

Kenya's Ngugi dumps Swedish book fair over far-right newspaper

STOCKHOLM, Sweden - Kenyan literary icon Ngugi wa Thiong'o, often tipped for the Nobel literature prize, has pulled out of an annual Swedish book fair in protest at the presence of a right-wing extremist newspaper, his publisher said Wednesday.



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The 75-year-old author of *A Grain of Wheat* (1967) and *Petals of Blood* (1975), wrote an email to his Swedish publisher Modernista informing them he would cancel his attendance at the Gothenburg Book Fair, "in solidarity with the writers withdrawing and of course with the concerns behind their withdrawal", referring to the newspaper *Nya Tider*, which will be represented at the fair.

"We can confirm that Ngugi wa Thiong'o has cancelled his attendance at the book fair in Gothenburg in the autumn," Kristofer Andersson, development director at Modernista, told AFP.

Birgitta Jacobsson Ekblom, head of communications for the fair, added they had received this information and were in contact with Ngugi, a fierce critic of post-colonial Kenyan society.

The event, to be held September 28 to October 1, is Scandinavia's largest book fair and draws around 100,000 visitors each year.

On April 21, more than 200 Swedish authors signed an article in daily *Dagens Nyheter* saying they would boycott the book fair if *Nya Tider* is represented.

Additionally, 12 European national institutes of culture - from Germany, France, Romania, Spain and Portugal among others - sent an email to organisers Tuesday expressing their concern about *Nya Tider's* attendance and urging it to bar the publication, which has received state press subsidies since 2012.

"The purpose of the email, for me, was to ask where to draw the line between freedom of speech and providing hatred with a free platform," Laurent Clavel, head of the French Institute in Sweden, told public broadcaster SVT on Tuesday.

Fair organisers have, however, refused to budge on the issue. "We believe that an open dialogue is the best way to beat forces involving intolerance, racism and xenophobia," Ekblom told AFP.

Source: AFP.

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