

Censorship is a systemic tool for suppressing those from below (Online Article)

Historical Note

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Content

Censorship is a systemic tool for suppressing those from below

Incidents of censorship in Cyprus have increased in recent years, escalating from online threats to violent attacks. Presentations of children's books by private institutions are censored following online interventions by members of parliament; books by state institutions are censored following interventions by members of parliament; and art exhibitions are censored following a combination of political, state, and deep state pressure.

Politicians across the island have demonstrated a readiness to suppress dissenting voices and censor critics without hesitation. We have also seen failed attempts at censorship, such as the president of the State Literary Awards committee urging the Deputy Ministry of Culture to reverse its recent award for a poetry collection. The Deputy Ministry stood its ground and stated that "it does not censor literary works," although it had no problem censoring the publication of Cyprus' participation in the Architecture Biennale or failing to take a stand against the unwarranted attacks on Giorgos Gavriel.

The recent case of censorship against Giorgos Gavriel can only be considered the result of a combination of state and deepstate attacks. It began with the (online) character assassination spearheaded by Efthymios Diplaros, MP and vice president of DISY, who proceeded to reproduce fake news (a product of montage), assisted by statements from the Speaker of the House (coincidentally they do belong to the same party). Both sides were vocal in their condemnation of Gavriel and his work, but silent in the face of deep state threats against the gallery owner's life, attacks on the gallery and, most importantly, the deep state attack on the home of George Gavriel's family.

Unfortunately, we expected nothing less from the deep state, nor anything more from the state and its political representatives.

Censorship cannot be dealt with à la carte. Either you stand against censorship expressed as a result of nationalist and/or racist discourse, or you support it directly or indirectly. Either you defend any voice that opposes nationalism, racism, homophobia, sexism, or you support the fusion of the (nationalist) homeland - religion (or religious fanaticism) - and the (heteronormative) family. Every time we remain silent in the face of censorship, it will return stronger, and those who remain silent or censor themselves are responsible for this.

The Nicosia Alternative Book Festival was established to combat censorship and, above all, the reactionary ideologies that encourage it. We remain steadfast in our positions and stand by Giorgos Gavriel, who has our unconditional support. No one forced those who do not like Gavriel's art to visit the gallery or decorate their walls with his art. In fact, it was they who gave it exposure, altered or

not, on social media.

We call on cultural institutions to take action to ensure freedom of expression, from protecting art spaces and artists to organising events to promote artists and their work when they are attacked.

Nicosia Alternative Book Festival

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