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Editorial | Cease Fire, Gallant: Give Israel Prize to Radical Mathematician

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Education Minister Yoav Gallant Credit: Avishag Shaar-Yashuv



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Education Minister Yoav Gallant has kept up his pathetic efforts to look for action in his ministry. Recently he refused twice to confirm an Israel Prize in mathematics and computer sciences to Professor Oded Goldreich of the Weizmann Institute, claiming that he's a BDS supporter.

From the standpoint of Gallant, who's more deserving of the title of minister of war rather than education, Goldreich

should be denied the Israel Prize for signing an appeal to the [German parliament](#) calling for cancelling recognition of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement as an antisemitic movement.

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“A situation in which a professor receives a most prestigious prize in one hand while with the other he advances the interests of a movement that undermines Israel’s existence – is absurd and inconceivable,” Gallant wrote to the prize committee members a month ago, when he first asked them to reconsider their decision. Any connection to the election campaign is hard to deny. He told his confidants that the thought of giving Goldreich the prize was “stomach-turning.”

The committee of judges rejected the attempt to change their decision providing the justified rationale that these matters are irrelevant to bestowing a prize for scientific achievements.

[Gallant](#) refused to accept this explanation and repeated his request. The rules governing the Israel Prize do permit the education minister to ask the committee to reconsider but also specify that “the committee’s second decision is final.”

After even a third decision didn’t help, committee members had no choice but to appeal to the Supreme Court which will weigh the petition on Thursday. At the committee chairperson’s request, Goldreich has clarified that he is not a supporter of BDS and has never supported the movement.

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In the meantime, it appears that Gallant isn't waiting for the court: On Sunday the Education Ministry sent invitations to the Israel Prize ceremony which lack any mention of the fields of mathematics and computer sciences. Gallant has completely ignored the fact that his authority as education minister to not approve the decisions of the judges committee is very limited, and relates to a situation in which substantial flaws come to light in the committees' work. Gallant's political "stomach aches" are irrelevant and not of any interest to anyone.

Cease fire, Gallant. The education minister must make clear that Professor Goldreich will receive the prize for his work in computational complexity on the eve of Independence Day. Any other response would be unacceptable. If Minister Gallant doesn't understand this on his own then the court must make it clear to him that he cannot taint Israel's important prize with political rationale of the lowliest level.

The above article is Haaretz's lead editorial, as published in the Hebrew and English newspapers in Israel.

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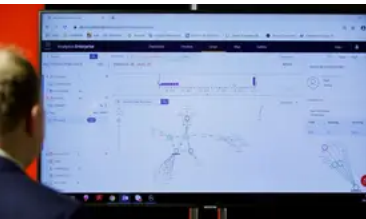
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