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ISN'T THERE ANY OTHER ALTERNATIVE IN SULUKULE?

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Sulukule is subject to demolishing...

In fact the world of the Sulukule people is subject to demolishing with the houses.

Life is sometimes built on daily facts which seem to be little but very important indeed. It is also the case for Sulukule people. The people whose lives were shaken are talking about these little but main things. A phaeton which you may easily park in front of your neighbor's door for example. A family which earns its life through selling rice pudding, zerde (sweet)... Having the freedom of playing his tabor whenever he wants in the middle of the night. They talk about things which seem to be simple. In which district will there be a neighbor door where you may park your phaeton by, how many districts can stand to the noise of a tabor, which district will see your poorness as a richness of heart?

A crime is committed in Sulukule. Against Sulukule people as well as Istanbul.

A crime is committed in Sulukule. Because a plan is implemented by ignoring the people in person living in that district, their life preferences, the circumstances of facts.

A crime is committed in Sulukule. While this plan was prepared, put into implementation none of the people living in there knew about it. None of them were given the right to speak.

A crime is committed in Sulukule. Because not even one suggestion regarding the improvement of the lives of the people living in Sulukule is mentioned in these plans. The people living in the same place for long years as a continuation of the Roma community living at the same region for hundreds of years are treated as people who came and claim to be the owner of that place without having the right to as occupiers.

However the Sulukule fact is very clear. One out of four people's monthly income is lower than 300 YTL, half of the people's monthly income is lower than 500 YTL according to a household survey made with a group of Sulukule people at the renewal area. The 83 percent of these people have been living in Sulukule more than 10 years, approximately half of them have been living in Sulukule for more than 30 years. And again according to the household survey 63 percent of these people are living at the same house 10 or more than 10 years, 24 percent of them are living in the same house for more than 30 years. And the modern city planning understanding in rehabilitating the resident areas similar to Sulukule entails the accordance of these new houses to be constructed with the public **living in there** in terms of both physical characteristics and payment

conditions. But the Urban Transformation Project which is tried to be implemented aims the opposite. It foresees to empty the places where people are living in, building new houses through a project where a private architecture company has drawn as a demand of the municipality and building up a new life area. An amazing urban rent is arising through a “**gentrified**” Sulukule.

The crime committed in Sulukule is not against the people living in there but it is against Istanbul, too.

Because Sulukule is not only a residential area, it is a resource of a Roma culture which saves its continuity from generation to generation and has an international reputation, for hundreds of years.

Because Sulukule is at the heart of Istanbul city walls buffer zone where UNESCO has especially underlined at its notification regarding the historical peninsula by saying “you are not able to protect it, if you continue to act so we will take out Istanbul from the World Heritage List”

Therefore the crime committed in Sulukule is not only against the people living in Sulukule today but it is against the history and future of Istanbul, too.

This crime in Istanbul is committed knowingly ignoring the various agreements Turkey had had signed.

The Convention of Protecting World Natural and Cultural Heritage which emphasizes that the pieces of cultural and natural heritage are also a piece of all humanity and the world heritage are ignored.

The Vienna Memorandum which says “The changes happening all the time regarding economic development, political concept, social structure, functional usage and coming out as a ‘structural intervention’ at the historical urban area can be accepted within the tradition of the city. In this manner the decision takers should act with a vision covering the whole city”, “taking a decision for ‘intervention and modern architects’ for any historical urban area entails a very serious consideration process, a sensitive approach by means of culture and history and consulting to all the stakeholders and concerned specialists” is ignored.

The Agreement of Protecting Intangible Cultural Heritage which Turkey has signed on 21 January 2006 is ignored, too. Because in this agreement it is told as “the intangible cultural heritage means the communities, groups and in some cases individuals, practices, representations, telling, information, skills and tools, materials and cultural space regarding these. This cultural heritage transferred from generation to generation is recreated continuously connected with the environment of these communities and groups, with interaction with nature and their history and this gives them the feeling of identity and continuity; consequently it contributes to the respect regarding the cultural diversity and human creativity”

Unfortunately the partners of this crime are a lot. The directors of Urban Transformation Projects, architects, planners, etc who has no idea about their responsibilities against human and history while contributing to these projects... All the experts, professionals who have no idea about what is going on... The ones who can not see, the ones who sees but doesn't speak...

And all of us...

Maybe the most criminal of all are us who forgot the days once we were amused by the Roma music we listened, danced, enriched through it ...

There is, must be a solution for Sulukule which does not move Sulukule people from their places. We should think and listen to them...