

# Decolonising the Museum

إنهاء الاستعمار في المتحف

## Museum dekolonialisieren

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I am inspired by the Hawo Tako statue. Every time I go to the museum and see the Hawo Tako statue outside, I am deeply moved by her story, I feel sorry for her, and for the years she spent fighting for a cause that has now lost its meaning. I feel like she has chosen me to share her story with my community and fight for the same causes she did: freedom, unity, and equality. I will never forget the strength and courage of Hawo Tako, and I will strive to live up to her example. I want to follow in her footsteps and show the world how strong she was and to finally reach the goals she fought for.

The Somali Youth League (SYL) was founded in 1943 by a group of young Somali intellectuals who were determined to liberate their country from colonial rule. The SYL quickly gained popularity and support throughout Somalia, and it became the leading voice for Somali nationalism.

Hawo Tako joined the SYL in its early days and quickly became one of its most active members. She was a fearless and outspoken critic of colonial rule, and she was instrumental in organizing protests and demonstrations against the Italian administration.

In 1945, the SYL sent a delegation to the Potsdam Conference, a meeting of the victorious powers of World War II. The delegation presented a petition to the

conference demanding Somali independence. Although the petition was not successful, it brought international attention to the Somali cause and helped to raise awareness of the oppressive conditions under which Somalis were living.

Hawo Tako's story is an inspiration to young people around the world who are fighting for freedom and justice. Her courage, determination, and selflessness serve as a reminder that even the most ordinary individuals can make a difference in the world. She was empowering women: Hawo Tako was a pioneer for women's rights in Somalia.

To me, decolonising the museum means dismantling the structures and practices that have perpetuated Eurocentric narratives and marginalization of non-Western cultures and perspectives. It involves a critical examination of the museum's role in perpetuating colonial power imbalances and actively taking steps to redress these imbalances.

Decolonising the museum is an ongoing process that requires ongoing commitment and collaboration. It is a journey of learning, unlearning, and reimagining the role of museums in society. By taking steps to decolonise, museums can become more inclusive, representative, and just institutions that serve all communities.

The concept of decolonising the museum carries a unique significance from a Somali perspective, as it intersects with the country's rich cultural heritage and its colonial past. In Somalia, decolonising the museum would involve acknowledging and addressing the ways in which colonial narratives have shaped the representation of Somali history and culture within museum spaces. While the Berlin context focuses on addressing colonial legacies within European institutions.

The word "decolonise" in Somalia is commonly translated as "Xoreyn". **Xoreyn** is the Somali word for liberation. It is a powerful and evocative word that carries a deep

historical and cultural significance for the Somali people. It represents the struggle for freedom from oppression, including political, social, and economic.

**Origin:** The word Xoreyn is derived from the Arabic word hurriya, which also means liberation or freedom. This shared origin reflects the close historical and cultural ties between Somalia and the Arab world.

**Roots:** Beyond the Arabic origin, the concept of Xoreyn is deeply rooted in Somali culture and traditions. The Somali people have a long history of resisting oppression and fighting for their independence.

Gumaysi is the correct word for colonisation in Somali. It carries a negative connotation, signifying the act of taking control of a territory and exploiting its resources and people.

Connotations:

**Xoreyn:** This word evokes positive emotions such as hope, pride, and resilience. It reminds Somalis of their history of resistance and their ongoing pursuit of freedom.

**Gumaysi:** This word triggers negative emotions such as anger, resentment, and humiliation. It is a reminder of the injustices and hardships endured under colonial rule.

Examples:

**Xoreyntii Soomaaliya:** This phrase translates to "The liberation of Somalia" and refers to the country's independence from Italian and British colonial rule in 1960.

**Dagaalkii Gumeysiga:** This phrase translates to "The war against colonization" and refers to the various resistance movements that fought against colonial powers in Somalia.