

HAKİKAT ADALET HAFIZA MERKEZİ  
TRUTH JUSTICE MEMORY CENTER



# new memory fields

**OPENING SPACE FOR THE YOUTH,  
STRENGTHENING INTERNATIONAL DIALOGUE**

**International Workshop**

**9 – 10 December 2023**




**OLOF PALMES  
INTERNATIONELLA  
CENTER**

**HEINRICH  
BÖLL  
STIFTUNG  
DERNEĞİ  
TÜRKİYE  
TEMSİLCİLİĞİ**



**CHREST  
FOUNDATION**



# **new memory fields**

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## 9 DECEMBER – Saturday

**10.00 – 10.30** **Introduction**

**10.30 – 12.30** **Presentations of the Memory and Youth project participants (I)**

Bêrîvan Saruhan  
Pelda Vesek  
Şükran Demir and Özgür Ünal

Discussants: Gülistan Zeren and Marko Milosavljević

**12.30 – 13.30** **Lunch Break**

**13.30 – 15.00** **Presentations of the Memory and Youth project participants (II)**

Berfin Kübra Ceyhan and Ozan Polat  
Gökтуğ Berber and Musa Can  
Helin Batar

Discussants: Arlo Jung and Balacan Ayar

**15.00 – 15.15** **Coffee Break**

**15.15 – 17.00** **Presentations of the Memory and Youth project participants (III)**

Mahmut Demir  
Uğur Yıldırım  
Zehra Nazlı  
Zilan Turgut

Discussants: Ece Koçak and Nesrin Uçarlar

## Sunday – DECEMBER 10

**10.00 – 11.40**

**International Perspectives on the Memory Field**

*Whose Memory? Whose Remembrance?  
Shaping Memory Cultures in Germany and Türkiye*

ASA Exchange Project  
ASA-ff/Offener Prozess

Hafıza Merkezi and Heinrich Böll Stiftung Foundation  
Aslı Özdemir, Bilge Martan, Hiyam Biary, Veli Aksoy

Offener Prozess (Chemnitz, Germany)  
Arlo Jung and Zeran Osman

Youth Initiative for Human Rights (Belgrade, Serbia):  
Marko Milosavljević and Vanja Đurđić

**Coffee Break** **11.40 – 12.00**

**Memory and Youth:  
Towards a Youth Community** **12.00 – 13.30**

Impressions and Suggestions  
of the advisors and participants  
of the Memory and Youth Projects



**BERIVAN SARUHAN**

**STÊRKA LI SER XETÊ**

In March 1993, the then Gendarmerie Unit Commander Hasan Atilla Uğur and a group of soldiers under his command raided a house in the residential area called "Dirbesiyê" at the zero point of the Syria/Rojava border. Recently, Hasan Atilla Uğur was tried as a defendant in the trial regarding the arbitrary executions and forced disappearances of 22 people between 1992 and 1996 in the Kızıltepe district of Mardin. After 17 hearings over a period of 5 years, an acquittal decision was made for Hasan Atilla Uğur, one of the 9 suspects in the indictment, and the other defendants.

As the reason for the raid, the people of the house were told that the star symbol on the iron window railings of the house represented the PKK, and Hasan Atilla Uğur ordered the star symbol to be removed immediately. The star symbols were removed from the windows that day, and an empty circle remained instead. Although those who experienced the incident wanted to say that the welder added the star symbol to the window bars in the late 1970s, and that there was a star symbol on the windows of many houses in the vicinity, they directly removed the star symbol without expressing any objection due to the atmosphere of fear created.

Through the eyes and language of those who experienced this event, this documentary film explores how the star symbol was criminalized in these years. Beyond this incident, the memories of Dirbesiyê inhabitants come to the surface, evoking the mines laid on the Syrian border, the deterioration of the economy after the closure of the border during the 1980 Coup period, and migration and displacement in the last years.



**ŞÜKRAN DEMİR**

**ÖZGÜR ÜNAL**

**REGIONAL PRIMARY BOARDING SCHOOLS  
AS AN ASSIMILATION PROJECT**

The objective of this documentary film is to examine and document the impact of the assimilation policy implemented through the education of Kurdish children in Regional Boarding Schools, which started in the early periods of the Republic of Turkey. The modern Regional Boarding Schools were officially established in 1962, and became more widespread in the 1990s, in the context of the conflict in the Kurdish region. In these schools, students were exposed to different types and levels of violence, subjected to a military-style "discipline" in a heavy military order, and discriminated against because of their culture, language and ethnicity. They were targeted as people who should definitely be assimilated and Turkified. Within the scope of this project, we aimed to make visible the traces still left in former students' lives, by discussing with them the spatial organization of these schools, gender roles, violence, harassment, the ban of mother-tongue education and resistance.

## THE MEMORY OF NEWALA QESABA

### PELDA VESEK

Newala Qesaba, located in Siirt, a region which counted an important Armenian population during the Ottoman Empire, is recorded as one of the massacre sites of the Armenian Genocide.

At the end of the 1980s, it began to be known as the burial place of those who lost their lives in military operations and disappeared in custody. Those who were detained, tortured and killed in clashes were brought to the city center and displayed to create fear. After the dead bodies were displayed, they were given to the municipality and thrown into the garbage dump in the Kasaplar stream by Siirt municipality officials. It is estimated that there are bodies of approximately 300 people in the region located within the borders of Siirt Commando Regiment Command.

During the excavations carried out in the region in 1989, 8 bodies were unearthed. The shrouds and funeral rituals of many people, who were allegedly killed by extrajudicial executions and were excavated with the diggers of Siirt Municipality, were found. Thereupon, relatives of the disappeared and non-governmental organizations demanded that excavations be carried out in the entire region, but the applications and lawsuits were inconclusive. After the funerals, the area was surrounded by wires to prevent it from being opened again, and after 25 years, in 2013, a private school started to be built in the area. Due to the reactions against this, the project was canceled but 7 years later, in 2020, a new building project emerged. The place was open to construction and first a double road was built in the area that has been turned into a garbage dump, then a planning permission was given for a wedding hall, and then a Police Academy was established in the area where mass graves are estimated to be located. Buildings and villas are now planned to be built in the area where hundreds of shrouded Kurds and Armenians are buried. Currently, a sign containing the details of the project has been hung at the entrance of the stream for the new project. Within the scope of the project undertaken by the company called War Yapı, dozens of villas, 8-storey buildings and swimming pools will be built. A sales office was also established in the area where the buildings and villas will be built, and the area around the office was surrounded by iron barriers.

#### Scope of the Project:

Revealing the truth and confronting the perpetrators and victims is very important for justice to be served. Therefore, with the "Newala Qesaba Memory Project", interviews were held with journalist Günay Aslan, rights defender Evin Çiçek and Barış Yavuz. The interviews with Günay Aslan and Barış Yavuz were recorded on camera and audio. A written interview was conducted with Evin Çiçek. At the end of the video, there will be photos about Newala Qesaba, music and poetry in the background. It will be a bilingual work (Turkish-English). The documentary will be 30 minutes in total. The name of the historical documentary will be Navê min Newala Qesaba (My Name is Newala Qesaba).

### UĞUR YILDIRIM

## TWO STORIES OF TOKAT

In this project, the transformation of Tokat from the Late Ottoman/Early Republican period to the present day is traced through what remains in the memories of the two groups. Tokat Circassians had to move from the Caucasus to Ottoman lands due to the Circassian Genocide in the 1860s, and Tokat is one of these cities. Armenians have lived in Tokat for centuries, but their presence in this city was almost ended due to the Armenian genocide in 1915. The objective of the project is to convey some of the story of Tokat, starting from the narrative of Agop, who was born in Tokat in the same period as the Circassian grandmother of the project author. Tokat is a city that Agop calls his hometown in the title of his book, and that the volunteer's grandmother also describes as her hometown. There is Tokat, the home of Agop, the home of his ancestors and himself, to which he had to migrate. On the other hand, there is a group that had to leave their centuries-old Circassian homeland in the Caucasus and sees Tokat as a new home. This project seeks to look at the relations, identities and languages of these two groups with the Republic of Turkey. Tokat represents a region that is often overlooked, much less known than Sivas for the Armenians and Duzce for the Circassians. The official historical narrative erased the diversity and plurality that characterized the region in the past, and still nowadays, to a much limited extent. At the same time, it is possible to look at the transformation of this diversity from the conceptual frameworks of Turkification and Islamization. Although the project has a personal aspect for the author, another complementary aspect aims to rely on this political-conceptual framework and show the efforts of the Republic of Turkey to homogenize its society and their impact on these groups.



**MUSA CAN**

**GÖKTUĞ BERBER**

**SOMEONE ELSE**

In this project, we aim to fight against the discrimination that trans+ individuals in Turkey face in the social arena by using the power of real stories. Through storytelling and digital collection creation methods, we collect the real life stories of trans+ individuals and objects symbolizing meaningful sections of their lives, with the aim of memorializing them. In addition to sharing it on our website [baskabirisi.com](http://baskabirisi.com), which we established as an online platform, we also contributed to the memorialization work with the workshops we planned.

In this project, which we set out from the concept of "other", we wanted to show that people who are alienated sometimes in their own inner world and sometimes in society are actually no other than us, with the aim of preventing alienation and drawing attention to both social and state-based exclusion and human rights violations that impact their everyday lives. In this context, we addressed discrimination against trans+ individuals in Turkey by bringing to the agenda alternative narrative and dialogue paths, provided an original storytelling platform that encourages empathy and connections between different layers of society, enriched the reach of the project by including visual objects from daily life in line with the stories, and supported trans+ individuals'. We have provided a permanent online repository of stories where their memories and struggles can reside and can be used as a reference point for both the community and the general public. We have brought together trans+ people to share their experiences, practice new ways of expressing themselves and increase their sense of community. Thanks to our creative coordinator Zeynep Ayta, we created a bridge between activism and art by integrating elements of advocacy and artistic expression.



**HELİN BATAR**

**LOOKING FOR QUEER ENTERTAINMENT**

The podcast series "Looking for Queer Entertainment" started with a question: How much of the LGBTIQ+ history, culture and movement can we watch through the entertainment life of queer people? In each podcast episode, we get elements of answer to this question, listening to the personal experiences and testimonies of different lubunya (queer people) in their own words and in their own voices. The podcast series, which has no temporal or spatial restrictions, explores various events and themes that are considered important for the Turkish LGBTIQ+ movement around the same basic question.

This podcast series aims to keep the memory of entertainment practices and laces that are often ignored, even though they are valuable parts of social memory and culture. It acknowledges the fact that queer people have distinct entertainment habits, motivation and history almost everywhere in the world, and that entertainment and entertainment venues have a critical place in the struggle for LGBTIQ+ rights.

In addition to the history of Turkey's LGBTIQ+ rights struggle and the participation of lubunya living in Turkey in life, the series also includes the reflections of events from Turkey's recent history such as war, migration, the Solution Process, economic crisis, Gezi Resistance and earthquakes, which inevitably affect entertainment life as well as affecting every aspect of life. It aims to follow the entertainment practices of lubunya. The Looking for Queer Entertainment podcast series also aims to prevent the forgetting of queer and/or feminist entertainment venues that have been closed or forced to close for various reasons. In addition, it attempts to observe the traces of the solidarity and ties established by the Turkish LGBTIQ+ movement with other rights struggles, such as the Kurdish freedom movement and the feminist movement, and the ruptures experienced in queer entertainment life.



**IN THE DEPTHS OF RECORDINGS:  
RESISTANCE AND MEMORY  
IN KURDISTAN THROUGH  
THE STORY OF BURIED TAPES**

**BERFİN KÜBRA CEYHAN**

**OZAN POLAT**

We started our project with the aim of memorializing the narratives of the buried tapes. We wanted to collect stories about these tapes in the research areas (Diyarbakır, Mardin) and to identify certain patterns in these stories, pointing to a narrative in which resistance and memory are intertwined. In this way, we aimed to reveal some contexts where culture and art intersect with politics and society, in daily life in Kurdistan since the 1970s. In the interviews with the participants, our main questions were the following ones:

- Why and how did people hide/bury Kurdish music tapes? Where and on what basis were these burying/hiding practices differentiated?
- How do the subjects of segregated burial/concealment activities explain these segregated burial practices according to their political and social positions?
- Can the tape storage practices be analyzed as a kind of resistance? If so, to what did these subjects attribute this resistance?

Based on the questions above, our project also aimed to understand the experiences of the local people, what they remembered while sharing these experiences, what they forgot and how they felt while these were happening. As a result, these interviews and interview processes showed that the stories of the buried tapes are not referring to a completed and already historicized situation, but a multi-layered process that also includes elements from the more recent history and the present.



**ZİLAN TURGUT**

**LATE ENCOUNTERS: "STONE-THROWING CHILDREN"**

This project was carried out with four young participants from the Kurdish region, who were tried within the scope of the amendment made to the Anti-Terrorism Law in 2006 and appeared in the media as Anti-Terrorism Law "victims", and three participants who were tried after the amendment brought to the same law in 2010. The project basically progresses through three dynamics. First, it addresses the emergence of these political subjects in their historical context; then, it delves into their experiences of imprisonment as children; finally, it comes to the process of re-integration of the interviewees into the public sphere after the trial processes are completed. Obviously, the interviewees are no longer "children", but people between 26–35, of different social statuses and their present situation plays an important role in the way they make sense of their past experiences and how they remember them.

The lives of the children who were exposed to various rights violations are known to us only as much as these children choose to share them. We have limited knowledge about what these subjects experienced during the process and how it impacted their lives. Sharing past political childhood experiences carries a security risk even 10–15 years later, which inevitably limits what is publicly known. In this case, while the state is omnipresent, the subjects lose their visibility. In the increasingly difficult political context, keeping silent is a way of protecting their personal safety. This project aims to partially fill this gap, by opening a space for the subjects who want to speak, and by sharing their experience with people who are willing to hear them.

**ZEHRA NAZLI**

**LETTERS IN THE SHADOW OF ISOLATION**

The project focuses on a father's approximately 3-year F-type prison experience and the correspondence he had with his family during this time. The aim of the study is to create a visual narrative archive that traces the isolation policies in F-type prisons through letters, pictures, photographs and other materials left over from this process. At this point, letters turn into another deep function, beyond being an individual experience and memory.

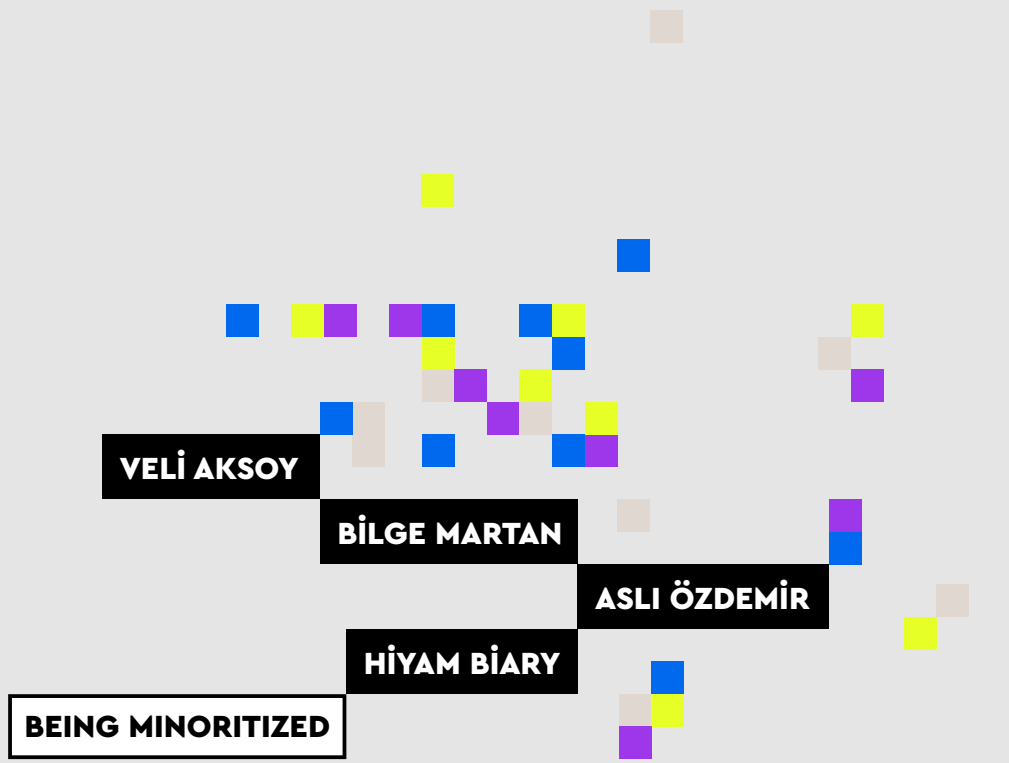
F-type prisons stand out from other forms of imprisonment with their practices of severe isolation, which condemns the prisoners to an overwhelming loneliness. Rather than providing factual information about this carceral regime, this study seeks to make the emotional and social impact it creates more palpable.

**MAHMUT DEMİR**

**MEMORY OF SONGS: THE 90S, KURDISH MUSIC AND MKM (MESOPOTAMIA CULTURAL CENTER)**

The 1990s witnessed the culmination of the state violence that has been going on for years in Kurdistan. Burned villages, torture, unsolved murders and many more remain vivid in the memories of people who lived through the period. Two misconceptions should be avoided when talking about the 1990s. The first is to think that state violence and lawlessness remained and ended in those years, and the second is to not mention the will and struggle of the people during this period. While oppression took different facets, multiple forms of resistance also developed. Art is one of these areas of struggle. Kurdish art has been an important aspect of resistance throughout history, and artists have played a role in countering false narratives and fighting for the truth. The poems of Cegerxwîn and Osman Sebrî or the albums of Koma Berxwedan in the late 80s are some examples of this resistance. We can say that Kurdish art gained a new identity in the 1990s, especially with the establishment of the Mesopotamia Cultural Center (MKM) and the start of collective production in different fields of art. In this project, we travel to the 1990s and listen to the first years of MKM, the feelings and memories of the artists. The songs from that period are still in our ears and we listen to them with intense feeling. As consumerism now dominates the artistic sphere, we also question what has changed in Kurdish art.





In a six-month tandem fellowship between Chemnitz and Istanbul, Veli Aksoy, Bilge Martan, Asli Özdemir and Hiyam Biary took a closer look at the practices of German and Turkish remembrance culture. They also looked at the work of various actors, affected minorities and the associated state sanctions. Accompanied by the Chemnitz-based association ASA FF, they were able to analyze right-wing continuities in Germany, talk to the families affected by the NSU and Hanau attacks and attend various memorial events in Germany. In Istanbul, accompanied by Hafıza Merkezi and the Heinrich Böll Foundation, they were able to learn more about migration movements within Turkey. Excursions to Izmir, Diyarbakır, Mardin and İmroz enabled them to contextualize current social and political issues in Turkey.

Throughout the intensive time, connections between the partner country were immediately recognisable, and the following questions were present: How do we emerge from this shared time? What does it take to continue and rethink the culture of remembrance? What has changed and what barriers do we encounter from country to country? Where are our interfaces and how do we build bridges of collective remembrance practice?