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## UAE Bans "Spider-Man" Movie Over Pro-Transgender Poster

Censors flagged "Spider-Man: Across the Spiderverse" for violating prohibitions on LGBTQ-related content that offends Islamic beliefs.

By *Joseph Reberkenny* on June 20, 2023

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Miles Morales (Shameik Moore) and Gwen Stacy (Hailee Steinfeld) take on The Spot (Jason Schwartzman) - Photo: Sony Pictures Entertainment Motion Picture Group.

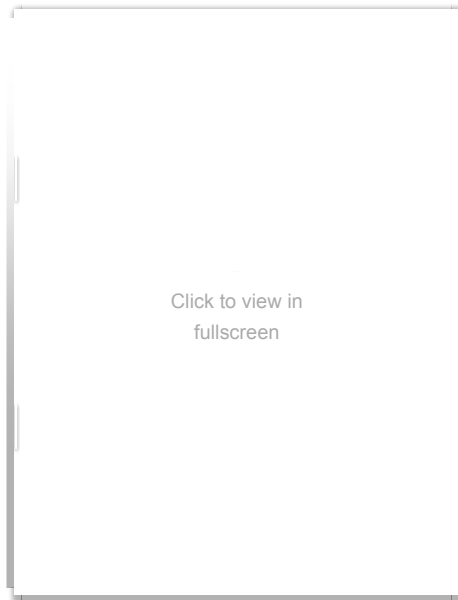
The computer-animated action film *Spider-Man: Across the Spiderverse* will not be shown in theaters in the United Arab Emirates after failing the country's censorship requirements, as reported by *Variety* last week.

The UAE's ban of the movie comes one week after Sony Pictures was set to release the film in the area.

Censors appear to have taken issue with a scene in the movie in which a transgender Pride flag and a "Protect Trans Lives" poster can be seen on a wall in the background of a scene.

Many countries in the Gulf region, including the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar, have strict guidelines which prohibit any depictions or discussions of deviations from traditional sexual and gender norms. This includes broaching the topics of, or referring to, homosexuality and transgender identity — both of which are considered taboo in

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UAE society.

The UAE's **official media regulation** website has a list of rules media must follow if screening content in the country. These include "not to offend the divine and Islamic beliefs." Due to Islam's rejection of homosexuality and its belief in only two genders, depicting or referencing a transgender person, or a person who supports transgender rights, violates the UAE's prohibition on such content.

The film is a sequel to the 2018 Oscar-winning movie *Spider-Man: Into the Spiderverse*, which made over \$1.7 million in the UAE. It was released in the United States on June 2 and was set to come out on June 22 in the UAE. However, since being flagged by the country's censors, the movie has been omitted from the "coming soon" list of upcoming films screening at major theater companies in the country, including Vox, Novo, and Reel cinemas.

**Trending**

**'A-List: Dallas' Star Allegedly Stole Thousands From Gay Men**



In addition to being banned in the UAE, the film is also not listed in Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman, and Bahrain.

Both *Spider-Man: Across the Spiderverse* and its prequel follow Miles Morales, a new Spider-Man discovering he is not the only 'Spider-Hero' to exist. Another one of the Spider-Heroes in the movie, Gwen Stacy — voiced by Hailee Steinfeld — is the character who has the offending "Protect Trans Lives" poster in her room. Due to the poster's presence, some movie viewers have speculated that Gwen is supposed to be interpreted as a transgender — and thus, could be another reason for the UAE's decision to ban the film — even though she is not explicitly identified as such in the film.

Banning films with 'taboo' characters or themes is not uncommon in the Middle East. The Disney movie *Lightyear* **was banned** in the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Malaysia for depicting a same-sex kiss between a lesbian couple.

The Marvel movie *The Eternals* was banned in November of 2021 for having a gay character and featuring a same-sex kiss, just months after Steven Spielberg's adaptation of the classic *West Side Story* **was barred from theaters for having a transgender character**, with the UAE's Youth and Culture Ministry saying the presence of a transgender character "violated the nation's media content standard."

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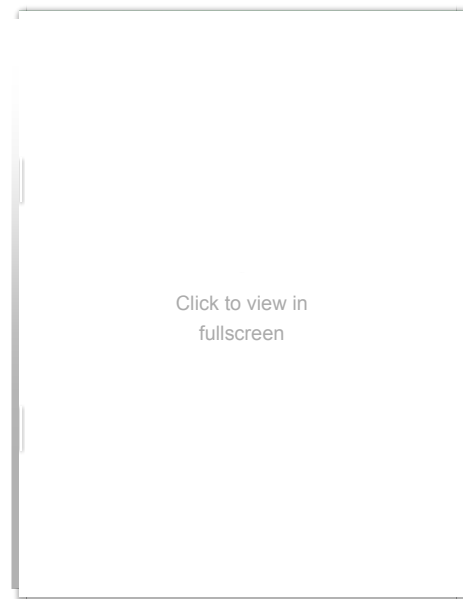


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By *Oliver Bates* on June 13, 2023

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By *John Riley* on June 9, 2023 @JRileyMW



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*By Doug Rule on June 3, 2023* @ruleonwriting

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