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# Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art

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## Statement of the Berlin Biennale in response the open letter *Beyond Repair. Regarding torture at the Berlin Biennale*

Berlin, August 15, 2022

On July 29, 2022, *Artforum* magazine published a letter written by Rijin Sahakian and co-signed by several artists. Among the signatories are the Iraqi artists Layth Kareem, Raed Mutar, and Sajjad Abbas, participants in the 12th Berlin Biennale. The open letter criticizes the placement of their works in the exhibition at Hamburger Bahnhof – Museum für Gegenwart – Berlin close to Jean-Jacques Lebel's work *Poison soluble. Scènes de l'occupation américaine à Bagdad* [Soluble poison. Scenes from the American occupation in Baghdad, 2013]. A response to the open letter written by Kader Attia, curator of the 12th Berlin Biennale, together with the members of the artistic team, Đỗ Tường Linh, Marie Helene Pereira, Noam Segal, and Rasha Salti, will shortly be published in *Artforum*.

The Berlin Biennale read Rijin Sahakian's letter with great dismay. We apologize that the placement of the affected Iraqi artists' works in close proximity to Jean-Jacques Lebel's work caused them great pain. We underestimated the sensitivity of the situation. We also apologize for failing to discuss the placement with them in advance in this special case. Likewise, we apologize that the process of replacing the works took so long.

We are in communication with Layth Kareem, Raed Mutar, Rijin Sahakian, and Sajjad Abbas and have already apologized to them personally. Currently, we are trying to find ways to work through the situation together and to understand the injuries that have been caused.

The website of the 12th Berlin Biennale provides information about the works of Jean-Jacques Lebel, Layth Kareem, Raed Mutar, and Sajjad Abbas.

*Poison soluble. Scènes de l'occupation américaine à Bagdad* is installed in the exhibition behind a curtain. In front of it, a sign informs visitors that large-scale images of violence are displayed and could trigger negative or retraumatizing reactions.