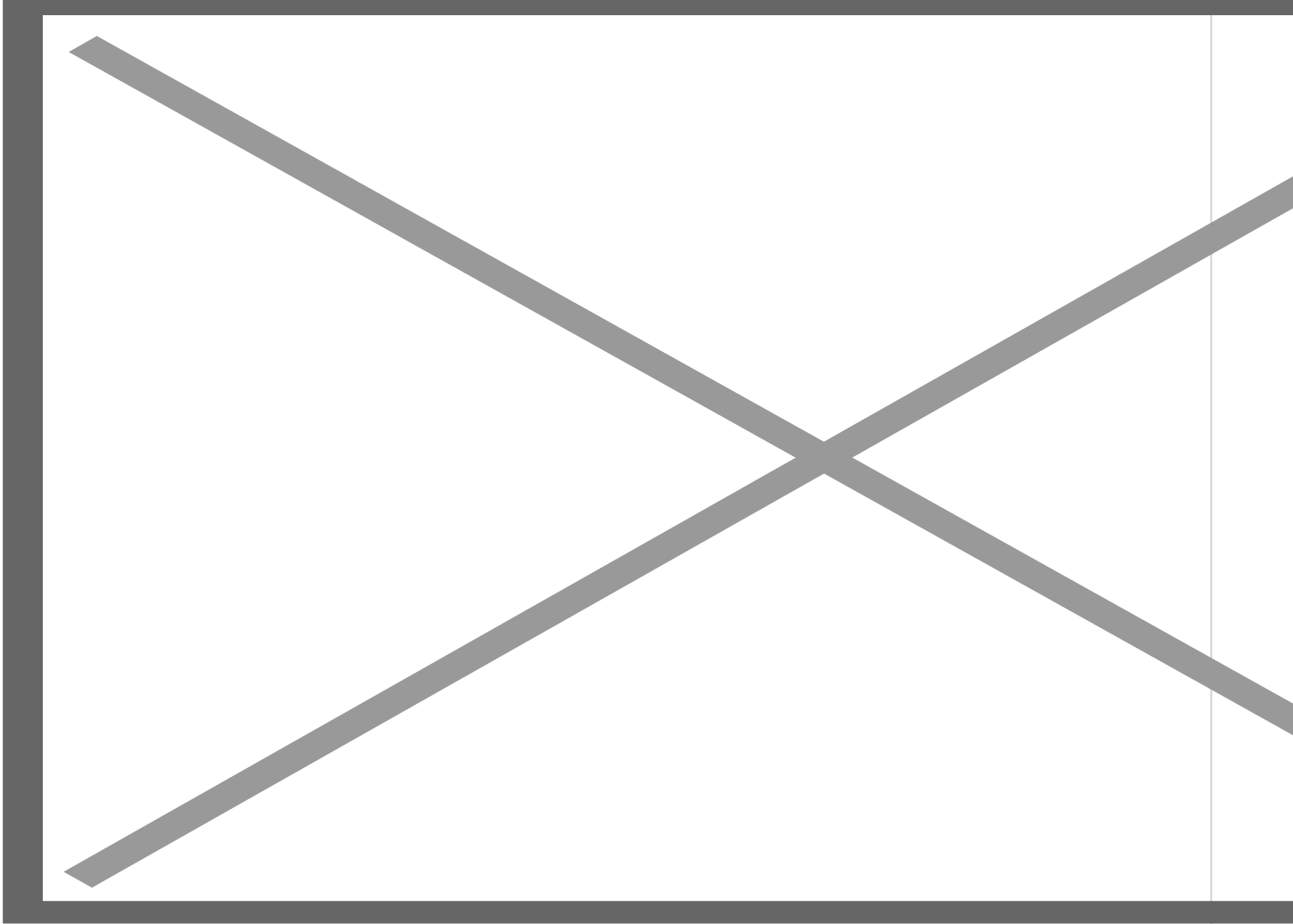


*Twenty-nine writers withdraw
from PEN Prizes to protest
complicity in normalizing
genocide*

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New York, April 18 (RHC)-- Twenty-nine authors and translators have withdrawn from consideration for PEN America's prestigious literary prizes to protest the organization's leadership and silencing of Palestinian voices.

In an open letter, some of the authors wrote: "We refuse to be honored by an organization that acts as a cultural front for American exceptionalism. We refuse to gild the reputation of an organization that runs interference for an administration aiding and abetting genocide with our tax dollars. And we refuse to take part in celebrations that will serve to overshadow PEN's complicity in normalizing genocide."

In other news, on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC, activists disrupted U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin as he spoke at a House Armed Services Committee meeting Wednesday . Among the protesters was Naseebah Hajjaj, a Palestinian-American woman who has lost some 20 relatives in Gaza since October 7th.

She held up her 16-month-old son Hamza during the hearing, shouting: "My child is human. Stop killing Palestinian children!" She and her son were forcibly escorted from the room and were detained, as the Pentagon chief continued his testimony.

This comes while the House of Representatives plan to vote on three separate legislative bills to provide \$95 billion to Israel, Ukraine and Taiwan. A vote could come on Saturday and is expected to pass. Biden has promised to sign it.

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