


Damage Degrees of Historical Buildings After the Conflict in Diyarbakır Sur District

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Abstract: Diyarbakır, its significant historical heritage, became an important city in terms of cultural history. However, in 2015, the central area of this cultural heritage, the Sur district, suffered destruction. Although restoration efforts are ongoing, there remains a debate on the extent to which the damage has been mitigated. This area, home to religious, civil, and social structures, is designated as an urban conservation site. Preserving this area is crucial for safeguarding architectural diversity and the traces of various civilizations. Over time, the cultural heritage in the region has been affected by various factors until 2015 when clashes exacerbated the damage, resulting in substantial losses. Prior to 2015, an inventory survey was conducted to identify the historical structures in the area, which were damaged or lost during the conflicts. Based on damage assessments conducted by the Ministry of Environment and Urban Planning in 2019, the buildings were classified as severely damaged, moderately damaged, slightly damaged, undamaged, or lost. According to the survey, out of the 479 buildings examined, restoration was carried out on 204, while 9 were severely damaged, 5 were moderately damaged, 4 were slightly damaged, 254 were undamaged, and 3 were lost. The data obtained from the study indicates that detailed efforts have been made to address the destruction in the region. Restoration activities have positively contributed to the preservation of documentary evidence. However, the best option for preserving similar areas is to cease terrorist activities in Turkey and around the world to maintain the originality of humanity's common heritage.

Keywords: Diyarbakır, Sur district, Urban Conservation Area, Historical Environment, Damage Assessment.

1. Introduction

Anatolia, hosting many civilizations throughout history and being situated on numerous trade routes, has developed due to its rich resources and various other reasons. Therefore, Anatolia has hosted many civilizations throughout history, bearing the traces of different cultures and possessing a rich cultural heritage (Gülen, 2023 pp. 43).

One of the cities that has developed throughout history is Diyarbakır. Diyarbakır has been referred to by various names throughout its historical process. The city, known by names such as Amidi, Amedi, Amid, O'mid, Emit, Amide, Diyar-ı Bekir, was officially named Diyarbakır by the decision of the vekil council (Parla, 2005 pp. 59).

Due to its strategic location and fertile lands, Diyarbakır has been an important city

throughout history (Kejanlı et al., 2011: 97). Being situated on the banks of the Tigris River and on trade routes has kept the city economically and culturally vibrant. Therefore, rapid population growth has occurred in the city. The city has evolved from being a small fortress town to its present state. In this sense, Diyarbakır, like all other cities in Anatolia, has a high cultural diversity, especially with its historical structures, particularly the historic houses (Dinçer, Kartal, 2022 pp. 57).

The city's known history dates back to the dominance of the Subarians from 3000-1800 BC, during which the city's first fortified area was built. After the Subarians, it came under the rule of the Hittites, Mittanis, Arameans, Assyrians, Urartians, Scythians, Medes and Persians, Greeks, Seleucids, Parthians, and the reign of Great Tigran. Between 30 BC and AD 330, the city remained under Roman rule. Diyarbakır gained significance as a large and important city during the Roman period. After the Romans, the city came under Byzantine rule and later under Ottoman rule. Today, it is within the borders of the Republic of Turkey (Kejanlı et al., 2011 pp. 97).

The first settlement of the city was located on a rugged terrain named Fis Rock, approximately 625 meters above sea level and about 100 meters above the bed of the Tigris River, in the eastern part of the Karacadağ plateau. This area, called Amida Höyük, is where the first settlement in Diyarbakır was located (Uzun & Çalın, 2019 pp. 443). Amida Höyük is situated in the northeastern part of Sur district, known as the inner castle area. It is believed that Amida Höyük was built by the Hurrians, located in the northern part of the inner castle (Yılmazçelik, 1999). Amida Höyük is located in the northeast section of the city walls, facing the Tigris River. Its highest point is 683 meters above sea level. Amida Höyük is also known by the names Virankale, Virantepe, or Top Tepe. Excavations and research conducted at Amida Höyük have unearthed artifacts dating from the prehistoric period to the New Age (Ökse, 2015: 61).

Over time, the insufficient space in the city located within the inner castle was expanded by

the construction of walls surrounding the Inner Castle. The inner castle covers an area of approximately 71 acres, with internal dimensions of 1100 meters (Tuncer, 2019). With the arrival of Christianity, Diyarbakır served as a central base and garrison during the Roman period. Therefore, the Inner Castle was expanded (Arslan, 1999). Administration in the growing city has always been based in the Inner Castle (Ateş, 2018).

The Inner Castle area, expanded and enlarged periodically, is now referred to as the Sur district. The Sur district reached its current castle boundaries during the Roman period (Dalkılıç et al., 2011).

The walls have four main gates located on the east-west and north-south axes. Dağkapı in the north, Mardinkapı in the south, Yenikapı in the east, and Urfa Kapı in the west. These gates are actively used for entering and exiting the city (Güneli, 2001: 28). The castle city is divided by four main avenues: İzzet Paşa, İnönü, Melek Ahmet, and Gazi Streets (Tuncer, 1999).

The streets branching off from the main avenues are areas where the city's structure is clearly observed. The positioning of buildings and plot boundaries shapes the streets. Therefore, the streets in the Sur district narrow, widen, bend, and do not have a straight line (Tuncer, 1999). The Sur district encompasses many architectural elements that constitute the city's urban fabric. The city is a rich cultural heritage site with its walls, mosques, churches, chapels, hans (inns), hammams (bathhouses), fountains, houses, and mansions (Yılmaz et al., 2013).

The most influential architectural structures shaping the urban fabric of the Sur district are traditional houses. Traditional house architecture consists of spaces arranged around a courtyard. The utilization of the courtyard in homes as a scenic area is due to the shaping of the Sur district within the city walls, influenced by climatic conditions. The masses arranged around the courtyard aimed to protect from or maximize exposure to the sun in summer and winter conditions (Tuncer, 1999). The urban fabric evolving within the city walls of the



Figure 1: On the left, General view of the Sur district (Gabriel, 1930), on the right, General view of the Sur district 2021.

region is characterized by narrow streets, as depicted in Figure 1, reflecting a sense of privacy expressed in the structures (Oruç, 2017 pp. 385).

The Sur district, with its rich cultural heritage, has attracted attention throughout history and has been the subject of research as an urban conservation area. Until the 1920s, the city, which displayed its development and change entirely within the city walls, emerged with the modernization movements and the formation of new settlements outside the walls. For years, the residents living within the city walls did not turn to the newly planned city outside the walls due to the sense of security provided by the walls. Therefore, the idea of demolishing the walls arose in 1931 by the governor of that period. In 1932, some parts of the towers to the west of Dağkapı and the intervals between them, and the intervals between two towers to the right of Mardin Gate were demolished, connecting the inner and outer Sur districts with a wide avenue (Dalkılıç et al., 2011). Modernization movements have also caused damage to other historical structures in the Sur district.

In addition to modernization movements in the urban fabric of the Sur district, factors such as migration, industrialization, natural disasters, human factors, and conflict have also led to destruction. In short, changes have occurred in

line with the changing needs of people within the city's natural process (Kartal, Dinçer, 2023 pp. 1113). The "Diyarbakır Fortress and Hevsel Gardens Cultural Landscape Area," which entered the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2015, provides integrity to the settlement area, where serious damages occurred in the architectural, sociocultural, historical fabric, and identity of the region due to clashes between the Turkish Armed Forces and security forces affiliated with the General Directorate of Security and members of the PKK, YDG-H, and YPS organizations between December 2, 2015, and March 10, 2016. The clashes took place in the Cevat Paşa, Fatih Paşa, Dabanoğlu, Hasırlı, Cemal Yılmaz, and Savaş neighborhoods of the Sur district (TMMOB, 2019).

Urban conservation areas, which are among the cultural assets that need to be protected, have been damaged over time due to various factors and have reached the present day with their destruction. The Historical Sur district of Diyarbakır is also among the cultural assets that need to be protected. However, due to the clashes in 2015, it is a region that has suffered considerable damage.

While there are different methods for classifying the degree of damage to buildings, according to a study conducted by the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization in 2019 in

Turkey, the damage status in structures is classified as heavily damaged, slightly damaged, moderately damaged, and undamaged structures. Heavily damaged buildings are those with damage caused by the load-bearing system and are not in usable condition, posing a danger. In moderately damaged buildings, there are cracks in the load-bearing system ranging from 1 cm to 5 cm. There is also a risk of collapse in such buildings. Slightly damaged buildings are those with hairline cracks and do not pose a danger. Undamaged buildings are those without any damage (ÇŞB, 2019).

The Sur district is an area with significant historical value, and many studies have been conducted on its structures (Özyalvaç, 2011 pp.345-373; Sami, 2017: 1531-1546), as well as on its different values and contributions such as tourism, socio-economy, ethnic heritage (Çatalbaş, 2011, 2012 pp. 248; Durak, 2014; Mungan and Günay, 2018). The Sur district, which is a culturally rich region with many studies conducted on its cultural heritage (Parla, 2005 pp. 57-84; Kejanlı, et al., 2011: 95-108; Sami, 2022: 585-601), is a subject of debate regarding the damage to its cultural heritage caused by conflicts and how much of this damage has been remedied. In the literature review conducted, no study was found that determined the degree of damage to and addressed the current situation of the structures affected by conflicts in this area. With this study, the extent of damage to the immovable cultural heritage in the Sur district and the current status of efforts to remedy the damage are addressed.

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2. Material and Method

Diyarbakır, where the study area is located, is situated in the central part of the Southeastern Anatolia Region in Turkey's Southeast region (Çorbacı et al., 2021 pp. 103). It is bordered by Siirt-Muş to the east, Mardin-Urfa to the south, Urfa-Adıyaman-Malatya to the west, and Elazığ and Bingöl provinces to the north of Diyarbakır (Yılmazçelik, 1999).

The study area, the Sur district, is located in the city center. The area, which is still actively used as a settlement, consists of 479 registered structures, forming the material of the study. These structures include 43 residential buildings, 6 baths, 18 mosques, 6 churches, 1 bank, 6 fountains, 1 madrasa, 3 markets, 2 schools, 2 tombs, 3 inns, and 428 residential buildings.

Various methods have been utilized in the study. Firstly, archival and literature research methods were employed. Through archival and literature research, the pre-2015 conditions of the Sur district were determined. Then, on-site inspections and documentation were conducted based on the registration map and the conservation-oriented zoning plan to assess the current situation. Based on the current situation, damage levels were classified using the damage assessment definitions made by the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization in 2019.

3. Findings

The damage levels of registered structures in the Sur district were examined based on the definitions of damage assessment by the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization, and the structures were photographed as a result of the inspections conducted. The obtained data can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1: Current Status of Registered Structures in the Sur District

Buildings	Buildings whose restoration has been completed or whose restoration work is ongoing	Heavily Damaged Structures	Medium Damaged Structures	Less Damaged Structures	Damaged Structures	Disappearing Structures
Type and Number of Buildings	188 Residences	9 Residences	4 Residences	4 Residences	225 Residences	3 Residences
	3 Churches		1 Church		1 Church	
	7 Mosques				11 Mosques	
	2 Turkish Baths				4 Turkish Baths	
	1 Fountain				4 Fountains	
	1 School				1 School	
	2 Bazaars				1 Bazaar	
					2 Tombs	
					2 Inns	
					1 Madrasa	
					1 Bank	
					1 Official Institution	
		Total: 204	Total: 9	Total: 5	Total: 4	Total: 254

After the conflicts that occurred in the Sur district in 2015, historical structures in the area were damaged. Through on-site inspections and one-to-one photography, the damaged structures were identified and classified according to their damage levels. The structures classified according to their levels were named with parcel numbers and tabulated (Table 1). Based on the prepared table, the damaged structures were color-coded on the Sur district map according to their damage levels (Figure 2).

According to the created map, it can be observed that in the eastern part of the Sur district, there is a concentration of buildings that have been restored or are undergoing restoration, along with some lost structures. It has been determined that these lost structures have been removed from registration and converted into streets. The eastern region encompasses the neighborhoods where the conflicts occurred, and it is observed that most of the damage occurred in this area, hence restoration efforts are ongoing here.



Figure 2: Examples of buildings that have been restored or are in the process of restoration



Figure 3: Severely damaged buildings

With the restoration efforts, the number of damaged buildings predominantly located in this area has been significantly reduced. Similarly, in the southwest part of the region, there are restored buildings, while in other

types. Out of the 9 severely damaged buildings, all are residential; out of the 5 moderately damaged buildings, 1 is a church and 4 are residential; out of the 4 slightly damaged buildings, all are residential; out of the 254



Figure 4: Buildings with minor and moderate damage

areas, intact and slightly damaged buildings are predominantly found.

As a result of the examination, out of the 479 structures in the Sur district, as indicated in Table 2, 9 are severely damaged, 5 are moderately damaged, 4 are slightly damaged, 254 are intact, 3 are lost, and 204 have been damaged in conflicts and are either undergoing restoration or have been restored. The damaged buildings have been classified according to their

intact buildings, 225 are residential, 4 are baths, 11 are mosques, 2 are tombs, 4 are fountains, 1 is a church, 2 are inns, 1 is a market, 1 is a school, 1 is a madrasa, 1 is a bank, and 1 is an official institution; out of the 3 lost buildings, all are residential; out of the 204 buildings undergoing restoration or already restored, 188 are residential, 2 are baths, 7 are mosques, 3 are churches, 2 are markets, 1 is a school, 1 is a fountain, and 2 are baths.



Figure 5: Examples of undamaged structures

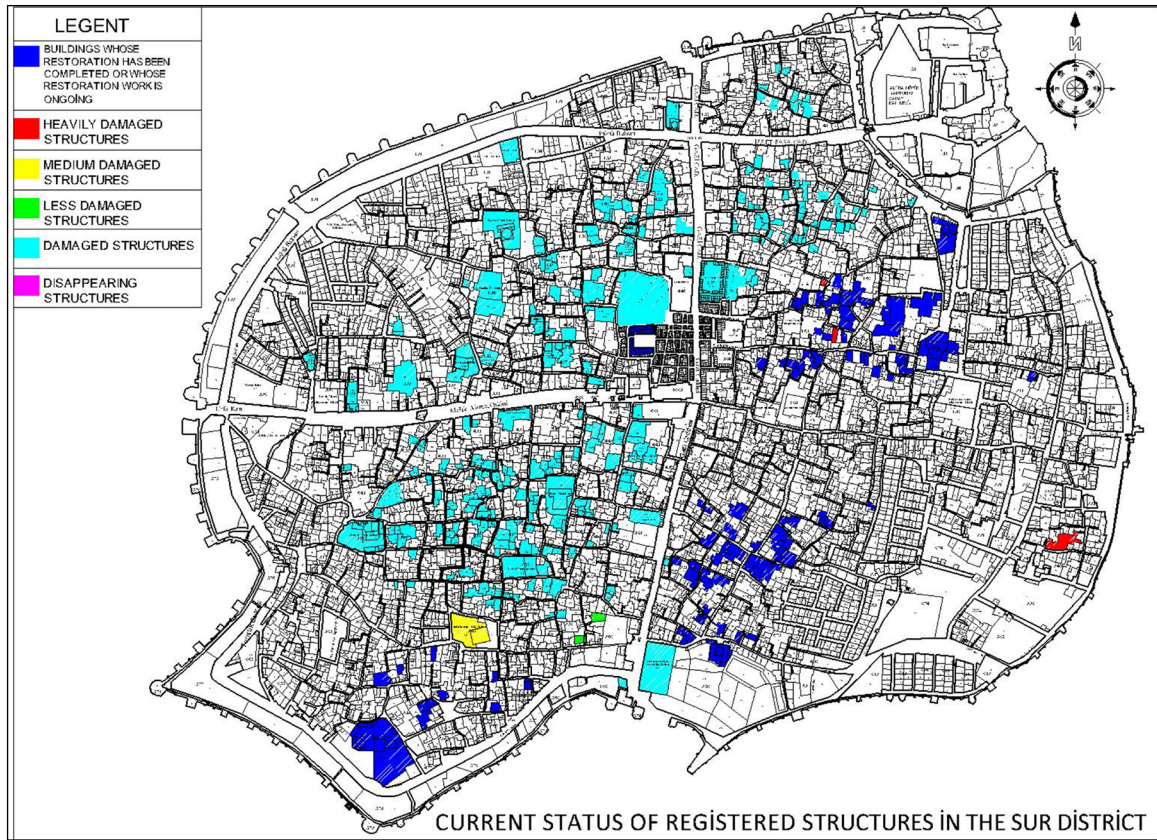


Figure 6: Damage degrees of registered buildings in the Inner City

Based on the data in Table 1, the current statuses of the structures on the zoning plan were processed to create a legend (Figure 6), and the areas in the Suriçi region that have been damaged were discussed.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

As a result of on-site inspections, it is observed that the indigenous population has left the region due to the intense conflicts and the extensive damage to the buildings, rendering

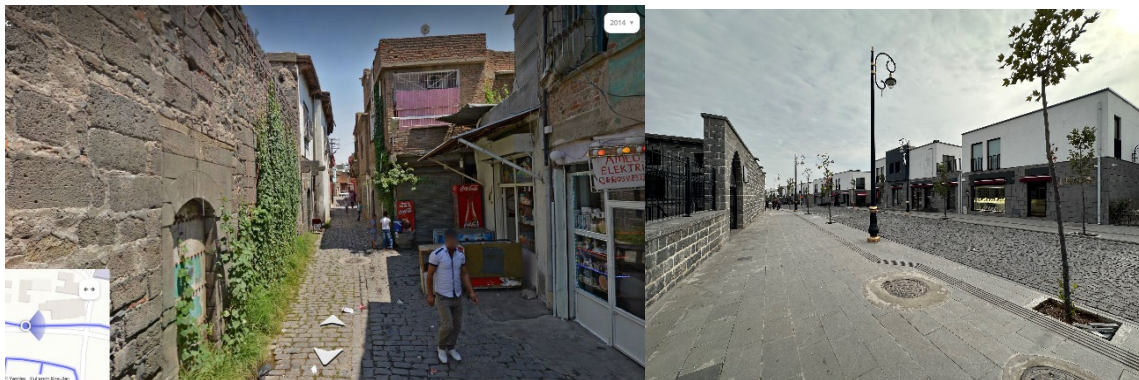


Figure 7: The left photograph shows the Yenikapı Street Yandex Maps 2014 image, while the right photograph shows the Yenikapı Avenue 2022 image.

them unusable. In this area, more damage is observed in the urban fabric compared to other areas. After the conflicts, significant damage has been inflicted and disappeared in terms of architectural, cultural, social, societal, and economic aspects.

Through on-site inspections, it has been determined that the street where three buildings were lost due to destruction has been transformed into a boulevard. It is observed that this boulevard is not compatible with the organic texture of the urban conservation area, indicating an application contrary to the urban fabric in this region. The wide boulevard constructed in contrast to the narrow alleyways of the Inner City disrupts the city's silhouette.

After the conflicts in the Inner City, restoration work on historical buildings has begun. It has been found that damaged structures are more concentrated in the eastern part of the Inner City, where conflicts were most intense. The findings indicate that restoration work in the area has reduced the number of damaged structures. While some structures have completed restoration, others are still undergoing the process. Additionally, restoration has not yet begun on some damaged, slightly damaged, and moderately damaged structures. It is imperative to commence restoration work on these structures as soon as possible. The significant progress in restoring damaged structures in the Inner City after the conflicts is considered a positive approach towards preserving the historical environment. However, the extent to which these restoration efforts maintain the original character of the structures requires further investigation.

Damage occurred to historical buildings in the Inner City after the conflicts. The damage has affected various types of structures in the area and has also led to losses in the urban fabric. Objective data on the destruction in the urban conservation area have been provided through meticulous on-site inspections and research.

Urban conservation areas are cultural assets that need protection. Historical buildings in these areas, as well as streets, squares, and other

elements that contribute to the urban integrity and collective memory, should not be harmed. However, cultural heritage sites worldwide have occasionally suffered damage from conflicts for various reasons. There are several theories for preserving cultural heritage, which are often utilized in the preservation and restoration stages of damaged cultural heritage sites.

In addition to the restoration efforts initiated after the conflicts in the Inner City, some structures are still awaiting restoration, while others have not yet begun restoration work despite being damaged. It is imperative to commence restoration work on these structures awaiting restoration to eliminate the damage in the area as soon as possible.

Out of the damaged structures, 204 have either completed restoration or are currently undergoing restoration. However, restoration has not yet been initiated for 18 damaged structures. It has been identified that some streets have been widened or transformed into boulevards as part of the restoration efforts. Upon examination of the boulevard, it was found that three buildings were delisted and lost, and three buildings were reduced in size due to their alignment with the road. However, it is observed that these three reduced buildings have been restored to their original state. Widened or boulevard-transformed streets disrupt the urban fabric and emphasize the importance of adhering to the original characteristics of these streets.

In addition to the restoration efforts initiated after the conflicts in the Inner City, any new concrete buildings constructed adjacent to or in close proximity to historical buildings in the urban conservation area should not disrupt the city's fabric, overshadow historical structures, or undergo drastic changes in the urban memory. Preserving the organic form of the Inner City requires the conservation of its narrow alleyways as part of urban design projects to be passed down to future generations. Modern buildings and urban designs in areas where the urban fabric has been completely lost should not contradict the city's

fabric. When it comes to individual buildings, efforts should be made to complete the missing parts of historical buildings or those partially lost through comparative studies with regional architecture, old photographs, and data. Materials used in restoration work should be compatible with the existing materials in the building and should not disrupt the silhouette of the structures. Construction techniques should adhere to the original construction methods. Modern additions to historical buildings should not harm the structure or disrupt its original character.

In conclusion, although it is evident that extensive efforts have been made to rectify the damage to many historical buildings, it is the hope of not only architects but also all humanity that such acts of terrorism do not recur in the region, our country, and the world.

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