

'McJesus' art sculpture to be removed from Israeli museum after violent protests



A sculpture of Ronald McDonald nailed to a cross will be removed from an Israeli art museum after it sparked violent protests among the country's Arab Christians.

Einat Kalisch-Rotem, mayor of the Israeli city of Haifa, announced on Wednesday that the crucified "McJesus" sculpture will be returning to Finland, The Times of Israel reported.

"In an agreement with the church leaders, and since the lending agreement for the sculpture ends in the coming days, it will be removed, and returned as soon as possible," Rotem tweeted.

She included a photo of the contract between the Zetterberg Gallery in Helsinki and the Haifa museum which stated that the statue would be returned by January 2019.

The art piece arrived to be included in the "Sacred Goods" exhibit in June and is meant to bring awareness to and criticize society's obsession with capitalism.

Rotem defended the removal of the sculpture in tweets translated by The Times of Israel.

"Without any connection, we believe in freedom of speech as a cornerstone of democracy," she wrote. "We regret the distress experienced by the Christian community in Haifa, and the physical injury and violence that followed. We thank the heads of the Christian churches and priests in Haifa for the dialogue and desire to bridge, the effort to reach a solution, and to prevent violence."

The sculpture sparked massive protests among Christian residents, who descended on the museum and clashed with police this week.

Police told the Associated Press that rioters threw a firebomb at the museum and crowds of protesters had to be dispersed using teargas and stun grenades.

Culture and Sport Minister Miri Regev also threatened to withhold funding for the museum unless “McJesus” was removed although the country’s Deputy Attorney General Dana Zilber said Regev does not have that legal authority, The Times of Israel noted.

The Finnish artist behind the “McJesus” sculpture, Jani Leinonen, also called for the piece to be removed because of his support for the boycotts against Israel.

“I joined the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement, that upholds the simple principle that Palestinians are entitled to the same rights as the rest of humanity,” Leinonen told the Jerusalem Post. “Israel overtly uses culture as a form of propaganda to whitewash or justify its regime of occupation, settler-colonialism, and apartheid over the Palestinian people. Therefore I do not wish to be part of this exhibition, and I asked the museum to take my artwork off the exhibition.”

Source: <https://thehill.com/blogs/blog-briefing-room/news/425992-mcjesus-art-sculpture-to-be-removed-from-israeli-museum-after>

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