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## **Destruction of the Archeological site of Hasankeyf by the State, in Kurdistan, Turkey : A Scientific, Human and Ecological catastrophe**

Summer 2017 has again been the scene of destruction of Kurdistan's landscapes and cultural treasures by the Turkish State. The « Association for the survival of Hasankeyf's archeological site » denounces the destructions being carried out by the Turkish State on this site, witness of human activities dating back to more than 12000 years. Some rock walls have been dynamited under the pretext of representing a danger. The archeological site containing many caves, has been directly affected by those destructions.

In order to build a dam and a hydro-electric plant, the Turkish State has, since 2010, sped up works to prepare for the complete flooding of the archeological site and the small neighbouring town with thousands of troglodyte caves, as well as relics from the medieval period including an ancient Mosque and a rich natural environment. Zeynel Bey's mausoleum has been moved in May 2017, opening the way to this massive destruction.

The flooding is part of the huge dam project over the Tigris river. It will strengthen the Turkish State's control over the Tigris's water which runs through Irak and flows into the Persian Gulf, raising the acute question of water sharing and access to irrigation.

Those dam projects are also part of a control policy by the Turkish State over territories of Kurdish settlements aiming at reducing land occupied by the PKK guerilla (Kurdistan Workers Party). Last but not least, the creation of this electric dam reinforces the exploitation of Kurdistan's lands, considered by the Turkish State as a soulless breadbasket which can be plundered until exhaustion.

The same logic is underway in Sur, the ancient town of Diyarbakir, main city of Northern Kurdistan.

Further to the 2015 uprising in Sur, the Turkish army led very violent military actions in this historical centre containing many protected monuments (for example a 1700 years old church dedicated to the Virgin Mary, city walls built in 350 BC and the Hevel Site dating back to 8000 BC). This military action left hundreds of dead, tens of thousands of people fleeing the city and many houses severely damaged.

After having crushed the rebellion, and under the pretext of rebuilding the neighbourhoods, the Turkish State completely erased the ancient city of Sur, destroying on its way the existing historical sites. Despite the resistance of the inhabitants, the Turkish State is determined to complete de destruction (a third of the city has already been destroyed). The stakes of this huge urbanistic

operation are high, on one hand, the resulting real estate operation can be a very lucrative business for the building companies linked to the AKP, the Islamic authoritarian party in power, and on the other, it will increase military control over the population in order to avoid any further uprising.

One cannot but make the link of this operation with the return of the scorched earth policy led in the Dersim region. Dozens of hectares of forests having been intentionally destroyed by the Turkish Army in Northern Kurdistan, endangering people's lives and destroying local ecosystems. Other forests have also been set on fire further to police operations without any intervention from the State, people being prohibited to extinguish the fires. The aims of those forest fires is to obstruct PKK guerrillas and punish local populations.

The attacks on the Kurdish people has a double goal : this ruthless war going on since 2015, has left several thousands of dead and has led to the destruction of the region.

Sud Culture denounces the destruction of Kurdistan's historical and cultural heritage by the Turkish State as well as the devastation of the region's ecosystems. This historical and natural heritage has to be saved. We denounce the excessive power of the Turkish State which has no consideration for people, Nature nor culture. We call for an immediate halt to the destruction of historical and cultural sites, for the rehabilitation of the sites that can be saved, the return of the displaced people, the reconstruction of their homes and neighbourhoods according to people's choices and a complete stop to the destructive military operations.

We shall continue to express our solidarity with Trade Union, association and political activists fighting for the rights of workers, women, minorities and local populations and who are being oppressed in Turkey and Kurdistan.