



FREEMUSE
FREEDOM OF MUSICAL EXPRESSION

DECLARATION

A nation that opens its windows to the world is able to develop because it is self confident. Such a nation can absorb and enjoy new visions, ideas and artistic presentations. A nation that closes its mind, on the other hand, is bound to isolation and rooms of darkness.

A society that is dedicated to the UN declarations on Human Rights, considers itself a respected member of the international community, and is aware of its own cultural richness should support and promote diversity of artistic expression.

In this spirit, civil society in Bahrain has sought a “Spring of Culture” festival that can bridge the gap between the traditional and the modern, between the local and the global.

While it is fit of a society and its politicians to discuss culture, the recent attacks by Bahraini politicians at the Lebanese composer Marcel Khalife and Bahraini poet Qassim Haddad for their interpretation of 'Laila Wal Majnoon' has taken this discussion into a seriously unhealthy direction.

Freemuse – an international organisation advocating freedom of expression for musicians and composers – is concerned about the recent attacks in Bahrain on the “Spring of Culture.”

While many in the western world would like to hold on to the stereotype of a backward Arab world, conservative political forces in Arab countries are reinforcing this false image by their apparent hostility toward artists and the arts.

This is especially the case with artists contributing in new and innovative ways.

When a political discussion focuses on censorship - rather than dialogue and constructive criticism - the situation easily develops into confrontation. It is therefore the responsibility of the politicians and other influential communities of Bahrain to seek dialogue create space for innovation and to protect the artists.

Political responsibility is to provide fuel to a nation, not cut off the fuel its artists provide, and certainly not set arson to it. The new interpretation of 'Laila Wal Majnoon' provides an opportunity for Bahraini society to examine its role in the modern world and to engage in democratic discussion.

Freemuse - representing artists, media, researchers and human rights workers in countries around the world - supports the “spring of culture” and asks the leaders of Bahrain to take responsibility for culture, support civil society and protect freedom of the arts.

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