

Hasankeyf Volunteers Association
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To the Export Credit Agencies of Germany (EulerHermes), Switzerland (ERG) and Austria (Österreichische Kontrollbank)

Comment on the RAP / Ilisu Dam

As a local NGO trying to save the ancient city of Hasankeyf for years, we had already suffered a trauma when Zeugma was buried under water. A thousands years old cultural treasure was destroyed in the name of a development policy and for the sake of a dam that could be used for only 30 years. Now we are again faced with a similar cruelty and clumsiness as regards the antique city of Hasankeyf, which will be erased from the history after the construction of the Ilisu dam. For months and months, local, national and international NGOs have been trying to warn the relevant authorities, applying to the courts to stop the process and enlighten the public community about the process.

Ilisu Project, which has not yet been given a green light to start due to the ongoing credit approval process for for the German, Austrian and Swiss partners of the Consortium, is most forcefully owned, wanted and defended by the Turkish partner of the Ilisu Consortium, the Nurol Construction and Trading Co. As everyone knows, some institutions and organizations were even sponsored to alleviate probable adverse public responses. For example, during the process, Ministry of Cultural Affairs were presented with a three dimensional album of the antique city, Hasankeyf; Nurol is now preparing to donate computers to the Ministry of Education. We wonder, if there was no such tender at stake, would Nurol still be willing and ready to present such gifts? It is really very hard to understand what this company is trying to achieve by documenting the city it will help burying under water by photographs.

Hasankeyf, today at risk of being submerged under dam waters, was declared a first degree Archeological Conservation Site by the Turkish Ministry of Cultural Affairs in 1978. Our efforts to convince the authorities to make the necessary changes in the Project to save the antique city has been inconclusive. Supporters of the dam insist on constructing the dam with an ancient technical Project that is now older than half a century.

It should never be forgotten that we do not have the right to destroy a cultural asset that has reached us through a tens of thousands year long historical process. On the contrary, we have the responsibility to ensure that it can be handed on to the future generations. For these reasons, instead of burying the historical and archeological sites under water, we should immediately take the necessary actions for preserving and exhibiting the ancient city as it is, in its natural and historical entirety. Turkish Ministry of Cultural Affairs has been preparing extensive budgets to save some of the historical and cultural assets in Hasankeyf. This is a contradiction beyond comprehension, how can you decide to preserve and protect only a few of the historical assets in a location that you will bury under waters with your own

hands, and then claim that this is all that you can do in the name of historical protection?

Amidst EU accession negotiations, culture is a very important strategic site of policy making for Turkey. How will Ministry of Cultural Affairs be able to bury Hasankeyf under water while at the same time preparing a list of the cultural heritage sites at the national level? Or is it the Ilisu Dam Project that has been preventing the antique city of Hasankeyf from taking its deserved place in the list of the cultural heritage for so long?

Most of the local people in this region are not well aware of their history. Maybe they rather care for their everyday struggles of living and for understandable reasons. Yet, one of the most distinguishing traditions and customs of the culture in our region is peoples' attachment and devotion to the cemeteries. A villager may come to agree with anything but the submergence of a graveyard under water. Our graveyards, where our ancestors, grandfathers, grandmothers, mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, sons and daughters lie, will be submerged under water with the construction of the dam. Where will go to visit them then?

Ilisu Dam will do no good to the region which has been suffering from extreme levels of unemployment and an accompanying lack of social and economic investment for many years. Consortium's promises for thousands of new jobs and new investments that will be brought about by the construction of the dam are deceitful. Batman Dam right nearby us was completed 5 years ago and now it is in miserable conditions. Who profited from its construction? The firms received their payments and left many files of corruption behind. No one knows when the right and left channels that would irrigate the Batman lowlands will be finished. Even the authorities at the State Water Works 10th Regional Directorate cannot give an exact date for the completion of the irrigation channels. However, Batman Dam was made both for energy and irrigation purposes. Local people could not receive what they were promised for before the construction of the dam, what good will the Ilisu dam, which will be solely built for energy purposes, do for the local people? Only a few large landholders will be made even richer in the end, while the displaced will be left to their own destiny after the expropriation rates are paid, that is if they do have a title deed, if they can at all qualify to receive compensation in the first place. In the future though, dam will bring many new problems, Batman will be at risk of earthquake, many new illnesses, first and foremost Leishmaniasis (*şark çibani*), will appear. Ilisu Project will not bring any good to the region at all.

We also want to express that above are our sincere thoughts about the construction of the dam, which we have been defending since the period of the first Ilisu Consortium. However, the summary given in the Ilisu RAP, under the section "Notes from Deep Interviews with the Stakeholders", represents a misleading juxtaposition of our views, whereby our thoughts were selectively rendered so as to omit our strong opposition to the Project and convey a more neutralized approach:

"The meeting was held at the association's headquarters in Batman and lasted for approximately one hour. Effects of the dam were discussed in the meeting. Discussions centered on cultural erosion that will be caused by the dam. At the end of the meeting, the formation of pilot villages after resettlement was also proposed." (*Ilisu RAP, Annex B.7, p 8/8*).

Hereby, as a local NGO working in the affected local settlements and specifically founded to save the ancient city of Hasankeyf, we do raise our voice against the construction of Ilisu Dam, and we hope that we will be heard by the relevant authorities.