

OBJECTIVE 01

To increase accountability and visibility of CSOs toward the public including measures to improve enabling environment for civil society



PROTECTING OUR HISTORICAL ARTIFACTS THROUGH AWARENESS RAISING

OYA KUTSAL



Photo Credit: Atila Karaderi

THIS ACTION INVOLVED

A research study on important historical artifacts in the northern part of Cyprus.

A photographic documentation on the conservation conditions of historical artifacts (August 2016 to October 2016).

Publication and wide dissemination of a book entitled "The Country of Derelicts".

A Facebook page to raise awareness on the existence and preservation conditions of historical artifacts.

ABOUT OYA KUTSAL

The activist, Oya Kutsal, is an English teacher at a "public" school in the northern part of Cyprus. She has been advocating against the destruction of historical artifacts and damage to the environment since 2012.

STORY OF THE ACTION

The purpose of the action was to raise awareness about the poor preservation of historical artifacts by documenting their current condition. Through the action, Oya Kutsal and her team gathered information on the historical and conservation conditions, took photographs of their condition and compiled them in a book entitled "The Country of Derelicts".

Oya Kutsal explains her motivations as follows:

"We don't feel that we belong to this country, or that this country belongs to us. We only have ownership of cars and the buildings we call home. Historical artifacts are the identity of society. Each artifact represents the community's DNA, and this is how begins the sense of belonging and uniqueness. The most important factor that keeps people together is the collective memory that they pass down to new generations. Trees cannot grow tall without strong roots. If we want a strong sense of identity, we must take care of our history. Historical artifacts are our roots. Destroying artifacts means destroying the community along with its culture and values; its truths and mistakes."

Before the action, Oya and her team researched the condition of historical artifacts in the northern part of Cyprus and found that many had been "misused" (e.g. converted in cesspools, barns or grasslands, among others). During the action, the team photographed fifteen artifacts in Nicosia, twenty-seven in Famagusta, sixteen in Kyrenia, six in Morphou/Güzelyurt, and finally six in the Karpasia/Karpaz area.

"This publication represents our feelings and concerns. It is not meant to be a research project or a schoolbook. It only aims to spark an interest; to demonstrate that we inherit a history that we do not have a clue about, and that ten thousand years of history is drifting apart because we haven't been able to protect it. If we are able to show this, to raise awareness and get people excited; we will consider the publication a success." Oya Kutsal

RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH

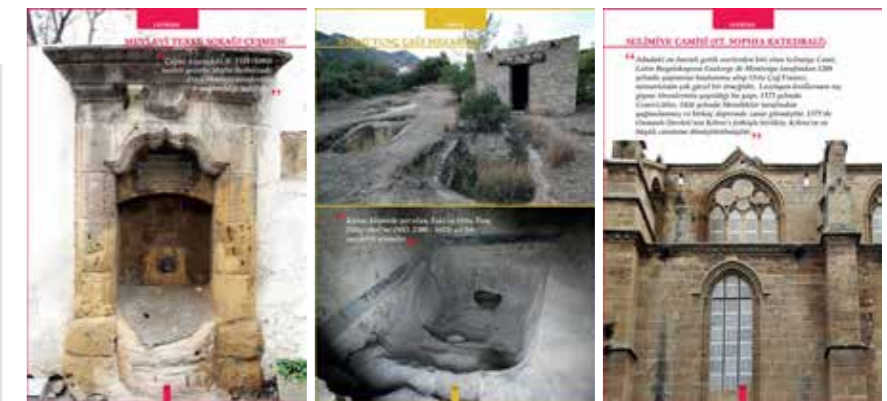
According to Oya Kutsal, the publication and the actions have raised awareness in both the Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot communities. Once duty bearers agreed to distribute the publication, the artifacts were shield from misuse, and people started to get involved and demand protection of the historical artifacts in their communities. After the publication, Oya created a year-long TV programme on the subject that ensured a large dissemination of the message.



Photo Credit: Atila Karaderi

WHAT'S NEXT?

Oya Kutsal is still pursuing her goal of protecting the island's ten thousand years old history. After the successful implementation of the action, she intends to expand its scope and work with the "Directorate of Foundations in Cyprus (EVKAF)" to create a documentary that will be shared worldwide on the history of the artifacts. She is also organizing one-day tours open to public figures to promote the historical artifacts and continue raising awareness. She believes that their involvement will ensure that the issue remains high on the duty bearers' agenda.



Pages from: "Metruk Tarihler Ülkesi"

TO FIND MORE ABOUT THE ACTION

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