, economically, and diplomatically by powerful allied states, particularly the United States, alongside numerous European governments. We recognize and oppose these wider structures of imperialism, militarism, occupation, and racial violence. See our Guide to Complicity.

At the same time, the Venice Biennale provides direct cultural legitimacy and representation to the State of Israel through its national pavilion. **ANGA's intervention addresses the concrete responsibility of this institution and the role cultural platforms play in normalising or obscuring state violence.** Refusing the cultural normalisation of a state accused of war crimes and genocide is a concrete act of solidarity and collective refusal.

ANGA stands in solidarity with all struggles against colonialism, militarisation, occupation, and oppression. Our presence at the Venice Biennale is part of a broader international movement demanding accountability, divestment, and an end to impunity.

As Angela Davis stated on 19 October 2023:

“Palestine serves as a measure of what we are capable of doing with respect to changing the entire world.”

Q: Artists are not their governments. What about dialogue?

A national pavilion at the Venice Biennale is not an individual studio or independent platform; it is an official cultural representation of a state. **ANGA’s call concerns the participation of the Israeli state through its national pavilion, not the personal beliefs or identities of individual artists.**

Cultural platforms often invoke “dialogue” while continuing relations that normalise and legitimise state power without consequence. In such conditions, dialogue risks becoming a mechanism for maintaining the status quo rather than challenging it. **Dialogue is not neutral when conducted under conditions of ongoing oppression.**

Refusal does not foreclose dialogue; it creates the conditions under which meaningful dialogue becomes possible. Historically, cultural, academic, and economic boycotts have been used to apply collective pressure against systems of oppression, including apartheid South Africa. Their purpose is to make the continuation of state violence, segregation, and impunity politically and materially costly.

The question is not whether exchange should exist, but what kind of exchange is possible while one side remains under bombardment, occupation, and displacement. **Accountability is not the opposite of dialogue. It is the condition for any just dialogue to emerge.**

Q: Why not boycott the biennale if you disagree with their support of Israel?

This mobilisation is rooted not only in refusal, but in collective labour action. Cultural workers, artists, curators, technicians, installers, educators, mediators, and staff all sustain the Biennale through their labour. The strike makes visible the people and conditions that uphold the institution, and withdraws that labour in protest.

History shows that when formal justice is suspended, responsibility shifts to students, workers, writers, artists, and civilians. We see this strike as part of that responsibility: to refuse normalisation, to act collectively, and to insist that cultural institutions cannot continue business as usual in the face of mass violence and dispossession.

We are responding to the call for collective action made by ANGA (Art Not Genocide Alliance), national organisations, and trade unions. We believe it is our responsibility to strike in solidarity with Palestine and to **make clear to the Biennale that we will not accept its complicity in, and continued inclusion of, a state perpetrating war crimes and genocide.**

Q: Is calling to exclude Israel from the Biennale anti-Jewish or antisemitic?

No. A national pavilion at the Venice Biennale is an official representation of a state, not of a religion or an ethnic identity. Criticising the actions of the Israeli state, or calling for the exclusion of its state-funded pavilion, is not anti-Jewish or antisemitic.

All UN member states, is subject to international law and cannot be treated as an exception to standards of accountability applied elsewhere. Sanctions should be applied to all states equally. The State of Israel is currently the subject of proceedings at the International Court of Justice concerning genocide in Gaza, and multiple Israeli officials are the subject of International Criminal Court arrest warrants relating to war crimes and crimes against humanity.

ANGA's campaign targets state institutions and structures of impunity, not Jewish people. Antisemitism — like all forms of racism, discrimination, and collective hatred — is unequivocally opposed by this movement. ANGA does not target artists or individual cultural practitioners as people, but the role of national pavilions as official representatives of states. Our position is grounded in principles of human rights, equality, accountability, and opposition to apartheid, occupation, and mass violence.