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DERNEĐİ

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BEING A CHILD IN SURIĐİ

Monitoring Report on the
Right to Play of Children in
Suriđi

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PREFACE



“Children’s games are the core of life.
All people develop, grow and form there.
The most beautiful and most positive talents of
man rise there.”
Friedrich Fröbel

Play is an indispensable element of the physical, social, cognitive, and emotional development of a child. Play is one of the fundamental needs of children that are guaranteed under the laws along with the right to food, health, housing, and education. Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) defines the right of the child to play. This convention commits to protect and improve the child’s right to play in accordance with national policies, programs, and services.

The framework established with the CRC also reminds us of the need to plan cities with children in mind. The number one prerequisite of this to accept the children as today’s citizens, not “the adults of tomorrow”. Based on the fact that the children are also citizens, urban plans must consider children as subjects who can participate in decision-making mechanisms, have a voice in the cities they live in, and cooperate to build the life in the city.

Right to play is essential for children’s lives in the city. Play is one of the first steps for children to socialize. Play contributes to their learning and socializing skills. Play prepares children for life; it teaches how to deal with winning or losing, succeeding or failing, or other problems they may face later in life. Children can discover themselves and reflect their personal characteristics on the play. Besides, the rules, tools, means, and methods of plays give an idea of the cultural characteristics of the society the children live in. Hermann Nohl states that the play is a psychological experience of the child and the source of the culture, pointing out the deep interaction between the collective conscious and play (Akt. Temur: 2017)

Having a happy childhood has a positive correlation with playing. We should never forget that individuals who play games and have happy childhoods will be strong people with advanced problem-solving and life skills. Unfortunately, not all children have access to equal opportunities. While some children can easily meet their playing needs as their standard of living is higher, others cannot sufficiently use their right to play due to unfavorable conditions of the country or region they live in. Children are capable of

Play is one of the fundamental needs of children that are guaranteed under the laws along with the right to food, health, housing, and education.

creating plays and games anywhere, regardless of the present conditions. Nevertheless, it is possible to provide children with a safe environment to play through the necessary arrangements as part of the responsibilities of the state and the adults. In addition to the governments, all stakeholders, from vocational organizations to civil society, have a responsibility to provide and improve the amenities for play.

Children are the most significantly impacted party in a conflict. However, it is also the children who receive the least support. According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), there are 41 million children affected by conflicts, disasters, or other emergencies who need humanitarian aid. The child's right to play is usually overlooked in conflict situations and natural or man-made disasters. Yet, traumatized children are the ones who need to play the most. Although many charities provide fundamental humanitarian aid such as food and shelter, they tend to overlook play and education.

We, as the Rengarenk Umutlar Association, use play as a tool in our programs in order to develop life skills of the children affected by armed conflicts in Sur, Diyarbakır in 2015-2016, speed up their recovery process and empower them against life's challenges, within the framework of children's rights. We recognize the play as a right and responsibility. We provide safe playgrounds and toys for children to support their development. Because we know that depriving children of their right to play has devastating consequences.

We wish for a world where children can live like children...

Rengârenk Umutlar Derneği



INTRODUCTION

The right to play is a universal right to be enjoyed by all children. The play has an important role in the child's mental, physical, emotional, and social development. Play also allows the child to develop their life skills and creativity. Dereli and Uludağ (2013) state that the child replicates participation in daily life through play as a tool to gain qualities such as emotion regulation, stress management, and acquiring self-preservation skills, which will help the child to respond to the demands in the future.

The practice of playing varies based on the geographical region the child lives in as well as the religious, economic and cultural structures around the child. Children learn about themselves, their interests and talents as well as the social roles in their social and cultural environment through play. However, this requires adequate and accessible playgrounds. The playgrounds must be designed to support the child's development and minimize the likelihood of any injuries or accidents. Playground must be designed by considering the developmental needs of each age group. Well-designed playgrounds provide benefits to the child in many aspects. The child learns how to use their bodies, recognize and overcome danger, and cope with their fears (Yılmaz and Bulut: 2002).

Play as a tool to support children's development transforms and varies both spatially and qualitatively as they get older. Children's play areas include the home, streets, playgrounds, shopping malls where entertainment is condensed in a confined space, and the virtual playgrounds that are very popular nowadays. However, not all children have equal access to playgrounds. The leading obstacle before children's access to playgrounds is socioeconomic conditions. In other words, poverty prevents children from having equal opportunities. Besides, the lack of access to adequate playgrounds across a certain region indicates a political agenda.

This study on the play rights of the children in the Suriçi region assesses the current conditions of playgrounds





The play has an important role in the child's mental, physical, emotional, and social development. Play also allows the child to develop their life skills and creativity.

and evaluates the radical transformation process Suriçi went through between 2010-2020, and the district's physical conditions, socioeconomic and cultural properties in line with the data gathered from the field study. This report consists of four main sections. Section one is about the methodology of the research. This section covers the details including the methods used for the research, sampling, limitations, and data analysis methods. Section two covers the theoretical framework of the study. The framework of the child's right to play, practices in Turkey, and global examples are included in this section. the Sur Municipality's strategic plans and annual reports, indicators in relation to the child's right to play, playgrounds, and children's cultural, educational, and social activities within the sample region Suriçi. In the same section, under a separate sub-section, the urban transformation process between 2010-2020, urban zoning plan, and the comparison of total green space in Suriçi based on the legislation details are shared. In addition, the effects of demolished buildings that emerged as a result of the armed conflict in 2015-2016 on the playgrounds are discussed. The qualities of the parks and playgrounds in Suriçi are determined based on the indicators we set up based on the Turkish Standards Institution's (TSE) "Playground Equipment and Surfacing" standards. Section three includes the interpretation of the data obtained from the surveys and interview forms, tables, and interviews. In the fourth and final section, our recommendations based on the findings of the field study are shared with all the actors involved in the child's right to play.



1. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This report on “The Right to Play of Children in Suriçi” is prepared by Rengarenk Umutlar Association and supported by the ETKİNİZ EU grant program. The purpose of the study is to evaluate children’s access to the right to play, quality, and adequacy of the playgrounds after the urban transformation and armed conflicts in 2010-2020 in Sur District of Diyarbakır. In this context, the neighborhoods in Suriçi are evaluated in terms of playgrounds with their social and spatial/physical aspects.

The study aims at ensuring that local administrations and the Ministry of Environment and Urban Planning do not ignore the impact of demolishing or building cities on the children and contributing to the efforts of administrative bodies to implement child-friendly urban planning policies.

1.1.Purpose of the Research and Sampling

The study aims to determine

- if the children in Suriçi have the amenities to play at home,
- if the children in Suriçi have access to playgrounds or playgroups in their neighborhoods,
- if the play groups are installed based on applicable standards,
- what risks do the playgrounds carry,
- what risks do the neighborhoods and/or streets carry for children,
- the gender equality in playgrounds and suitability of playgrounds for all age groups
- if the authorities fulfill their responsibilities regarding the playgrounds based on the data and indicators.

The target area of the research is the neighborhoods in Suriçi District of Diyarbakır that are affected by the deterritorialization and depopulation policies, destroyed due to the urban transformation projects and armed conflicts in 2015-2016, and then quickly expropriated over the course of ten years between 2010 and 2020. The sample of the research includes 115 children, 25 parents, 4 mukhtars, 1 elected but deposed mukhtar, and 1 neighborhood council member in 7 neighborhoods (Ali Paşa, Lalebey, Cevat Paşa, İskender Paşa, Dabanoğlu, Ziya Gökalp, and Cami Kebir) affected by the armed conflict.

Both quantitative and qualitative research methods are used for this study on Monitoring the Right to Play. The field study is carried out in three phases. 115 children to take part in the surveys are selected by random sampling. A focus group of 13 children is established based on voluntary participation. 25 parents to participate in the in-depth interviews are selected by snowball sampling. The purposive sampling method is used for the in-depth interviews with 5 mukhtars and 1 neighborhood council member.

Field study was carried out between 04.02.2021-03.03.2021. Experienced volunteers and field experts who participated in previous projects of the Rengarenk Umutlar Association also participated in this field study.

1.2. Data Gathering Methods and Data Analysis

Field study consists of one 46-question survey with 115 children, 15-question semi-structured interviews with 25 parents, 7-question semi-structured interviews with 6 mukhtars, and 2 focus groups. The questions for the survey and in-depth interviews are shaped based on the fundamental problems addressed by the study. The survey is made with children with ages 8-15. The sample for the survey is kept diverse in terms of gender, age, physical characteristics (different developmental characteristics), and ethnic identities of the participants. Although gender equality is especially sought after for the sample, the study could not reach the aimed level of gender equality due to the pandemic and the conditions of the playgrounds in the neighborhoods. The interviews made with parents also fell short in terms of gender equality, since usually, only female parents were home during the interview hours. 13 children with ages 12-15 among the children who participated in the survey (6 girls, 7 boys) are chosen to include in 2 separate focus groups in a safe environment within the association's office building without any health risks. The mukhtars of the neighborhoods the study focuses on are contacted, 5 mukhtars agreed to an interview, 1 mukhtar was not available but a neighborhood council member was interviewed instead, 1 mukhtar rejected to meet due to health reasons and their neighborhood council members were not available.

The data gathered through the surveys are uploaded to the SPSS data analysis software to create charts and graphs, which are interpreted in the findings section of the study. Focus group and in-depth interviews are interpreted with qualitative data techniques, the audio of the interviews are recorded by getting the consent of the participants, notes were taken during the interviews with participants who did not give consent to their audio being recorded. The participants of the survey are not asked to share their names or addresses; the age, gender, and neighborhood details of the parents who participated in the in-depth interviews are shared anonymously. The names of the mukhtars interviewed are not changed.

The secondary data (Suriçi Conservation Development Plan, Sur District Municipality's Strategic Plan and Annual Reports, official documents of the Turkish Standards Institute on the quality of playgrounds, local, national, and international reports, media scans, Turkish Statistical Institute) used for the right to play are provided throughout the report and under the references section.



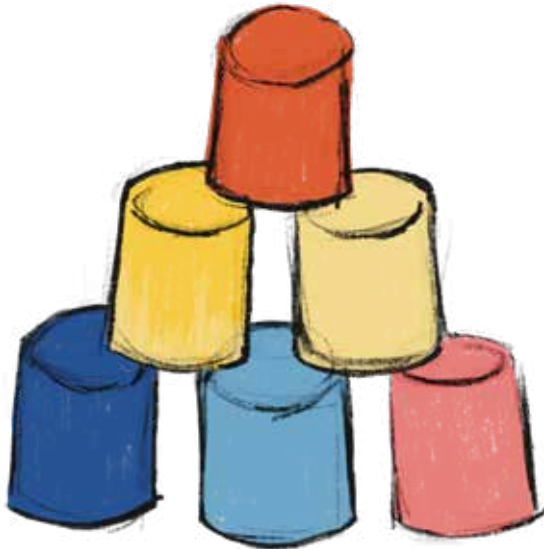
1.3. Limitations and Challenges of the Research

There are 15 central neighborhoods in the Sur District of Diyarbakır. The study is limited to 7 neighborhoods and the years 2010-2020, which covers urban transformation projects and the armed conflicts in Sur District. The study's sample is also limited due to the pandemic, in order to prevent the potential health risks for both the children and field staff.

Our experience in field study in the Suriçi region for four years as the Rengarenk Umutlar Association (RUMUD) and for many years before that as the Umut IşığI Women's Cooperative, and the recognition of our Association in most of the neighborhoods helped the participants to trust the interview and survey process. However, the pandemic and the lockdown for children made reaching them challenging.

As our field study team members were followed by radical Islamist groups located in a certain street, they had to end the survey and leave the area not to put the children or their parents at risk.

Sur District Municipality's Strategic Plan and Annual Reports, which are resources of secondary data, were not available on the municipality's official website. However, we were able to access the annual reports for the years 2011, 2012, 2013, 2016, 2018, and 2019 as well as the 2007-2011 and 2020-2024 strategic plans upon our application to the Communication Center of the Turkish Presidency (CİMER) to exercise our right to information. Thus, the study does not include the comparison of the data regarding the goals set and goals realized for the playgrounds by years.



2. THE FRAMEWORK OF PLAY AS A RIGHT, THE RIGHT OF THE CHILD AS A CITIZEN, AND THE RIGHT TO THE CITY

2.1. Evolution of Children’s Rights



Children in Turkey do not have any participation mechanisms to share their opinions and views about the cities they live in. Unfortunately, only a number of Children’s Councils within City Councils and a few municipalities offer “genuine” participation opportunities for children.

The evolution of children’s rights as human rights started recently. Two global movements affected children’s rights. These are The International Save the Children Alliance founded by the social reformer Eglantyne Jebb in 1919 and the “Sustainable Development Movement” started in early the 1970s. The five-point declaration of The International Save the Children Alliance contained the child’s right to life, food, protection, healthy development, and provision without exploitation (Severcan, 2019). These points shaped the children’s rights declarations. Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child (Geneva Declaration), published in 1924 and signed by Turkey in 1928, which constitutes the basis of The United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), consists of these five points.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 20 November 1989 is the most extensive reference document for children’s rights and it offers a liberating framework for children in addition to a protective perspective. It sets forth “the right to protection” as well as the “right to participation” as their framework principles. Turkey ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990. The convention was signed in 1994 and published in the Official Gazette on 27 January 1995, thereby taking its place in domestic law under Law No. 4058.

The convention introduced negative and positive

obligations regarding children's rights to the state parties, just as in the human rights treaties. The core principle of these liabilities is "the obligation to respect, protect and fulfill". These obligations have, in brief, the following meanings:

The **obligation to respect** means that States should not directly or indirectly facilitate, aid, and abet any infringement of children's rights.

States have an **obligation to protect** against infringements of rights guaranteed under the Convention and the Optional Protocols thereto by third parties.

The **obligation to fulfill** requires States to take positive action to facilitate, promote and provide for the enjoyment of children's rights.

There are a few additional justifications for placing importance on children's human rights. For example:

- Because they are still developing, children are especially vulnerable to human rights violations,
- Children's views and opinions are not recognized enough,
- Children generally do not vote and do not traditionally take part in political processes that will determine the position of governments towards human rights,
- Children face serious challenges in applying to the judicial system to protect their rights or take legal action against violation of their rights,
- Children also have limited access to the organizations that will advocate for children's rights.

Lack of consideration for the children's views dilutes the impact of regulations regarding children. Therefore, child and adult advocates of children's rights try to generate discussions about paying regard to children's rights in various areas. One of the topics of discussion for this purpose is the children's right to the city. Children in Turkey do not have any participation mechanisms to share their opinions and views about the cities they live in. Unfortunately, only a number of Children's Councils within City Councils and a few municipalities offer "genuine" participation opportunities for children.

2.1.1. Children and Their Right to the City

As of 2014, there are 1397 municipalities and only 190 of them (based on 2014 figures) have a city council. 130 city councils among those 190 have children's councils (Dolu, 2014). There are serious challenges before forming these children's councils. The bylaws of these children's councils are not child-friendly. The councils cannot reach disabled, poor, immigrant, introverted children, or children with special educational needs. Bylaws do not contain any provisions on whether the decisions of children's councils are binding for the city council. In other words, it is not certain how the decisions of children's councils will be used or what will be their influence (Özservet, 2018). If children's councils can be planned



If children's councils can be planned effectively, children can identify the problems they see in the city and ensure solutions to be implemented.

effectively, children can identify the problems they see in the city and ensure solutions to be implemented.

In the workshop organized by UNICEF during the Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) held in Istanbul in 1996, the actions to take in order to identify the Children's Rights in a rapidly urbanizing world and to achieve the goals set within the framework of children's rights were discussed. The Child-Friendly Cities (CFC) that was launched at the end of the conference is the first major step forward in this direction. Becoming more prominent after the conference, the child-friendly cities initiative is completed after identifying guiding criteria for the implementation of the rights defined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The twelve principles defined by UNICEF identified the environmental, spatial, administrative, and social opportunities that a child-friendly city has to offer and served as a guideline for different practices.

These principles are:

- Influence decisions about their cities,
- Express their opinions about the cities they want,
- Participate in a family, city/community, and social life,
- Have access to fundamental services including housing, education, and healthcare,
- Have access to clean water and proper sewer systems,
- To be protected from exploitation, violence, and abuse.
- Walk freely on the streets on their own,
- Make friends and play games,
- Have access to green spaces for plants and animals,
- Live in a clean environment
- Attend cultural and social activities,
- Have access to all services of the city regardless of their religion, language, income, gender, ethnic origin, or level of privilege.



Although it is usually at the bottom of the list of priorities, the right to play is crucial and fundamental in terms of children's health, development, education, and right to participation.

A number of both academic and civil society projects regarding children and the right to the city increased and local administrations started taking steps forward about this issue. Child-Friendly Cities Project was implemented by Mersin and Manisa metropolitan municipalities as well as Bitlis, Giresun, Lüleburgaz, Yüreğir, Mamak, İspir, Bornova, and Eyyübiye municipalities between 2014-2015. Moreover, other provincial and district administrations also started working on this topic in 2015.

The concept of Child-Friendly Cities and the relationship between children and the city are addressed by many countries in the context of children's rights. Also integrating the right to play, these international projects provide examples of children's participation in the city and spaces as well as their implementation. These projects include:

“Woonerf”

Woonerf is a type of system where the streets are arranged as playgrounds for children. Colin Buchanan, in his report to the Ministry of Transport in 1963, pointed out the relationship between the effective traffic flow and the deterioration of streets for pedestrians. Although the idea is originally British, the Netherlands was the first to turn this idea into reality. Dutch Niek De Boer was influenced by Colin Buchanan's idea of traffic and pedestrians and designed streets that, for drivers, felt like driving through gardens. These streets were named “woonerf” by De Boer and were designed with the inhabitants of the street and pedestrians in mind, encouraging drivers to drive slower (Hand, 2007, Akt. Tandoğan, 2014).

“Home Zone”

Home Zone project was initiated by the Children's Play Council (CPC) in the United Kingdom in 1998, in order to raise awareness of the importance of play for children's development and the need to better means of play and services for children (Bristol City Council, 2003, Akt. Tandoğan, 2014).

Another practice to make the physical environment in the cities more livable for children is creating safe and secure playgrounds that contribute to children's development and meet the children's needs and wants. For this purpose, several institutions including the US Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) and National Program for Playground Safety (NPPS) identified the design criteria for children's playgrounds. A couple of the most important points to consider is safety and age-appropriate design. On the other hand, the standards for playground equipment are established in order to create safer playgrounds and prevent fatal accidents in playgrounds. Çakıroğlu and Arslan (2010) state that EN 1176 standards are implemented in Europe, other developed countries, and

Turkey at manufacturing and installation stages to meet minimum requirements for safe Playground Equipment and Surfacing (Akt. Tandoğan, 2014).

Right to Play in the Context of Children's Rights

The lack of children's participation in decision-making processes for the cities they live in brings along many rights violations. One of those rights is the right to play, one of the most invisible rights of children. This invisibility is related to the lack of respect for children's right to play by adults and the state or the lack of recognition of play as a right.

Although it is usually at the bottom of the list of priorities, the right to play is crucial and fundamental in terms of children's health, development, education, and right to participation. In this context, the most comprehensive description of the right to play is given in Article 31 of UNCRC:

States Parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.

States Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational, and leisure activity.

Hence, the states have the obligation to take responsibility to meet the requirements for fulfilling Article 31, just like other articles they have an obligation to conform to. The obligations of the states within the scope of the CRC underline that the justifications, including lack of resources, that may be suggested by public authorities cannot be used as justification for the violation of this right. Therefore, states also have the obligation to plan public expenditures to allocate the necessary funds to realize children's rights.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child sees the child as an individual and recognizes the child as a citizen. According to Article 90 of the Constitution of the Republic of Turkey, international treaties shall be executed as domestic rules of law. In this context, all articles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child must be referred to and implemented while considering children's rights at a national scale.

Although the right to play is identified as a key right for children's individual development, it is also important to address the right in a holistic way. The child must have unconditional access to all of their rights. It is important to address the Articles of CRC on the mother tongue, minorities, and ethnic identities (Articles 17, 29, and 30), on which Turkey made a reservation, in the context of the right to play.

Article 17: States Parties recognize the important function performed by the mass media and shall ensure that the child has access to information and material from a diversity of national and international sources, especially those aimed at the promotion of his or her

social, spiritual, and moral well-being and physical and mental health.

To this end, States Parties shall:

- Encourage the mass media to disseminate information and material of social and cultural benefit to the child and in accordance with the spirit of article 29;
- Encourage international co-operation in the production, exchange, and dissemination of such information and material from a diversity of cultural, national, and international sources;
- Encourage the production and dissemination of children's books;
- Encourage the mass media to have particular regard to the linguistic needs of the child who belongs to a minority group or who is indigenous;
- Encourage the development of appropriate guidelines for the protection of the child from information and material injurious to his or her well-being, bearing in mind the provisions of articles 13 and 18.

Article 29: States Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to:

- The development of the child's personality, talents, and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential;
- The development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations;
- The development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language, and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own;
- The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national, and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin;
- The development of respect for the natural environment.

No part of the present article or article 28 shall be construed so as to interfere with the liberty of individuals and bodies to establish and direct educational institutions, subject always to the observance of the principle set forth in paragraph 1 of the present article and to the requirements that the education given in such institutions shall conform to such minimum standards as may be laid down by the State.

Article 30: In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities or persons of indigenous origin exist, a child belonging to such a minority or who is indigenous shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of his or her group, to enjoy his or her own culture, to profess and practice his or her own religion, or to use his or her own language.

Turkish Government must consider the multilingual, multicultural and multiethnic structure of the population to ensure that children have access to their right to play. However, Turkey does not fulfill their positive obligations due to the reservation they made on certain articles. The area covered by this study, Suriçi District of Diyarbakır, has a predominantly Kurdish population who speaks Kurmanji and Zaza dialects of Kurdish. Children's lack of access to play, which is the single activity that children spend the most time for, in their mother tongue may weaken the bond they have with their mother tongues, culture, and ethnic identity in adulthood. This also may lead to the extinction of a language, culture, and history in the long term.

The right to play is on a wide spectrum when we consider the right in terms of the child's development and the state's obligations. However, it has a direct relationship with urban planning activities. In order to create a more adequate and inclusive framework for children's right to play, children must participate in the decisions regarding urban planning as citizens. There are many actors involved in the urban planning process besides public authorities. These actors include professional chambers, trade unions, and civil society organizations. Adults have as many duties and responsibilities as public authorities have. Play is not perceived as a right by public authorities or adults in general. However, play is essential for children's development. On the other hand, playgrounds are the places where children get injured the most. Therefore, securing the right to play means protecting the children's right to life.



Children's lack of access to play, which is the single activity that children spend the most time for, in their mother tongue may weaken the bond they have with their mother tongues, culture, and ethnic identity in adulthood. This also may lead to the extinction of a language, culture, and history in the long term.

2.2. Right to Play in Strategic Plans of Sur District of Diyarbakır

All children must have access to the areas that will support their physical, psychological, and social development, discover their talents, and improve their skills. Central administration bodies, as well as local administrations, are responsible for fulfilling these conditions.



According to the laws, local administrations are responsible for building adequate infrastructure and services to ensure safe, guiding, educational, accessible, and healthy spaces for children to exist, paying regard to the children's human rights.

The child has the right to express their views in all matters affecting the child (CRC Article 15). The child can only exercise this right if they have the opportunities to raise their awareness of their rights. According to the convention, the child has the right to use the resources allocated for them to improve their conditions and become active and responsible members of the society (UNICEF, 1998: 6-7). In addition, Article 6 highlights that every child has the right to life. There are also articles covering that children's physical and psychological integrity shall not be harmed.

According to the laws, local administrations are responsible for building adequate infrastructure and services to ensure safe, guiding, educational, accessible, and

healthy spaces for children to exist, paying regard to the children's human rights. Local administrations must take the most important role to ensure children have access to their rights and they live freely and peacefully. In addition, local efforts and activities must be in line with and connected to the national planning. Moreover, child-friendly policies must create coordinated physical, social, and administrative spaces for children. Children's participation in management in the matters affecting them must be taken as the basis at local and neighborhood levels (Çakırer-Özservet, 2015).

Local administrations are expected to recognize the social dynamics, structure, needs, priorities, and codes and to create effective and sustainable solutions to the problems in the area as soon as possible. Therefore, local administrations must have an efficient management system in place. National/universal declaration of children's rights and action plans are expected to be implemented on a national level and incorporated into the policies for children locally.

In this section, the strategic plan and annual reports of the District Municipality of Sur that have jurisdiction over the sample region Suriçi are examined in terms of their compliance with the obligations arising from universal covenants on children's rights signed by the government of Turkey. The goals set by the Ministry of Family and Social Policies (MoFSP) for 2013-2017 under the MoFSP "Turkey's Children's Rights Strategy Document" and action

plan must be noted. The action plan stipulates that:

Goal 1. Local administrations are given a small role in developing and implementing training programs within the scope of Target 2 titled “The Culture of Respecting the Child” under the section titled “Respecting the Child and Improving the Culture of Children’s Right”

Goal 2. Local administrations are also mentioned in Target 2 titled “Establishing Turkish Children’s Council” under the section titled “Ensuring Participation of All Children in Decision-Making Processes Regarding Children’s Rights”.

Goal 3. Local administrations are given another role in improving the physical environment of children under Target 3 titled “Protecting the Environment Where the Child is Born and Raised, and Improving the Physical Environment”.

It was initially planned to investigate the strategic plans and annual reports between 2010-2020 based on the treaties that are signed by Turkey. However, Sur District Municipality’s Strategic Plan and Annual Reports were not available on the municipality’s official website or the Strategy and Budget Office of the Turkish Presidency. We were able to access only 6 annual reports for the years 2011 to 2019 as well as two strategic plans for 2007-2011 and 2020-2024 despite our written application to the Communication Center of the Turkish Presidency (CİMER) and the Sur District Municipality. The strategic plan and annual reports are assessed with content analysis method in terms of the services provided for children. Content analysis-based document scanning method is used for this study.

Following leading questions were asked for evaluating the strategic plan and annual reports:

1. Are there any planned courses to support children’s development?
2. Are there any awareness projects regarding the child’s right to play?
3. Are there any actions taken for the child’s right to development?
4. Is there planned cooperation with NGOs for creating relevant spaces and activities?
5. Are there any identified goals, targets, and activities for children?
6. Is there planned participation by children and families in the process of creating relevant spaces and activities?
7. Are there any plans for allocating a sufficient budget for creating, implementing, maintaining, and improving relevant spaces and activities?
8. Is it ensured that relevant spaces and activities are gender-inclusive and accessible by all children regardless of their disability, socioeconomic status, language, religion, gender, and cultural identity?
9. Are there any requirements to reserve relevant spaces in rural and urban planning projects?
10. Are there any plans to establish and/or implement safety and accessibility standards for relevant spaces and activities?

Table 1: Strategic Plan and Annual Report Analysis Table

Gösterge/Stratejik Belge	Çocukların Gelişimini Destekleyecek Kurumlar	Farkındalık çalışmalarları	Çocuğa yönelik Faaliyetler	STK'lar ile işbirliği	Çocuk Odaklı Amaç	Çocuk katılımı	Öngörülen Bütçe	Çeşitlilik ve ayrımcılık riskleri	Kentsel Planlamada Çocuk	Erişilebilirlik
2007/2011 Stratejik Plan	Çocuk meclisi binası, sanat atölye binası, çocuk kütüphanesi, spor kulübü, eğitim destek evi	Yok	Çocuk festivalleri, çocuk öykü yarışmaları	Yerel gündem 21	9 tane amaç belirtilmiştir.	Çocuk meclisleri	998.311 YTL	Yok	Var	Yok
2020/2024 Stratejik plan	Kıtap kafelerin oluşturulması, Halk Eğitimi Merkezi işbirliğinde çocuk ve gençlerin gelişimine katkı sunacak kültürel ve sosyal kursların açılması,	Yok	Kültürel ve sosyal etkinliklerin düzenlenmesi	Yok	5 tane amaç belirtilmiştir.	Yok	3.000.000 TL	Yok	Yok	Yok
2011 Faaliyet raporu	2 Çocuk kütüphanesi, Sanat evi, tiyatro evi ve eğitim destek evi, Kürççe kreş	Yok	Halk oyunları, tiyatro, müzik, resim	Dicle Fırat Kültür merkezi	Tehlike arz eden yapıların yıkılarak park ve yeşil alanla dönüştürülmesi, Dünyacak evi projesi	Yok	854.074,94 TL	Yok	Yok	Yok
2012 Faaliyet raporu	2 Çocuk kütüphanesi, Sanat evi, tiyatro evi ve eğitim destek evi ve 2 Kürççe kreş	Yok	Halk oyunları, tiyatro, müzik, resim	Dicle Fırat Kültür merkezi, ÇAÇA ve DSM	Çocuk destek merkezi projesi	Yok	Belirtilmemiş	Yok	Yok	Yok
2013 Faaliyet raporu	2 Çocuk kütüphanesi, Sanat evi, tiyatro evi ve eğitim destek evi ve 2 Kürççe kreş	Yok	Halk oyunları, tiyatro, müzik, resim	Dicle Fırat Kültür merkezi	Tehlike arz eden yapıların yıkılarak park ve yeşil alanla dönüştürülmesi,	Yok	940.000 TL	Yok	Yok	Yok
2016 Faaliyet raporu	Çocuk kütüphanesi ve sanat evi	Yok	Yok	Yok	Yok	Yok		Yok	Yok	Yok
2018 Faaliyet raporu	1 Çocuk kütüphanesi	Yok	Tiyatro, kültürel ve sportif faaliyetler	Yok	Yok	Yok	Belirtilmemiş	Yok	Yok	Yok
2019 Faaliyet raporu	1 Çocuk kütüphanesi	Yok	Tiyatro, sinema	Yok	Yok	Yok	Belirtilmemiş	Yok	Yok	Yok

As it is seen from Table 1:

- In Strategic Plans, activities regarding children are addressed under Culture and Arts chapters but there is no mention of a dedicated children's rights unit,
- There are not any identified goals for raising awareness for children's right to play,
- The institutions to support children's development are limited to the children's libraries, daycares, and art classes,
- There have not been any collaborations with NGOs since 2016 and the activities to support children are carried out by public institutions such as mufti's office, community education centers, and national education institutions,
- There is not an express declaration on whether the activities planned for children are prepared based on children's rights and gender equality norms,
- There are not any existing or planned standards for the safety of children or accessibility of spaces dedicated to children.

It is seen that the strategic plans of Sur District Municipality are not prepared from the perspective of children's rights. In Suriçi, the area subject to this study is severely damaged due to the armed conflicts in the region in 2015 and 2016. Children's playgrounds were also got damaged during the conflicts that caused a serious economic, social, cultural, psychological, and vital loss. In this case, Sur District Municipality has the obligation to meet children's fundamental right to play by building safe playgrounds for children and improving existing ones as soon as possible. **However, as it is clearly seen from the table and the comparison of annual reports for the year 2016 with the reports of previous years, no progress has been made in terms of children's right to play; the situation deteriorated instead.**

2.3. Urban Transformation Process in Suriçi in 2010-2020 and Its Relation to the Right to Play

The most important symbol of the city of Diyarbakır with historical and social significance is the city walls. Suriçi (walled city) is named after these city walls. Suriçi has intense immigration movements. Migration from and to Suriçi also changes and transforms the social, cultural, and economic structure of the city. Two major social breakdowns led to the structural transformation of Suriçi. One of them is the forced migration in the 90s due to the armed conflicts in rural areas where Kurdish people lived.

The other one is the armed conflicts in 2015-2016 and the aftermath. As a result of the sudden and forced migration from rural areas in the 90s, the immigrant families who did not have any means of production to replace traditional means



Migration from and to Suriçi also changes and transforms the social, cultural, and economic structure of the city.

or have the necessary finances gradually became poor, which deepened their problems with adaptation. Suriçi has become prominent with unplanned urbanization, poverty, and political identity over the years due to the migration to the district.

The Suriçi area has become a current issue with the armed conflicts in 2015–2016, curfews, forced migration, and severe rights violations. The armed conflicts not only caused people to become homeless but also led to damage to residences, registered sites, and social-cultural fabric. **According to TMMOB's (Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects) Destroyed Cities Report, 40 registered buildings and 247 buildings eligible for registration, and a total of 4985 buildings were destroyed. It is also stated that 3 schools got damaged and/or destroyed.** The urban transformation projects that were already planned before the conflicts, as well as the destruction during and after the conflicts, also indicate that the Suriçi's political identity, social and cultural structures are targeted for radical changes.

Home to many noteworthy architectural and historical buildings, Suriçi was subjected to a demolition project targeting historical buildings in 2012, when Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality got involved with the Urban Transformation Project started by TOKİ (Turkish public housing administration) and Diyarbakır Governorate in 2009. After the protocol was signed between the parties, Ali Paşa, Lale Bey, Cevat Paşa, and Fatih Paşa neighborhoods were determined as pilot areas for evacuation and demolition. However, the neighborhoods showed resistance, which forced the Metropolitan Municipality to withdraw from the protocol and stop the demolition process.

Local and urban organizations assessed the demolished areas under the Urban Transformation Project and concluded that the planned demolition has multiple dimensions and cannot be addressed only in a spatial context. The evaluations also included that the demolition would damage the environmental, historical, social, and cultural fabric of the area. In other words, it is implied that the transformation is aimed at changing the demographic structure in the area. Following the conflicts in 2015–2016, the urban transformation project in Ali Paşa and Lale Bey neighborhoods that got interrupted in 2012 resumed and both neighborhoods got almost completely destroyed. The area, in general, was evacuated and demolished both under the urban transformation project and due to armed conflicts. New commercial buildings were built instead of the demolished ones.

Several different methods were used to implement urban transformation decisions. **The municipality and law enforcement threatened the locals to evacuate the neighborhoods, the municipality suspended garbage collection and street cleaning services and blocked the sewer system.** Thus, people were forced to move and people who did not have the means to do so remained living in ruins, which caused many problems. Children and women were the most affected parties during this process. Other than the play areas designated in the zoning plans, the streets are the main play areas for children in Suriçi. The process caused the streets to become unsuitable for play, thereby causing

children to stay inside. In addition, the water and power outages paralyzed the social life in the area. This process also leads to certain psychological issues for the children. Research papers on this process state that the conflicts and the subsequent migration hurt children's education and adaptation.

Experiencing serious trauma after the conflicts in 2015-2016, children in Suriçi could not use the streets as play areas. After the destruction, the project implemented in Suriçi skipped children. The Conservation Development Plan (CDP), which was revised multiple times, did not foresee any actions in favor of children. On the contrary, **the CDP revisions after the conflicts in 2016 stipulate that 1 recreational facility that can be utilized as a children's play area and 2 primary schools to be converted into police stations.** Locals still live with the risk of being forced to leave the area as the Suriçi area has been declared a Disaster-Prone Site with the Cabinet Decision dated 22.10.2012 as per Law No. 6306 and subsequently included in the Urgent Expropriation plan with the Cabinet Decision dated 21.03.2016.

2.3.1. Evaluation of Zoning Plans for Sur District within the Context of the Right to Play



Experiencing serious trauma after the conflicts in 2015-2016, children in Suriçi could not use the streets as play areas.

According to 2019 data for 15 neighborhoods in Suriçi, the total population of the district is 38156. The total area of Suriçi is 150 hectares or 1500 decares. According to Zoning Law No. 3194 and the relevant regulations thereof, 10 m² active green space is required per person in the areas where the new zoning plan will be implemented. **Active green space is defined as children's parks, playgrounds, resting spaces, recreational areas, picnic sites, entertainment areas, and recreational playgrounds.**

Children's playgrounds in Turkey are included in active green spaces defined in zoning plans. As zoning plans do not expressly reserve any areas specifically for children, not all active green spaces include playgrounds. It is seen that Zoning Law No. 3194 and the regulations on planning guidelines do not prioritize children's needs.

If Suriçi had been a new settlement, the population would be deemed to have required 381 decares of active green space in total according to the Zoning Law No. 3194 and applicable regulations. However, since Suriçi was declared an Urban protected area in 1988, the total area for children's playgrounds or active green spaces is on the lower end. Conservation development plans apply for settlement in urban protected areas.

According to the current Conservation Development Plan, there is a total of 117.792 m² active green space reserved in 19 lots and front of the city walls. Only one lot is reserved

for a children's playground (Hasırlı Neighborhood). Hence, the active green space per person is approximately 3.1 m² according to the current CDP. The green space in front of the city walls is also included in the calculation. However, these areas are not within walking distance of many of the buildings in the area. They are difficult to access due to the distance. Yet they were included in the calculations. According to the regulations on the preparation of spatial plans, the maximum walking distance to an active green space is 500 meters. They are difficult to access due to the distance. Yet the green spaces in front of the city walls were included in the calculations for the Suriçi region in general.

It is seen from the survey of the active green spaces identified in CDP that some of the lots met the minimum green space criteria. Some lots are empty while some lots have private buildings; in other words, they are not used as green spaces or children's playgrounds.

As it is seen in Table 2 below, there are three playgroups in the active green space in 19 different lots and areas in front of the city walls according to the CDP. Two of them are in use, one of them is damaged and unusable. In addition, there are two playgroups installed by the locals that are not included in the CDP and one playgroup installed by the municipality. Two out of the three playgroups are damaged and unusable. Only one of them is usable.

As a result of the field survey, it is seen that the active green space per person in Suriçi is far less than 3.1 m² which is calculated according to the current CDP. Access to the active green space in front of the city walls as well as the two children's playgrounds within them is difficult and dangerous due to the wide ring road extending along the city walls.

In conclusion, it is impossible to reserve the necessary amount and number of areas and playgrounds for children when there are not enough active green spaces in the district. Based on the overall evaluation of the Suriçi district, it is concluded that not utilizing the lots with active green spaces or install the necessary number of children's playground equipment is a political preference and a result of the demographic change project for Suriçi.



Table 2: Active Green Spaces and Children's Playground Equipment in Suriçi

Lot No	Location	Neighborhood	Area (m2)	Is it an active green space?	Is there a playgroup installed?
1	Anzele Park	Melik Ahmet	6925	Yes	No
2	Next to Iskender Paşa Mosque	İskender Paşa	873	Yes	Yes (Unusable)
3	Uzun Street	İskender Paşa	276	No - Private Business	No
4	Telgrafhane Street	İskender Paşa	350	No - Empty Lot	No
5	Block No. 151	Cami Nebi	1085	No - Private Parking Lot	No
6	Next to the Great Mosque (Ulu Cami)	Cami Kebir	225	No - Private Parking Lot	No
7	Block No. 639-640	Lale Bey	580	No - Empty Lot	No
8	Next to the Church of Virgin Mary	Lale Bey	442	No - Private Building	No
9	Block No. 965 (Urban Transformation Zone)	Lale Bey	405	No - Empty Lot	No
10	Block No. 290 (Urban Transformation Zone)	Ali Paşa	373	No - Empty Lot	No
11	Block No. 472 (Urban Transformation Zone)	Ali Paşa	343	No - Empty Lot	No
12	Block No. 256	Ali Paşa	123	No - Empty Lot	No
13	Block No. 646 (Conflict Zone)	Fatih Paşa	1280	Yes	No
14	Block No. 205 (Conflict Zone)	Fatih Paşa	680	No - Square	No
15	Block No. 244 (Conflict Zone)	Hasırlı	794	No - Empty Lot	No
16	Block No. 239 (Conflict Zone)	Hasırlı	347	No - Empty Lot	No
17	Block No. 229-505 (Conflict Zone)	Hasırlı	963	No - Empty Lot	No
18	Block No. 230 (Conflict Zone)	Hasırlı	562	No - Empty Lot	No
19	Karadeniz 2. St. (Conflict Zone)	Hasırlı	1700	No - Empty Lot	No
20	Telgrafhane Street	Cami Kebir		No	Yes (Unusable)
21	In front of the Surp Sarkis Church	Ali Paşa	122	No	Yes (Unusable)
22	Block No. 156	Dabanoğlu		Yes	Yes - 1 set
23	In Front of the City Walls - Zone No. 1	Ali Paşa, Lalebey, Melikahmet, İskenderpaşa, Cami Nebi, Cevatpaşa	64.005	Yes	Yes - 2 sets
24	In Front of the City Walls - Zone No. 2 (Conflict Zone)	Cemal Yılmaz, Hasırlı, Fatih Paşa, Dabanoğlu	35.462	No-Empty Lot	No

Evaluating the city plans in terms of the child's right to play, daycares, kindergartens, recreational and cultural facilities must be considered as children's play areas indirectly. As was the case for the foregoing evaluation of active green spaces, if Suriçi had been a new settlement, a minimum of 0,5 m2 for kindergartens, 0,75 m2 for social and cultural community facilities would have been reserved per person according to the regulations. In other words, Suriçi would, under normal circumstances, have a total of 19.000 m2 area for kindergartens and 28.500 m2 area for social and cultural community facilities. However, as Suriçi is an urban protected area, these numbers are fairly low. The field survey in Suriçi indicates that there are only three spaces that can be used as a place for social and cultural events and therefore a children's playground, as seen in Table 3.

Table 3: Kindergartens, Social and Cultural Community Facilities

No	Address	Title	Activity
1	İskender Paşa Palu Sok. No: 5	Sur Municipality Children's Library and Information Center	Active
2	Ziya Gökalp Neighborhood Yeşil Sok. No:2	Sur Municipality Youth and Art Center	Active
3	Cemal Yılmaz Neighborhood Şair Sırrı Sok. Ada: 247 Lot: 1	Sur Municipality Turkish Education Foundation Children's Library	Active



2.4. Current Condition and Quality of the Children's Playgrounds

Children's playgrounds are places where children spend their time the most and also where they get injured or face rights violations the most. Therefore, playgrounds must be safe for children. **There are not any statistical data for injuries or rights violations on playgrounds for children in Turkey.** For this reason, the statistical data of different countries are analyzed in order to better understand the extent of injuries and rights violations on playgrounds in Turkey.

According to the report analyzing playground accidents in the UK, 40.000 children are referred to a hospital each year and 80% of these incidents are fall-related injuries (URL-3, 2018, Akt, Sariaslan-Senyen ve Erdoğan, 2019). According to the same report, while the most common type of accident is falling from swings, 20% of the accidents involve children being struck by a swing seat or having their hands or feet stuck.

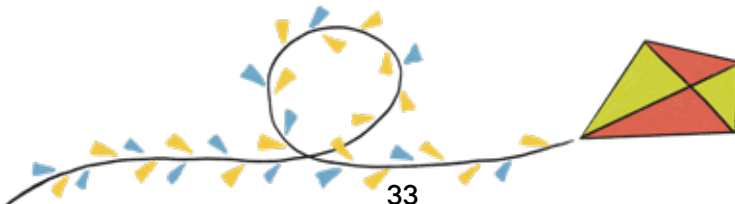
In Israel, 4% of the falls that require medical attention occurred on playgrounds in 2005 (Sethi et. al, 2008 Akt, Sariaslan-Senyen ve Erdoğan, 2019).

In European Union countries, 5.600 children receive medical attention as a result of fall-related injuries on playgrounds each year. Fall injuries represent 72% of all injuries that occur on playgrounds (Sethi et. al, 2008, Akt, Sariaslan-Senyen ve Erdoğan, 2019).

In Sweden, there are 12.000 injuries on playgrounds each year, which corresponds to 6% of child injuries (Sethi et. al, 2008, Akt, Sariaslan-Senyen ve Erdoğan, 2019). Approximately 55% of injuries on playgrounds reported between 1995-1996 resulted in fractures, dislocation, and concussion.

According to research made between 2011-2014 to determine the risk of concussion and fractures due to accidents on playgrounds In Korea, 48,5% of 6.110 children between ages 0-7 were referred to hospital due to fall-related injuries (Bae et. al, 2017, Akt, Sariaslan-Senyen ve Erdoğan, 2019). The percentage of slide-related injuries is 40,5% and swing-related injuries are 18%; 56,6% of all injuries are reported as head and neck injuries. Concussions are usually seen in children ages 0-2 as a result of swing accidents while hand and arm fractures are seen in children ages 3-7 as a result of climber accidents. Foot or leg fractures are usually attributed to horizontal bars, tightropes, and trampolines.

These experiences in various countries inspired Turkey to create playground standards. Playground Equipment and Surfacing Standards by the Turkish Standards Institute (TSE) sets out the standards for playgrounds and their surroundings.



These standards consist of the following parts:

- General safety requirements and test methods
- Additional specific safety requirements and test methods for swings
- Additional specific safety requirements and test methods for slides
- Additional specific safety requirements and test methods for carousels
- Additional specific safety requirements and test methods for rocking equipment (Sarıslan Senyen ve Erdoğan, 2019)

These standards must be considered in the context of positive obligations of the state to secure children's right to life. The state must protect, fulfill and respect children's rights. In this context, child injuries on playgrounds or any harm inflicted on children by third parties must be considered a violation of the State's obligation to protect and fulfill children's rights. It must be noted that these violations are preventable.

2.4.1. Evaluation of Children's Playgrounds within the Context of Children's Rights

Bearing in mind that establishing the standards for playgrounds is under the state's obligation to protect and fulfill, a checklist is created in line with the following indicators, drawing inspiration from the TSE standards and academic research. 6 playgrounds with equipment in Suriçi are examined according to the criteria included in the checklist. There are several indicators in the checklist, including but not limited to the properties of the location, flooring, hazardous structures on the playground, signs, gender equality, and accessibility for special needs children.

The criteria about the existence of armored vehicles or police stations around playgrounds originate from a child who is allegedly killed by law enforcement officers during armed conflicts in 2015-2016. Moreover, there are several reports published by human rights organizations claiming that state law enforcement is mostly responsible for the death of 123 children during the armed conflicts in Diyarbakır and neighboring cities in 2015-2016. The fact that there are not any investigations in place for the children who lost their lives during the conflicts and independent organizations are not allowed to make field observations to confirm rights violations serve as strong evidence that suggests the allegations are true. These violations also adversely affect the relationship that children and parents establish with law enforcement. Therefore, police stations or armored vehicles around playgrounds are included in the indicators as they may have a negative impact on playgrounds/green spaces or worry the children and the parents.

Definition of environmental safety includes several topics such as the traffic on the roads leading to the playgrounds, safety concerns about the traffic, pits and construction sites, buildings with collapse hazard, and wiring.

In this context, playgrounds should not be installed near main roads or busy streets, otherwise, there must be crosswalks, traffic lights, and warning signs.

Figure 1: Playground's Distance to the Main Road



It is observed that three out of 6 playgrounds are installed in areas near main roads or traffic and **none of them have crosswalks, traffic lights, or warning signs nearby.**

However, according to the data of the Turkish Statistical Institute, 574 children lost their lives and 51.600 children got injured due to traffic accidents in 2019. Although the data by age is not available, 43 people died and 4.299 people got injured due to traffic accidents in Diyarbakır. It must be remembered that these accidents are preventable and necessary measures must be taken immediately.

Figure 2: No Safety Tapes or Fences Around Dangerous Sites



There are pits and construction sites near four out of six playgrounds. There are not any safety tapes or fences around these sites near three playgrounds.

Figure 3: Electrical Hazards



Electrical installation and wiring on two out of six playgrounds pose a vital risk.

Figure 4: Collapse Hazard

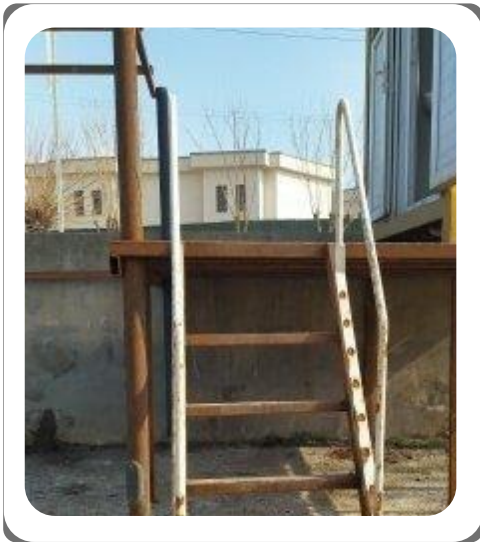


There are buildings with a risk of collapse near all 6 of the playgrounds.



“Access to Basic Needs on Playgrounds” section includes topics such as clean water and toilet facilities, lighting, shade structures, green space, and areas reserved for families. Our observations on these topics are as follows:

Figure 5: Access to Basic Needs on Playgrounds



None of the playgrounds have toilet facilities or access to clean water.

Only one park has a toilet, as seen in the photo on the left, but it is not accessible for children or adults as it does not have an accessible entrance.



Figure 6: Playgrounds In Green Spaces

4 out of 6 playgrounds are installed in green spaces. This means a larger area for children and parents to spend time in.

None of the playgrounds has an adequate shade structure and two playgrounds do not have access to adequate lighting. This limits the use of the playground both by children and parents. Lack of shading poses certain health risks, especially in summer. Thus, only two playgrounds are organized to accommodate children and their parents.

Only one playground was sufficiently hygienic. This is especially risky during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Evaluation of Playgrounds In Terms of Hazards

In this section, our observations on the following features of playgrounds are shared.

- Impact-attenuating surfacing,
- Properly installed and fixed equipment,
- Protection against fall,
- Set-up to prevent children from getting their arms or legs stuck in openings or between rails,
- Equipment height adjustment to prevent severe fall injuries,
- Protection against sharp edges or corners that may cause injury on impact,
- Information for children about the course of action in the event of any rights violation on the playgrounds,
- Armored vehicles or police stations around playgrounds (security, request box, report line, etc.)

Assessing the playgrounds in Suriçi based on the foregoing criteria, the current condition of the playgrounds indicates that children's rights and needs are neglected.



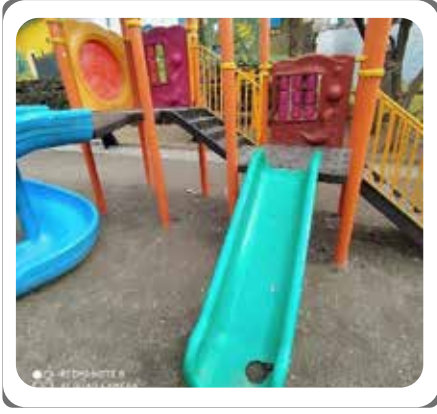
Figure 7: Risks and Hazards on Playgrounds



Assessing playgrounds based on these standards makes the potential risks and hazards more visible. In addition, regular inspections by the state are required for ensuring the implementation of these standards.

As it is seen from the photos, the playgrounds fail to meet safety standards. Besides, there are not any mechanisms in place for children to apply in the event of any rights violations (security or reporting mechanisms). Other than the risks specified above, the following risks are identified during the field observations.

Being A Child in Suriçi



None of the 6 playgrounds in Suriçi are accessible for visually impaired, hearing impaired, or physically disabled children. Lack of arrangements for disabled children is considered a violation of the obligation of non-discrimination. There are not any signs indicating the intended age groups or levels of challenge. Playgrounds are organized to allow boys and girls to play together. None of the playgrounds have pedestrian or bicycle paths. Playgrounds must be reviewed and renewed based on these criteria to prevent possible injuries or harm. Thus, children cannot use the playgrounds under these circumstances. This can be supported by the findings presented in Tables 24 and 25.

3. PLAY IN SURİÇİ

“Right to play means that everybody has the right to play. Our toys are either ropes or a ball. But everyone scolds us if we play ball. They won’t let us play.”

The curfew declared in 6 neighborhoods (Hasırlı, Cevat Paşa, Fatih Paşa, Dabanoğlu, Cemal Yılmaz, Savaş) during the conflicts in Suriçi in 2015-2016 caused financial and emotional damage to the people as well as the historical, physical and sociocultural value of the city. People who found themselves in the middle of an armed conflict were forced to leave their homes. According to TMMOB’s report on the issue, almost all of the population in these 6 neighborhoods were displaced by the time the conflicts ended and the demolition process was sped up with the Urgent Expropriation Decision.

People in Suriçi suffered heavy losses due to the armed conflicts and long intervals of curfews in the central Sur District of Diyarbakır in 2015-2016. Unlike adults, children were more affected as they could not make sense of what they were experiencing. Besides, children had to stay inside, away from the streets they use as their play area and educational facilities.

In this section, the study focuses on the children’s access to their right to play, the quality of the playgrounds, and the challenges that the children face after the traumatic process in Suriçi. Tables and comments about the indoor and outdoor play areas and the quality thereof, physical features of the playgrounds and most common accidents, attitudes of parents and local people about children’s right to play are given below. The opinions and observations of parents and mukhtars are also shared below.



3.1. Demographics of the Participants

Table 4: Neighborhoods of Participants

	Number	Percentage
Ziya Gökalp	15	13,0
Lalebey	15	13,0
Cevat Paşa	14	12,2
Dabanoğlu	19	16,5
İskender Paşa	18	15,7
Cami Kebir	17	14,8
Ali Paşa	17	14,8
Total	115	100,0

The surveys are made in 7 neighborhoods that are affected or demolished but not completely evacuated due to the conflicts and curfews in 2015-2016, and for which urban transformation and Urgent Expropriation decisions are taken.

Table 5: Gender Data of the Child Participants

	Number	Percentage
Girls	53	46%
Boys	62	54%
Total	115	100,0

It is seen that the percentage of boys who participated in the survey is 54%. Although the study pays regard to achieve gender equality, the number of girls falls short of the number of boys.

Table 6: Gender Data of Adult Participants

	Number	Percentage
Women	21	84.0
Men	4	16.0
Total	25	100.0

It is seen that the percentage of women who participated in the survey is 84%. One of the biggest reasons for this rate is that women were usually home during the hours of the survey.

Table 7: Mukhtars who Took the Survey

	Neighborhood	Office
Muhsin Sanav	Ziya Gökalp	Mukhtar
Abdullah Çetin	Lalebey	Mukhtar
Mehmet Değer	Cevat Paşa	Mukhtar
Abdullah Barbak	Dabanoğlu	Mukhtar
Cengiz Ekici	Cami-Kebir	Mukhtar (Deposed)
Bülent Uygun	İskender Paşa	First Member of Neighborhood Council

Interviews with 4 mukhtars, 1 elected but subsequently deposed mukhtar, and 1 neighborhood council member were made for the 7 neighborhoods analyzed in this study. Representative and council members of the Ali Paşa Neighborhood were not available for the interview due to health reasons.

Table 8: Age and Gender Distribution of Participants

			Gender		Total
			Girls	Boys	
Your Age?	Age 8	Number	9	4	13
		Percentage	69,2%	30,8%	100,0%
	Age 9	Number	5	8	13
		Percentage	38,5%	61,5%	100,0%
	Age 10	Number	6	11	17
		Percentage	35,3%	64,7%	100,0%
	Age 11	Number	9	11	20
		Percentage	45,0%	55,0%	100,0%
	Age 12	Number	7	13	20
		Percentage	35,0%	65,0%	100,0%
	Age 13	Number	3	10	13
		Percentage	23,1%	76,9%	100,0%
	Age 14	Number	7	2	9
		Percentage	77,8%	22,2%	100,0%
	Age 15	Number	7	3	10
		Percentage	70,0%	30,0%	100,0%
	Total Percentage	Number	53	62	115
		Percentage	46,1%	53,9%	100,0%

It is seen that both girls and boys are at ages 8-12. Interviews with girls ages 14-15 were made in their gardens/courtyards. Usually, girls and boys above the age of 12 do not spend time in their neighborhoods. One of the main reasons for this is the play areas near them are not appropriate for their age. Another reason is that parents and locals do not approve the girls above the age of 12 going outside due to both security reasons and gender roles. Some participants stated that:

► “It is very dangerous for girls outside. I don’t even let my son go out, how would I let my daughter? In a way I’m glad that I don’t have a daughter.”
(Female, Age 51, Ali Paşa Neighborhood)

“Little girls can play outside in front of their homes until age 10. But families don’t let their daughters above 10 to go out.” (Abdullah, Mukhtar of Lalebey Neighborhood)

Table 9: Level of Education of Participants

	Number	Percentage
Primary School	40	34,8
Secondary School	59	51,3
High School	12	10,4
Not attending	4	3,5
Total	115	100,0

96,5% of the participants stated that they continue their education while 3,5% stated they do not. Among the participants who don’t/can’t go to school, 1 participant stated that they cannot continue due to economic reasons, 1 responded stated that they both cannot continue due to economic reasons and do not want to continue, two participants stated that they are not allowed to go to school in Turkey as they did not go to school in Syria before they migrated to Turkey.

Table 10: Household Data of Participants

	Number	Percentage
3-5 family members	42	37%
6-8	57	50%
9-11	12	10%
12 or more	4	3%
Total	115	100%

Analyzing the household data of participants, it is seen that 50% of the households consist of 6-8 people, 37% consists of 3-5 people, 10% consists of 9-11 people and 3% consists of 12 people or more.

Table 11: Disability of Participants

	Number	Percentage
Yes	3	3,45
No	112	96,55
Total	115	100,0

3% of the participants stated that they are visually impaired, hearing impaired, or physically disabled. Disabled participants said that they cannot always go outside and if they want, a family member accompanies them.

Table 12: Ethnicity of Participants

	Number	Percentage
Kurdish	93	83,0
Turkish	10	8,9
Arab	2	1,8
Dom	1	,9
Other	5	4,5
Not Sure	1	,9
Total	112	100,0

83% of the participants are Kurdish, 8,9% are Turkish and 1,8% are Arabs. 0,9% of the participants did not answer the question about their ethnicity, 0,9% said they are Dom and the others stated that they do not know their ethnicity. 4,5% of the participants stated that they are Zaza, as they speak Zaza dialect of Kurdish.

3.2. Right to Play in Home Environment



And if there are no games, what is left?

Tolstoy

Home is the first play area of children. Being the first environment to discover, home is transformed based on the age and development of the child. The games children can create at home or the toys they have cannot be considered separate from the socio-cultural and economic conditions of their families. Moreover, parameters such as architecture and physical conditions of the house, and the number of people in a household affect the play culture in the home environment.

Table 13: Past Time Activities at Home

	Number	Percentage
Playing with toys	29	26%
Watching TV	45	40%
Reading books	39	35%
Studying	35	31%
Internet	24	21%
Other	24	21%
Total	196	173%

40% of the participants stated that they spend time watching TV, 35% reading books, 31% studying, 26% playing with toys, and 21% browsing the internet. Girls who chose the “other” option stated that they help their mothers and take care of their siblings while boys stated that they play games on their tablets and spend time online.

Table 14: Play Areas at Home

	Number	Percentage
Yes	59	52,2
No	39	34,5
Sometimes	15	13,3
Total	113	100,0

52,2% of the participants stated that they can play games at home, 34,5% stated that they cannot play games at home and 13,3% stated that they can sometimes play games at home.

Table 15: Factors Limiting Play in Home Environment

	Number	Percentage
Home is not suitable for play	19	41%
Mom/dad doesn't allow	5	11%
My siblings don't allow	1	2%
I don't have any toys	11	24%
I'm not a child anymore	10	22%
Other	12	26%
Total	58	126%

As the schools, which is the place that children socialize the most, are closed due to the pandemic, children had to spend less time outside and more time at home.

41% of the participants who stated that they do not play at home suggested that the physical condition of their houses is not suitable. Considering that 57 out of 115 children who participated in the study live in 6-8 people households, this result is not surprising. Most of the participants who chose "other" are girls. Girls explained that they cannot play at home as they help their mothers with chores or they look after their siblings. On the other hand, boys stated that they spend time by playing mobile games or watching TV. 24% of the participants stated that they do not have any toys while 22% stated that they "are not children anymore". 11% of the participants told that their parents do not allow them to play at home.

In the focus group meeting with girls, one participant explained the reason why her mother does not allow her to play at home: "We have toys at home but we can only play for half an hour or so, then mom tells us 'pick up your toys, don't make a mess here'". In the same focus group meeting, another participant told that "I don't have any toys at home. We build ourselves a fort by spreading a bedsheet over clothes drying rack".

Parents stated the following about the play areas of their children at home:

"Small children play by themselves, with pillows or cushions... They stack throw pillows and roll over them. They can play by themselves and create games. My house is not very suitable for play, neither the courtyard, but they play wherever they can find. They roll over or play those games you'd see in Survivor. That's it." (Female, Age 30, Lalebey Neighborhood)

"Houses are too small, rooms are cold. Kids play with pillows, they don't have any toys." (Male, Age 32, İskender Paşa Neighborhood)

"There isn't enough space at home. Kids play on the courtyard. They play ball games and hide and seek, or other games like that. They don't have that many toys, so..." (Female, Age 40, Ziya Gökalp Neighborhood)

"During the early days of the pandemic, Rengarenk (Rengarenk Umutlar Association) gave them lots of things to play with, like play doughs, craft papers, cardboard, color pencils, books, pastels, and stationery. They played with them for a long time. When they ran out of those things, they didn't play much." (Female, Age 51, Ali Paşa Neighborhood)

Akıllı and Dirikoç (2016) suggest that one of the main indicators of lack of play materials is the lack of toys to play with at home. Considering the physical conditions of the houses in Suriçi and the income levels of the families who live there, it is safe to say that the home environment is very limited and not suitable for children to play in without any toys. As

children in multi-child households cannot find themselves a private space (such as their own room), children, especially boys, prefer playing outside. It is seen that girls play with toys or spend time playing with other materials available and/or play games that do not require any toys.

Table 16: Which Family Member Do You Spend The Most Time With?

	Number	Percentage
Mother	1	0,9
Father	3	2,8
Older Sister/Brother	16	15,1
Younger Siblings	71	67,0
No one	10	9,4
Other	5	4,7
Total	106	100,0

82,1% of the participants state that they spend time with their siblings and 3,7% spend time with their parents. 9,4% state that they do not spend time with anyone. Participants who chose “other” explained that they spend time with their cousins or nephews/nieces.

Table 17: Do Parents Spend Time With Their Children?

	Number	Percentage
Yes	5	20,0
No	13	52,0
Sometimes	7	28,0
Total	25	100,0



“I can only meet the needs of my kids.

Cleaning, cooking, chores... I can't find time to spend time with them.” (Female, Age 32, Dabanoğlu Neighborhood)

As a result of the interviews made with parents, it is seen that 52% of the participants stated that they do not spend enough time with their children, 28% can sometimes spend time with their children and 20% adequately spend time with their children.

Parents explained the reasons why they cannot spare enough time for their children:

“These times are very stressful for all of us since we are all at home. We started arguing more since children are also at home all the time. I spend all my time doing housework. So I can't find any time to be with my kids.” (Female, Age 46, Cevat Paşa Neighborhood)

As the schools, which is the place that children socialize the most, are closed due to the pandemic, children had to spend less time outside and more time at home. The mothers we interviewed frequently stated that they cannot make time for their children as the amount of housework they have to attend increased.

Table 18: Favorite Game/Toy

	Number	Percentage
Video Games	13	18%
Balls	24	32%
Guns	10	14%
Dolls	16	22%
Marbles	2	3%
Spinning Tops	1	1%
Ropes	1	1%
Toy Cars	13	18%
Other	33	45%
Total	113	153%

32% of the participants stated that they prefer playing ball, 22% prefer dolls, 18% prefer toy cars and video games, and 14% prefer toy guns.



Table 19: Cross-Distribution of Favorite Game/Toy Data By Gender

Game/Toy		Gender		
		Girls	Boys	Total
Video games	Number	2	11	13
	Percentage	15%	85%	100%
Balls	Number	4	20	24
	Percentage	17%	83%	100%
Toy Guns	Number	1	9	10
	Percentage	10%	90%	100%
Dolls	Number	15	1	16
	Percentage	94%	6%	100%
Marbles	Number	0	2	2
	Percentage	0%	100%	100%
Spinning Tops	Number	0	1	1
	Percentage	0%	100%	100%
Ropes	Number	1	0	1
	Percentage	100%	0%	100%
Toy Cars	Number	1	12	13
	Percentage	8%	92%	100%
Others	Number	15	17	32
	Percentage	45%	52%	100%

It is seen that girls who can play at home prefer dolls, ropes, and ball games, while boys prefer marbles, spinning tops, toy cars, and guns. According to the details provided for the “other” option, girls prefer games that do not require any toys such as hide and seek, tag, or pretend games and they use household objects such as pillows as toys. Boys prefer fighting or wrestling games, Lego bricks, jigsaw puzzles, and card games, as well as playing mobile games on their phones or tablets. It is seen that the preferences of boys and girls are shaped by gender norms.

Table 20: Accidents While Playing At Home

	Number	Percentage
Yes	43	38,1
No	70	61,9
Total	113	100,0



"Kids run around even though the house is too small... The TV fell over one of my kids once and my daughter broke her leg." (Female, Age 49, Cami Kebir Neighborhood)

61,9% of the participants stated that they did not have any accidents at home, while 38,1% stated that they had. The most common accidents among the responses are falling down the stairs, having hands stuck in doors, falling down, accidents involving wardrobe falling, and bumping into furniture. Most of the accidents occurred while playing.

Parents told the following about the accidents their children had at home:

*"Kids run around even though the house is too small... **The TV fell over one of my kids once and my daughter broke her leg.**" (Female, Age 49, Cami Kebir Neighborhood)*

***"We have a ladder at home and it fell down. My daughter hit by a car while she was playing on the street, she hurt her hand. She got a bandage."** (Female, Age 32, Dabanoğlu Neighborhood)*

"My son had his hand stuck in the door and my other son had his leg stuck in the door while playing hide and seek." (Male, Age 32, İskender Paşa Neighborhood)

"They wrestle and fight with each other at home, so they hit their heads somewhere or bump into something... Home accidents are inevitable. They are not serious accidents, of course. But they split their lips sometimes." (Female, Age 51, Ali Paşa Neighborhood)

According to the 2012 UNICEF report, children whose physical activity is restricted and who cannot adequately engage in activities such as running, skipping, or playing, etc., are considered to have their rights violated (Akt, Küçükali, 2015). Based on this argument, the pandemic negatively affected children since they cannot go to school or spend enough time outside as the places where they socialize as well as the play areas are restricted. The architectural structure and physical conditions of the houses in Suriçi are not suitable for play or exercise.

Home accidents can also result in death. The Report on the Child's Right to Life (2015) prepared by Gündem Çocuk Derneği (Gündem Children's Association) makes this issue visible:



"We have a ladder at home and it fell down. My daughter hit by a car while she was playing on the street, she hurt her hand. She got a bandage." (Female, Age 32, Dabanoğlu Neighborhood)

Table 21: Home Accidents to Children

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Number	18	47	44	55	62

According to the figures of reported incidents, 226 children had died between 2011-2015 in Turkey due to home accidents. However, it must be noted that these figures are based on the media scans and the data gathered by civil society organizations. Thus, unfortunately, these figures are estimated to be lower than the actual number. It must also be remembered that the state must prevent the violation of children’s right to life.

3.3. The Relationship Between the Right to Play and the Street as a Public Space

Sur District expanded spatially but narrowed economically, due to the excessive forced immigration to the district in the 90s. Although Suriçi offers a nostalgic feeling to the people with historical places, museums, and bastions, it also presents the socioeconomic poverty and deprivation of the right to the city. According to Bauman, poverty means being excluded from what passes as a ‘happy life’ and not being able to take advantage of ‘what life has to offer’, leading to feeling worthless, and resentment, which presents itself in the form of violent and aggressive behavior.” (1999:60) It is an “open secret” that Sur District is neglected and ignored. As a consequence, the city has become a major place of urban delinquency.

This section of the study addresses how the streets that also serve as a playground for children transformed since the social and economic problems deepen as an aftermath of the 2015-2016 conflicts in Suriçi. The issue is even worse from the perspective of children. Derelict buildings/ruins in the neighborhoods pose a danger for children who play on the streets. Associations and cooperatives that were carrying out sociocultural and educational projects before the conflicts are closed pursuant to the “Statutory Decrees on the Emergency Measures”, thereby narrowing the area where children can socialize.

Table 22: Are There Any Playgrounds in the Neighborhood?

	Number	Percentage
Yes	54	47,0
No	61	53,0
Total	115	100,0

53% of the participants stated that there are not any playgrounds in their neighborhoods and 47% stated that there are playgrounds in their neighborhoods.

Table 23: Are There Any Playgroups on the Playgrounds?

	Number	Percentage
Yes	13	24,5
No	40	75,5
Total	53	100,0

75,5% of the participants who stated that there are playgrounds in their neighborhoods told that there are not any playgroups on the playgrounds, while 24,5% told that there are playgroups on the playgrounds.

Table 24: Do You Use the Playgrounds?

	Number	Percentage
Yes	22	42,3
No	30	57,7
Total	52	100,0

57,7% of the participants who stated that there are playgrounds in their neighborhoods told that they do not use the playgrounds in their neighborhoods, while 42,3% told that they use the playgrounds.

Table 25: Reasons for Not Using the Playgrounds

	Number	Percentage
My parents do not allow me	4	18%
The playground is worn out/unusable	10	46%
I don't think they are safe	6	27%
I don't go outside due to the pandemic	2	9%
Total	22	100,0



Analyzing why children do not use the playgrounds in their neighborhoods, 46% stated that they do not use the playgrounds as they are worn out or unusable, 27% stated that they do not find the playgrounds safe, 18% stated that their parents do not allow them to go to the playgrounds and 9% stated that they do not use the playgrounds due to the pandemic.

Table 26: Do You Spend Time Outside?

	Number	Percentage
Yes	94	81,7
No	21	18,3
Total	115	100,0

81% of the participants said that they spend time outside while 18,3% said they do not.

Table 27: How Do You Spend Time Outside?

	Number	Percentage
I create/set up games with my friends	40	41%
I play soccer with my friends	47	48%
I hang out with my friends	31	32%
I go to the park	6	6%
I ride my bicycle	36	37%
Other	32	33%
Total	192	198%

48% of the participants who can spend time outside stated that they prefer playing soccer, 41% stated that they play games with their friends, 37% stated that they ride their bicycles, 32% stated that they hang out with their friends, and 6% stated that they go to the playground. The participants who chose the “other” option stated that usually play games that they call ‘fights’ and ‘pretend war’, skate, play hide and seek, or survivor.

Table 28: Where Do You Ride Your Bicycle?

	Number	Percentage
On the street	12	33%
In the neighborhood	12	33%
On the road	7	19%
In the school garden	3	8%
Other	2	6%
	36	100%

Children who stated that they ride bicycles told that they ride in the neighborhood, on the streets, roads, or in school gardens as there are not any parks in their neighborhoods and there are not any bicycle paths in the existing parks. The majority of the participants who ride bicycles stated that they rent bicycles.

Table 29: Cross-Distribution of Data of Spending Time Outside By Gender

			Gender		Total
			Boys	Girls	
		Number	35	59	94
Do you spend time outside?	Yes	Percentage	37,2%	62,8%	100,0%
	No	Number	18	3	21
		Percentage	85,7%	14,3%	100,0%
Total		Number	53	62	115
Percentage		46,1%	53,9%	100,0%	

Among 94 participants who stated that they spend time outside, 62,8% are boys and 37,2% are girls. Among 21 participants who stated that they do not spend time outside, 87,7% are girls and 14,3% are boys.

Table 30: The Reasons for Not Spending Time Outside

	Number	Percentage
I don't think it's safe outside	12	57,1%
I don't go outside because of the pandemic	9	42,9%
I help my mother with chores	4	19,0%
I have a job to support my family	3	14,3%
There aren't any play areas suitable for girls	5	23,8%
Other	3	14,3%
Total	36	171,4%

57,1% of the participants who stated that they do not spend time outside told that they do not think it is safe outside, 42,9% told that they do not go outside because of the pandemic, 23,8% told that there are not any play areas suitable for girls, 19% told that they help their mothers with chores, 14,3% told that they had a job to support their families and 14,3% gave other reasons as to why they do not spend time outside.

Table 31: Cross-Distribution of Reasons for Not Spending Time Outside By Gender

Reasons for not spending time outside		Gender		Total
		Boys	Girls	
I don't think it's safe outside	Number	12	0	12
	Percentage	100%	0%	100%
I don't go outside because of the pandemic	Number	8	1	9
	Percentage	89%	11%	100%
I help my mother with chores	Number	4	0	4
	Percentage	100%	0%	100%
I have a job to support my family	Number	1	2	3
	Percentage	33%	67%	100%
There aren't any play areas suitable for girls	Number	5	0	5
	Percentage	100%	0%	100%
Other	Number	3	0	3
	Percentage	100%	20%	100%



8 out of 9 children who cannot go outside due to the pandemic are girls.

It is seen that all of the participants who stated that they do not go outside as “they don’t think it’s safe outside”, “they help their mothers with chores” or “there aren’t any play areas suitable for girls” are girls. One girl and two boys cannot spend time outside as “they have a job to support their families”. 8 out of 9 children who cannot go outside due to the pandemic are girls.

Girls explained the reasons why they do not go outside:

“Other kids don’t like us because we came from Syria. So, we don’t go outside.” (Girl, Age 14, İskender Paşa Neighborhood)

“We’re immigrants, so I don’t go outside. I only can go out to buy bread.” (Girl, Age 10, Cevat Paşa Neighborhood)



“Other kids don’t like us because we came from Syria. So, we don’t go outside.” (Girl, Age 14, İskender Paşa Neighborhood)

“Boys look at us when we go outside, so our brothers won’t let us go out.” (Girl, Age 13, Ziya Gökalp Neighborhood)

“Adults make fun of us when we play outside, they say things like ‘act your age’” (Girl, Age 12, İskender Paşa Neighborhood)

Analyzing the reasons why girls do not spend time outside, it is seen that a major factor is gender norms. In addition to being expected to conform to gender norms, Syrian girls who had to flee their country due to the war have to face discrimination, which causes a violation of their right to play.

Parents who do not want their children to spend time outside explained their reasons as follows:

“To be honest, their father doesn’t want them to go out. He says “girls shouldn’t go out and play with boys.” There are thousands of bad people out there... We can’t trust anyone. So my husband is not happy with it but my daughter still goes out. She only plays in front of the house, though. Some teenagers fight and use swear words. My son already started copying them. That’s why I don’t want him to go outside.” (Female, Age 35, Ziya Gökalp Neighborhood)

“Old Diyarbakır houses (registered buildings) all have courtyards. The wells in those ruins were all open and you could access the second floor by climbing some stairs. Each house had four or five rooms. People stole the doors of these buildings, even removed the stones used for stairs and handrails.

So the houses were all unattended. There are heroin users and junkies, or child molesters out there. I saw it myself, there were 20-30 kids who took one child between them and harassed him; I saw it with my own eyes. I yelled at them and my husband went to the ruins. All those kids ran away. That kid (harassed child) was brought to his parents. Pardon me, but people even molest donkeys. So we go to the police to report these things but they say “bring those people to us” or ask us who they were. How should I know? They all ran away before we can even reach there.

We also reported these to the mukhtar. Then municipality sealed these doors with concrete. But this is not a solution, because the back of the buildings is still open. Everyone can get inside.

These are not the kids from this neighborhood. They all live nearby, in other neighborhoods. They came here to take heroin or smoke weed. There are also some drug dealers in the area. Police came here more than I could count, broke their doors to get in, and beat them up. They checked their criminal



Analyzing the reasons why girls do not spend time outside, it is seen that a major factor is gender norms.



“We’re immigrants, so I don’t go outside. I only can go out to buy bread.”

backgrounds but did nothing. God forbid, what should I do if my child takes this path?” (Female, Age 51, Lalebey Neighborhood)

“My son had a traffic accident. There is a risk for kids to fall in with the wrong crowd like drug users or thieves. And when they play outside, people in the area attack/insult them.” (Male, Age 45, Ali Paşa Neighborhood)

Parents expressed that they do not want the streets to be used as play areas as they are dangerous for their children. Parents worry about the strangers who use the ruins and abandoned buildings in the area, which are increased in numbers after the

conflicts in 2015–2016, for substance use. As the authorities have no attempts to prevent the misuse of these abandoned buildings, these places have the risk to become a hot spot for substance use, theft, and harassment. Mukhtars shared their opinions on the risks of these buildings for children:

“The most dangerous places for children are the abandoned buildings. Children only think about playing games. Some of them fall down and break their legs or heads, some of them jump over the walls. There are also many dangerous activities in those areas: drug use, theft, or anything you can imagine. Of course, these used to happen before the conflicts but it definitely increased. There are more than 38 ruins and abandoned buildings in Ziya Gökalp Neighborhood. There are two types of ruins: registered buildings and unregistered ones. We can’t do anything to the registered buildings. Not even the kaymakam (district governor) or the governor can do something about it. We recommend that, for example, we could build a wall (in front of the registered buildings) but they don’t accept it saying its illegal. So we ask them to do it for us but they reject it. Nobody does anything for it. This is dangerous. **One of the walls of a building on our street collapsed a few years ago but thank god, no one got hurt. Multiple children were raped in those buildings. We heard this recently, an old man was passing by one of those buildings and save a child, by coincidence.** We all go after these people but can never catch them.” (Mukhtar of Ziya Gökalp Neighborhood)



“Boys look at us when we go outside, so our brothers won’t let us go out.” (Girl, Age 13, Ziya Gökalp Neighborhood)

“Ruins are very dangerous for children. If a kid spends more than an hour outside, their behavior and language change immediately. They get used to swearing, become rebellious, and copy whoever or whatever they see. If kids go outside with permission or under the supervision of their parents, it’s ok. But if they sneak out or go out without supervision, they change. They fall in with the wrong crowd. They spend time with those people. There are gangs of 10-12-year-old boys who smoke joint.” (Abdullah, Mukhtar of Lalebey Neighborhood)

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“According to the residents, there are many incidents where drug addicts go to abandoned buildings and do many things there. There is a foundation’s building on a street. We can’t go in there for spraying (for pests or mosquitos etc.) as we don’t have the keys. I told the person in charge to give me the keys. So I got the keys but it wasn’t even a week before those street kids broke the lock and built themselves a key. It was as if they own the place. We are not sure what they do in there. The door is closed, we can’t see inside. There are more than 40 abandoned buildings in my neighborhood, we hope all of them will be demolished. If they are demolished, cleared, and converted into play areas, most of our problems will be resolved. The kaymakam works on this issue. He says “let’s clear these buildings and put them in good use for our neighborhoods. At least they will serve as playgrounds for children.” (Mehmet, Mukhtar of Cevat Paşa Neighborhood)

The mukhtars stated that they would like to utilize the property of the abandoned buildings as there are not enough playgrounds in the neighborhoods. However, they also stated that these areas attract criminals. Mukhtars expressed that they applied to the authorities, requested these buildings to be demolished or otherwise cleared and used as safe spaces for children, but left empty-handed.

Table 32: What Time of the Day Do You Go Out?

	Number	Percentage
In the morning	6	5,2
Around noon	63	54,8
I’m not allowed to go out every day	15	13,0
I’m not allowed to go out on my own	9	7,8
No one minds if I go out or not	15	13,0
Total	108	100,0

54,8% of the participants who stated that they can spend time outside told that they go out around noon, 13% told that they are not allowed to go out every day while another 13% told that no one minds if they go out or not. 7,8% stated that they are not allowed to go out on their own. All participants who stated that “they are not allowed to go out on their own” are girls while all participants who stated that “no one minds if they go out or not” are boys.



The mukhtars stated that they would like to utilize the property of the abandoned buildings as there are not enough playgrounds in the neighborhoods. However, they also stated that these areas attract criminals.

Table 33: Do You Always Play Here?

	Number	Percentage
Yes	97	83,5
No	18	16,5
Total	115	100,0

83,5% of the participants stated that their play areas have not changed while 16,5% stated that their play areas have changed. Participants who stated that their play areas have changed explained the reasons as follows:

Table 34: Why Have Your Play Area Changed?

	Number	Percentage
I moved to another neighborhood	9	53%
Our play areas got demolished	3	18%
It's not safe anymore	1	6%
Other	4	24%
Total	17	100%

Among the participants who stated that their play areas have changed, 53% stated that they moved to another neighborhood, 18% stated that their play areas got demolished and 6% stated that their play areas were not safe anymore. 2 participants who chose the “other” option stated that they migrated from Syria and 2 participants stated that they do not prefer the play areas since they got older.

84% of the participants stated that they play on the streets, 18% play in the gardens of their schools or homes, 16% play in the courtyards of mosques, and 12% play in abandoned buildings. The “other” option represents the playgrounds.

Table 35: Play Areas

	Number	Percentage
School garden	17	18%
Home garden	17	18%
Mosque’s courtyard	16	16%
Abandoned buildings	12	12%
Streets	81	84%
Other	8	8%
Total	151	156%

84% of the participants stated that they play on the streets, 18% play in the gardens of their schools or homes, 16% play in the courtyards of mosques, and 12% play in abandoned buildings. The “other” option represents the playgrounds.

There are many reasons for the participants not to use the playgrounds as their play areas, including that not all neighborhoods have playgrounds, existing playgrounds are worn out or unusable and they can cause serious accidents.

Our findings from the interviews with mukhtars and parents are in line with the responses of the surveys. Mukhtars expressed the following about children’s play areas:

“Children play on the streets and alleys. Kids come here (pool in Anzele) and play in the pool. So, it’s like Antalya (a southern province in Turkey) for children. This is the common area for two neighborhoods. You can find 300-400 children in the pool in summer.” (Cengiz, Mukhtar of the Cami-Kebir Neighborhood)

There are many reasons for the participants not to use the playgrounds as their play areas, including that not all neighborhoods have playgrounds, existing playgrounds are worn out or unusable and they can cause serious accidents.

“Kids play wherever they can find, on any wide and flat ground. There are abandoned ruins in almost all streets. Kids used to play in the mosque’s courtyard. But old people live nearby, they don’t allow them to play. So, the kids want to play if they discover any wide areas suitable for their games. They go to the parks around the city walls but the attendants don’t allow them, claiming that kids damage the grass while running around. How should children play freely or have fun in those narrow streets and ruins?” (Abdullah, Mukhtar of Lalebey Neighborhood)

“There isn’t a single square meter for children to play in. Kids play in the ruins, play ball games on the street. Residents get annoyed with the kids and yell at them: “don’t play here, don’t disturb us”. Kids need to burn off their energy but they can’t. Sometimes they play with their marbles around me and I get upset, too. But I regret it after 10 minutes. I say to myself ‘why would they even want to play here if they had a place to play?’” (Mukhtar of Ziya Gökalp Neighborhood)

“There isn’t any place for kids to play except the small playground here. There wasn’t a playground here before the conflicts. Kids used to play on the streets. This is the first time the kids have something like a playground; they got so happy. There is a green space around the Hz. Süleyman Mosque but there aren’t any playgroups there. We were planning to build a playground in another place but couldn’t do it because there was a restoration project going on and the city walls have a risk of falling on the children. It was a large place, a playground there would have more playgroups and equipment. Now, we wait for the restoration of the city walls to be completed. At least we have installed a playgroup here.” (Abdullah, Mukhtar of the Dabanoğlu Neighborhood)

“Children have only a few games to play anyway. They use a piece of rope, or a ball, or a line they draw on the ground. They don’t have any swings or slides, they don’t have anywhere to exercise... The best they can do is to play with some pebbles, play soccer, jump rope or play with lines; nothing fancy. (İskendepaşa Neighborhood Council Member)

Mukhtars stated that there are not any areas for children to play games in and residents scold children who play on the streets or courtyards of mosques. Although neighborhood residents are not happy with the ruins that emerged after the conflicts in Suriçi and pose a great risk, children still use the ruins to play as there are not any designated play areas. It is understood from the interviews with the mukhtars that a green space with a playgroup for children is built after the conflicts in Dabanoğlu Neighborhood. However, the play area is still dangerous as it is too close to the main road.



“Children have only a few games to play anyway. They use a piece of rope, or a ball, or a line they draw on the ground. They don’t have any swings or slides, they don’t have anywhere to exercise... The best they can do is to play with some pebbles, play soccer, jump rope or play with lines; nothing fancy. (İskendepaşa Neighborhood Council Member)

Table 36: Have You Ever Had An Accident While Playing Outside?

	Number	Percentage
Yes	73	63,5
No	42	36,5
Total	115	100,0

63,5% of the participants stated that they had an accident while playing and 36,5% of the participants stated that they did not. Types of accidents are as follows:

Table 37: Types of Accidents Occurred While Playing

	Number	Percentage
Bicycle accident	11	15%
Motorcycle accident	5	7%
Car accident	5	7%
Falling	46	63%
Other	6	8%
Total	73	100%



“Accidents happen because of the glass and debris on the ground”

63% of the participants who had an accident while playing had fall accidents, 15% had bicycle accidents, 7% had motorcycle or car accidents. The “other” option represents the various incidents including being cut by a piece of glass or nails, firecracker-related accidents, or being struck by a swing.

The field study done to identify the causes of fall accidents, which is frequently brought up in the interviews, indicates that the main reasons are uneven pavement, loose paving stones with sharp edges, lack of manhole covers, or placing

the cover too high. Moreover, there is debris in the ruins, glass shards on the ground, and stones that are seemingly about to fall.

Children told the following about the accidents they had while playing:

“Accidents happen because of the glass and debris on the ground” (Boy, Age 13, Ali Paşa Neighborhood)

“We fall down and get injured while we play soccer because the ground is not flat.” (Boy, Age 13, Ali Paşa Neighborhood)



"We fall down and get injured while we play soccer because the ground is not flat."

"Our play areas are not in good condition. For example, there are lots of rocks. Look what happens when we fall down (shows his hands). The ruins are full of glass shards. Our ball bursts if it touches the ground." (From the focus group meeting with boys)

"One time, my child fell down on a piece of glass while running on the streets and cut his hands. He got stitches. This happens often. The number one reason is the uneven streets, lots of pits and sharp-edged rocks..." (Female, Age 30, Lalebey Neighborhood)



"10 to 12-year-olds ride their bicycles on the streets. Sometimes traffic accidents happen because there aren't any designated bicycle paths." (Bülent, İskender Paşa Neighborhood Council Member)

"Kids play in ruins and sometimes they got hit by a piece of stone that fell from the walls. We reached out to the owner multiple times but he ignored us. It's dangerous for the kids. We get upset when we see them play in the ruins and won't allow them but they go there if we are not around." (Female, Age 35, Ziya Gökalp Neighborhood)

"There have been many times when kids got stung by a scorpion or bit by a snake in these abandoned buildings. Those buildings are everywhere and of course they become infested." (Mehmet, Mukhtar of the Cevat Paşa Neighborhood)

"10 to 12-year-olds ride their bicycles on the streets. Sometimes traffic accidents happen because there aren't any designated bicycle paths." (Bülent, İskender Paşa Neighborhood Council Member)

"Some kids get hurt because of the glass shards at the bottom of the pool in Anzele. Some of them slip and fall down on their heads. I had to call an ambulance a couple of times. There is a road nearby, I know that two kids got hit by a car while they were crossing the road. More accidents are waiting to happen if we don't do something about the ruins in the area. They started to fall down piece by piece." (Cengiz, Elected Mukhtar of Cami-Kebir Neighborhood)



"There have been many times when kids got stung by a scorpion or bit by a snake in these abandoned buildings. Those buildings are everywhere and of course they become infested." (Mehmet, Mukhtar of the Cevat Paşa Neighborhood)

Children, parents, and mukhtars believe that the main cause of the accidents is the lack of adequate green spaces and playgrounds. Moreover, the streets are used as play areas and loose, sharp-edged paving stones, rocks, debris, and glass shards on the grounds of the ruins cause injuries. It is also stated that the children who play in the ruins are at risk of being stung by a scorpion, bit by a snake, or hit by a piece of stone that falls down from the walls. As there are not any swimming pools in Suriçi, children, especially those who live in İskender Paşa and Melik Ahmet Neighborhoods, use the pond in Anzele as a swimming pool. However, the glass shards thrown into the pond can cause injuries to children. Moreover, the lack of a bicycle path in Suriçi creates a risk of traffic accidents for the children who ride their bicycles on the roads.

Table 38: Are There Any Courses/Workshops in the Neighborhood?

	Number	Percentage
Yes	86	74,8
No	29	25,2
Total	115	100,0

74,8% of the participants stated that there are courses or workshops they can attend in their neighborhoods, 25,2% stated that there are not any



Among the participants who stated that there are courses or workshops they can attend in their neighborhoods, 69% said that they can take Quran lessons, 10% said they can take music classes, 8% can take chess classes and 5% can take drama classes.

Table 39: Types of Courses/Workshops

	Number	Percentage
Quran lessons	57	69%
Chess class	7	8%
Music	8	10%
Drama	4	5%
Other	34	41%
Total	110	133%

Among the participants who stated that there are courses or workshops they can attend in their neighborhoods, 69% said that they can take Quran lessons, 10% said they can take

music classes, 8% can take chess classes and 5% can take drama classes. The participants who chose the “other” option stated that they attended the workshops organized by Rengarenk Umutlar Association before the pandemic and there are a few organizations such as the Multi-Purpose Community Centers (ÇATOM), Sur District Municipality’s Children’s Library and Information Center.

Table 40: Do You Attend the Courses/Workshops Available to You?

	Number	Percentage
Yes	55	67,9
No	26	32,1
Total	81	100,0

Among the participants who stated that there are courses or workshops they can attend in their neighborhoods, 67,9% said that they attend these courses while 32,1% said they do not.

Table 41: Reporting Mechanisms

	Number	Percentage
Yes	26	23,4
No	85	76,6
Total	111	100,0

76,6% of the participants believed that there is not any person or organization to whom they can report anything negative they experience. 23,4% believed that there are people or organizations to whom they can report anything negative they experience. All participants stated that they shared their experiences with their parents if they want to report any incidents.



3.3.1. Attitudes of Neighborhood Residents Towards Children Who Use the Streets as Their Play Area

Children are forced to use unsafe places as their play areas as there are not adequate play areas and the authorities and adults do not have a solution for the issue. These unsafe places include the streets, ruins, abandoned buildings, courtyards of schools and mosques. Streets and ruins put the children's health and safety at risk. Moreover, the children are exposed to verbal, and sometimes physical, violence by the residents.

Participants stated the following about the attitudes towards them and their experiences when they want to use their right to play:

"Wherever we go, we get kicked out. If our ball hits the walls, someone comes and threatens us "go away or I'll kill you". Sometimes older kids steal our ball and run away." (From the focus group meeting with boys)

"For instance, a man got to the window and said "don't play here, or play quietly." So we played quietly for a while. Then, all of a sudden one of our friends yelled, the man opened his window and spat on us. We don't have anywhere else to play except the streets." (From the focus group meeting with boys)

"We can't freely go outside. Whenever we go outside, someone would say 'get inside, you disturb us. I'll tell your mother'" (From the focus group meeting with girls)

"I don't like our neighbors on the second floor. They go to sleep early, so they get angry and shout us to 'shut up'. So we yell even more just to annoy them." (From the focus group meeting with girls)

"Even if they turn the ruins into play areas, they (residents) would get mad at us. Because there are houses near the ruins, too." (From the focus group meeting with boys)

"I don't like the ruins. There's nowhere to play. People don't want us to play on the streets, because the streets are very narrow." (Boy, Age 12, Cevat Paşa Neighborhood)

"We can't play because of the rocks, we always fall down. And I don't like women to yell at me while we are playing on the street." (Boy, Age 15, Ali Paşa Neighborhood)

Parents do not want their children to go to the ruins to play. However, the residents do not want the children to play on the streets. Parents describe the attitude of the residents towards them because of their children playing on the streets:

"Sometimes kids play ball in front of the house. They play ball on the street, but the street is very narrow. People walking by get hit by the ball. There are no playgrounds, nothing. So, they have to play on those narrow streets. When the neighbors complain, kids get inside. Ours is a single-story house. They go up to the rooftop to play. This time I don't allow them, because there are my flowers on the rooftop. There isn't anything in the house for children

except the TV. So you see, it's terrible for children." (Female, Age 51, Ali Paşa Neighborhood)

"There aren't any playgrounds in the neighborhood, they have to play in front of the house. I wish there was one. They have to play on the streets. Sometimes neighbors come to my door to complain and say 'your kids play too loud'. So, whenever I clean my doorstep after the kids I clean my neighbor's, too. Kids sometimes make a mess in front of their house, too. That's why I clean theirs." (Female, Age 35, Ziya Gökalp Neighborhood)

Children's play areas are further limited by both the physical conditions of their homes and the narrow streets, causing the residents to be disturbed by the noise. Residents react to both children and their parents, which affects the relationship between neighbors.

Mukhtars also described the use of streets for play, experiences of children, and reactions from the residents in a similar way.

"Children, small kids come to me and ask me to arrange a playground for them. **A small playground was installed earlier and kids ran to me to say thank you.** You should see for yourself, 20-30 kids are waiting in line before the slides. You should go and take a picture. It's not enough for them, so they climb up to the top part of the slide. That part is not strong, it's about to break. One of the kids fell from there and broke his leg. It's not okay to do this. They climb up to the roof of the playgroups. These kids have never seen anything like this, the kids are excited so these things happen, unfortunately." (Mehmet, Mukhtar of Cevat Paşa Neighborhood)

"Kids ask me to build them a playground. They say to me 'Mukhtar, why wouldn't you build us a playground?'. You tell us not to play on the streets, so you should build us a playground. That way we can play there and nobody will be disturbed.' But my hands are tied. My job is to convey these requests to the authorities. I contact the authorities but nobody responds. I cried. A 3-4-year-old asked me something and I couldn't do anything. It's their right but my hands are tied. I mean, at least put a couple of benches, two swings. It's already a 100 or 200 square meters area anyway. Let the kids play there. Families also have similar requests. They say 'if there will be a park, at least I'll know where my kids are playing.'" (Mukhtar of Ziya Gökalp Neighborhood)

"Of course they want to play, they are kids. When someone scolds them for being too loud, they immediately ask "where should we go?". This is a legitimate request, they mean 'show us a play area and we will go there'. Every kid wants a comfortable play area where they can play freely and don't injure themselves if they fall. For example, when you play on the streets, kids have to be careful about the people passing by. Because they know someone will beat them if kids hit them accidentally with a ball. Kids don't have a place for themselves. There is none. Forget about my neighborhood, there are only a handful of playgrounds in the whole district. Even if there is a thing called the right to play, that right hasn't been around in Suriçi. I mean, there are only 5-6 neighborhoods left in Suriçi anyway." (Bülent, İskender Paşa Neighborhood Council Member)

Children are well aware of the challenges they face due to the lack of playgrounds and submitted their requests for a playground to the mukhtars of their neighborhood. Mukhtars are also aware of the tension caused by the issue. Therefore, they filed an official request to the Governor and District Governor for a playground. Mukhtars describe the process as follows:

“I personally talked to the Mayor of Sur District from HDP (People’s Democratic Party) before. Then the government appointed a trustee. I also talked to the trustee, multiple times. I personally took the floor in the mukhtars’ meeting, made a request in front of all other mukhtars. I also submitted a petition. I applied both in writing and personally. There was a park on the left of the hospital (Selahattin Eyyübi State Hospital in Dağkapı). We wanted to utilize that place. It would be a playground and an exercise area. It would be nice if we had an exercise area in the neighborhood. That place wasn’t accepted due to the hazard caused by the city walls. I mean, if the area is enclosed with handrails, there won’t be anything dangerous about the place. It would be great for the neighborhood. We will also save our children. They won’t be on the streets. There isn’t a single exercise area in the whole Sur District.” (Mehmet, Mukhtar of Cevat Paşa Neighborhood)

*“Recently I talked to the district governor about this issue. He said to us ‘find a public property that we can build a playground on.’ I mean, they have the list of public property, how should I know? They have a project but I don’t know how it will turn out. I can’t find any property but they can expropriate land... Neither the trustee nor the HDP administration rejected our requests but they didn’t do anything either. There is nothing done for the children. There used to be children’s festivals during Mayor Abdullah’s administration. He would take the kids to the festival area where they play and burn off some energy for a few days. **We have a saying in Kurdish ‘dive pekî, diçe sal u mehki’, which means nothing has happened since then.**” (Mukhtar of Ziya Gökalp Neighborhood)*

“There are areas suitable for playgrounds. Recently, we applied to the district government and asked them if they plan to build a playground for children. They always say ‘sure, we will’ but also ask us to find the land. You are the municipality, if you don’t know how to find the land, how should I know? I can’t know if a piece of land belongs to someone or not, if there is a title deed for the land or if it’s abandoned. Back in the day, Abdullah Demirbaş administration used to organize festivals for children. We all used to go to the festivals with our children. There was an event in every neighborhood. People had a great time, watching movies and theater plays, listening to some concerts. Children learned their manners and grow with these events. (Abdullah, Mukhtar of Lalebey Neighborhood)

Mukhtars conveyed the requests for a playground to the Governor, elected Mayors, and appointed trustees. They stated that they applied to the authorities, did not have their requests rejected but no action is taken about the issue. Expecting mukhtars to access the details about the property for a playground is an indication of the authorities not taking any responsibility unless they are deliberately making things difficult.

3.3.2. Evaluation of Playgrounds from the Perspective of Gender Norms

Our findings from the monitoring project carried out in Suriçi about the “right to play”, field observations, in-depth interviews with parents and mukhtars, and photos taken from the existing playgrounds exhibit serious violations of children’s right to play. Children prefer streets and ruins to play in as there are not any suitable playgrounds. The risks of playing in these areas and the attitudes of adults towards children are addressed in previous sections. However, analyzing the places used by children to play with a gender perspective, we discovered even more serious inequalities. Participants of our focus group meeting with girls stated the following about their experiences while playing outside:

“Boys bother us. They send us away and play themselves instead.” (From the focus group meeting with girls)

“We played dodgeball the most. But we can’t go outside because of the pandemic and my brothers won’t let me because there are boys outside.” (From the focus group meeting with girls)

“Boys look at us when we go outside, so our brothers won’t let us go out.” (From the focus group meeting with girls)

“I don’t like drug addicts. The neighborhood is not safe for girls.” (Girl, Age 12, Lalebey Neighborhood)

“There aren’t enough play areas. There aren’t any safe areas. We can’t go out in the evening because of the lighting issues.” (Girl, Age 14, Cevat Paşa Neighborhood)

“They swear at us. Boys don’t let us play on the street if they were already there. Then there are junkies and thieves.” (From the focus group meeting with girls)

One of the main reasons restricting girls from playing outside is the gender norms. **Because the boys believe that only they are entitled to use the street, they can prevent girls from spending time outside and playing on the street.** Widely conformed gender norms are the reason why boys can play on the streets while girls are restrained by their brothers. Because one of the biggest roles given to boys is to protect the “honor and purity” of their sisters.

Parents explain why they do not want their daughters to play outside and describe the risks girls may encounter in play areas:

“I won’t let my daughter go out because boys are playing.” (Female, Age 32, Dabanoğlu Neighborhood)

“I don’t let my daughter go out that much. I’m afraid that drug addicts would harm my daughter.” (Female, Age 35, Lalebey Neighborhood)

“I mean, there isn’t discrimination against boys or girls. But girls are more up front. Why? Because they are girls. I mean perverts are perverts for both boys and girls. But people are obsessed with the honor of girls. I mean, both boys and girls are exposed to this.” (Female, Age 40, Ziya Gökalp Neighborhood)

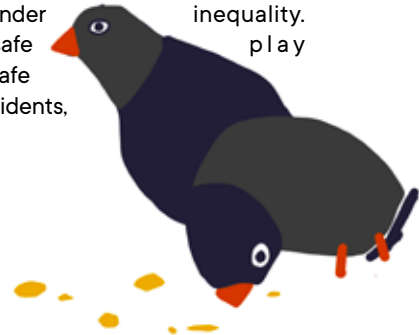
“We hear all the bad things happening in those ruins. We are afraid that someone would kidnap our daughter.” (Female, Age 35, Cevat Paşa Neighborhood)

“Some pervert exposed himself to my daughter. My daughter went to our neighbor’s house to use the internet for school work. Then I heard her scream and ran to the street. But the man went away. How could I leave her alone? There are lots of ruins around here. I’m afraid, people do drugs there and there’s a pervert in our neighborhood.” (Female, Age 36, Ziya Gökalp Neighborhood)

“Strangers do drugs in the ruins. This wasn’t the case before. Now, there are also thieves and burglars. We are afraid because we hear about kidnapping stories.” (Female, Age 45, Lalebey Neighborhood)

Parents do not let their daughters spend time outside since boys use the streets most of the time. Parents also prevent their daughters from playing outside to protect them, as they are afraid because of the harassment they witness or hear about. Parents stated that they prefer keeping their daughters inside as there are not any safe places they can play in.

The home environment is the first place where gender inequality starts to take root. It is also the first place where the gender roles and duties are assigned and internalized. The physical changes that children’s bodies go through, especially in adolescence, further bring out these roles and duties. While girls are expected to help the mother with the housework, boys are expected to protect their sisters. In addition to the spatial/physical conditions of Suriçi, the socioeconomic and cultural structure of the district have also an impact on creating gender roles. Almost all children in Suriçi have their right to play violated. However, girls experience more violations due to gender inequality. The inaction of the authorities is the reason for the lack of safe play areas, thereby making the children prefer the streets or unsafe areas to play and exposing them to the possibility of accidents, neglect, and abuse.



3.3.3. My Favorite Thing About My Neighborhood

Children in Suriçi have limited green spaces and play areas. They are at risk of accidents due to playing in places such as the streets, ruins, and courtyards of mosques and schools, and they are under the pressure of their family members and residents of the neighborhood. Children express their connection to their neighborhoods, despite all challenges they experience:

“My mom lost her kidney because she gave birth to me. This neighborhood nursed me. That’s why I love my neighborhood. I like playing games with my friends.” (Boy, Age 14, Ali Paşa Neighborhood)

“I like that everyone knows each other in the neighborhood. I like the street culture and the appearance of the streets.” (Girl, Age 15, Cami Kebir Neighborhood)

“My neighbors, helping each other and their warmth...” (Boy, Age 15, İskender Paşa Neighborhood)

“I feel good here. I love the streets and I love the city walls.” (Girl, Age 14 Cevat Paşa Neighborhood)

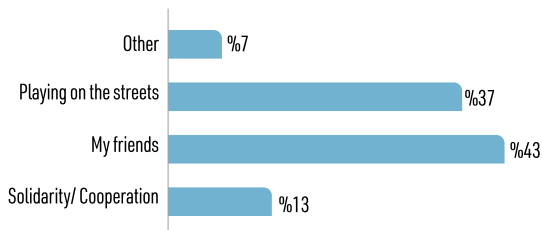
“I like my neighborhood, the solidarity and I like people helping each other” (Boy, Age 11, Ziya Gökalp Neighborhood)

“I like my friends and the street animals. There are cats on the rooftop across our house, we feed them.” (From the focus group meeting with girls)

“My favorite thing about this neighborhood is that my house is here and I can live with all my relatives.” (From the focus group meeting with girls)

Despite all adversities in Suriçi, the sense of solidarity shaped by their everyday relationships in line with the space they live in helps them develop their sense of belonging. As Küçükırca explains, although the people of Sur District do not live as a collective, the solidarity stemming from poverty makes Suriçi a home (2018: 38).

Table 42: What Is Your Favorite Thing About Your Neighborhood?



Children frequently mentioned their friendships, the streets, and the culture of cooperation/solidarity as their favorite aspects of their neighborhoods.

3.3.4. If I Were To Build A Play Area In My Neighborhood...

“I would build a basketball court. I would turn the ruins into a play area for children.”
(Girl, Age 12, Cevat Paşa Neighborhood)

“I would stop people from throwing their garbage on the floor. I would make a bicycle path.”
(Boy, Age 9, Dabanoğlu Neighborhood)

“I would stop child rape. I would install cameras on the streets, call the police. I would build playgrounds and parks. There are some empty areas nearby, I would turn them into soccer fields.”
(Girl, Age 13, Ali Paşa Neighborhood)

“I would fix the ground, rebuild the ruins. I would make a playground and a basketball court.”
(Girl, Age 13, Ali Paşa Neighborhood)

“I would like big houses with gardens and animals. I would like swings, slides, and seesaws in the playgrounds.”
(Girl, Age 10, Cami Kebir Neighborhood)

“I would build a playground. I would ask kids’ opinions. I would help the disabled. I would help everyone. I would give away balls to the kids. I wouldn’t let our neighborhood fall apart and I wouldn’t allow drugs.”
(Boy, Age 14, Ali Paşa Neighborhood)

“Trees, the smell of the ground, butterflies... I would like a fully-equipped playground.”
(Boy, Age 13, İskender Paşa Neighborhood)

“A large playground for everybody. Green parks and a pool, but let’s keep its historical structure. I would like many toys on the playground.”
(Boy, Age 12, Lalebey Neighborhood)

“I would reconstruct the ruins, build soccer fields and basketball courts. I would build a mosque. I would send away the thieves and junkies in my neighborhood. I would bring a circus to the neighborhood. I’d like everyone to have fun.”
(Boy, Age 13, Ziya Gökalp Neighborhood)

“I would like a library in our neighborhood. There is only one playground in the neighborhood. So everyone goes there and fight over it.”

(Girl, Age 14, Cevat Paşa Neighborhood)

“Our neighborhood is not safe in the evening. I would like my neighborhood to be safe.”

(Girl, Age 12, Dabanoğlu Neighborhood)

“I would bring internet connection to all neighborhoods, give everyone tablets and build a school. I would build a playground and a pool.”

(Girl, Age 12, Ziya Gökalp Neighborhood)

“I would like the playground to have a courtyard with a pool, have a door so that strangers wouldn’t come in and make a mess. We would like to have the keys to the playground’s door.”

(From the focus group meeting with girls)

“I would like to have slides, seesaws, merry-go-rounds, and one of those Ferris wheels. I would like to have an amusement park.”

(From the focus group meeting with girls)

“Let’s demolish the ruins in the neighborhood and build playgrounds instead. Don’t let strangers in.”

(From the focus group meeting with girls)

“If we have a park, I would like to have cats there. Let’s have houses for cats and dogs.”

(From the focus group meeting with girls)

“I would like to have a giant playground just like an amusement park. There must be a security guard so no one could ruin the place. I also would like a pool.”

(From the focus group meeting with girls)

“There must be a guard to prevent strangers from damaging the place. I would like to have an exercise area. Let’s have seesaws, slides, and swings on the playground.”

(From the focus group meeting with girls)

“Let’s have a playground with a soccer field, volleyball court, a pool, and a foosball.”

(From the focus group meeting with boys)

“We used to borrow bikes from you (Rengarenk Umutlar Association) and ride for a week. It was nice. There isn’t a bicycle path here, that’s why our bikes break down easily. We can’t ride fast in the neighborhood. If there was a bicycle path we would go so fast.”

(From the focus group meeting with boys)

“I’d like to have bikes that we can ride on the playground. I’d like a pool.”

(From the focus group meeting with boys)

“I would like to have a pool in the summer and a warm place/shelter in winter. Homeless people make it somehow in the summer, but what about winter? If there is some type of shelter, they can stay there. One of these ruins can be turned into a shelter. And animals on the streets also need shelters. There are some rich people out there, they can’t bring themselves to spend a dime. They can’t even look after a dog.”

(From the focus group meeting with boys)

“I would build a normal playground. I would put a swing, slide, playhouse, sandpit, and a play area.”

(From the focus group meeting with boys)

“I would like to have a house in the children’s playground. Put some games, harmless games in the house, like Monopoly. Make a soccer field or a basketball court... Have guards to protect the playground. Guard is necessary to keep away people except for the kids in our neighborhood. Strangers will ruin the place. There are thieves and bad people out there.”

(From the focus group meeting with boys)

“Let’s have guards and first-aid kits or fire safety things, so we can quickly do something about any problems in the area. But let the children from other neighborhoods or wherever come here, too. They too deserve having fun.”

(From the focus group meeting with boys)

Participants stated that they would like to have an exercise area, soccer field, volleyball and basketball courts as well as a safe bicycle path. They stated that they would like to have the ruins cleared and turned into play areas, have access to a swimming pool in summer, an amusement park, or other recreational areas with playgroups. Participants also wanted the authorities to address street lighting issues and increase the security measures such as installing camera systems in order to prevent abuse and harassment of children in unsafe areas. The participants wanted to eliminate the social threats posed by alcohol abuse, substance use, and theft, which are claimed to be most prevalent in

the ruins in Suriçi. Some of the children expressed their concerns about homeless people and recommended houses for the homeless and shelters for animals in children's parks. Children being excluded from the decision-making process about the play areas in the city or other projects that concern them indicates that children's right to participate is also violated.

As the participants used the term "strangers" a few times, they are asked to clarify who they were referring to and why they do not want strangers to have access to the play area. Participants explained that they refer to any children from other neighborhoods and they do not want them to have access to the play area due to the discrimination they face on the playgrounds in other neighborhoods.

"I, my sister, and my cousin went to a playground in Sur. There were lots of girls and boys. My sister wanted to swing, so we asked the kids there if we could have a go. They said 'no, you don't live here, go away.' That's why we don't want other kids in our play area."

(From the focus group meeting with girls)

"Right to play means that everybody has the right to play. Our toys are either ropes or a ball. But everyone scolds us if we play ball. They won't let us play. They don't even let us talk. I went to my aunt's, there was a playground nearby. They didn't let us play there either. I don't understand how I have a right to play."

(From the focus group meeting with boys)

The answers given by the children to the question about their ideal play area give some clues about the current condition of their play areas. Their statements indicate that the play areas are far from being safe or useful for the children. The playground equipment is something children can see on TV or in other neighborhoods outside Suriçi when they visit their relatives. Children in Suriçi are deprived of their right to play and currently, they do not have equal opportunities.



CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Urban poverty is not solely about lack of sufficient income; it is also the cause of many social issues. Children who live in poor neighborhoods in cities are the most vulnerable part of the society, depending on certain parameters such as their age, gender, and ethnicity. Despite their defined rights, children all around the globe are still subjected to abuse and harassment, die in the middle of wars, are forced to migrate, and are forced into work (Stearns, 2018: 7). There are many inequalities including living in unfavorable conditions, social exclusion, unhealthy/poor nutrition, unequal opportunities in terms of having access to the right to play.

Our findings from the field study about the right to play clearly show the failure of local administrations to fulfill their obligations and responsibilities. According to 2019 data for 15 neighborhoods in Suriçi, the total population of the district is 38156 and the total area of the district is 1500 decares. The fact that there are only 6 playgrounds, 3 of which are unusable, in such a large area reflects the level of importance placed on children and their rights. Moreover, urban transformation and armed conflicts had a negative impact on the living space of children as well as their right to play. Above all, the children had to move to other neighborhoods and adapt to a new social environment and play areas. **Thus, ensuring the participation of both adults and children in the decisions about the city should be the first step.**

In this context, in order for the local administrations to protect the child's right to play:

- Information and awareness studies must be carried out to realize children's rights for children, caregivers, and all local actors,
- The principles of UNICEF's Child-Friendly Cities project must be adapted to Diyarbakır,
- A "Children's Rights Directorate" that will focus on children's rights must be established and given sufficient resources,
- Children's Councils must be established under local administrations and regulations on the status of the decisions taken by children's councils must be issued,
- Strategic action plans and activities must be child-focused and child-friendly,
- Local children's civil society organizations must be supported, cooperation with these organizations must be ensured and children's rights commissions led by local administrations must be established,
- Provincial Child Protection Coordination Committee must be reorganized to allow voluntary participation of civil society organizations and children,
- Toy libraries must be established in each neighborhood, to accommodate the local population of children,

- The number of age-appropriate social, cultural, and art courses must be increased to support children's development, allow children to discover their talents and develop their skills,
- Local administrations must carry out assessment and evaluation studies to better understand the impact of the activities that directly concern children.

According to the findings of the field study, it is seen that the decisions taken during the urban transformation process for the last 10 years had a negative impact on children's rights. **Thus, the decisions taken in this process must be reviewed:**

- The Urgent Expropriation decision must be revoked and re-discussed with the participation of citizens,
- Planned urban transformation projects must be canceled and alternative transformation models must be implemented for buildings with collapse hazard,
- The child's right to play must be clearly defined in the Zoning Law No. 3194 and the regulations on the principles of planning, standards for building play areas suitable for the population of children must be established,
- Green spaces defined in CDP must be reclaimed and playgroups must be installed in these spaces,
- Children cannot spend enough time on playgrounds as there is not enough number of playgrounds, existing playgrounds are unsafe and neglected. Children who play on these playgrounds are at various risks. The playgrounds in 7 neighborhoods of Suriçi that are covered by our study must be fixed and improved immediately.

Municipalities, when planning playgrounds, must consider the following:

- The playgrounds must be organized according to the standards set by the Turkish Standards Institute,
- Playgrounds must be installed in safe green spaces where children and their caregivers can visit together,
- All play areas must be inclusive for all children, whether they live on the streets, are immigrants, from a different ethnic background, or disabled,
- Playgrounds must be arranged for all children from different age groups,
- Playgrounds must be away from main roads, there must be crosswalks and traffic lights for the playgrounds near busy roads,
- Playgrounds must not be installed near buildings with collapse hazard and such buildings must be identified and marked with a warning sign or fences,
- Playgrounds must be designed to accommodate children and their parents or caregivers,

- Playgrounds and parks must have adequate lighting,
- Information and reporting mechanisms must be in place for children to report any violations of their rights,
- Abandoned buildings/ruins in Suriçi must be converted into play areas, culture, and art spaces, or exercise areas.

One of the play areas of children is their homes. However, the findings of the field study indicate that almost half of the children have accidents while playing at home. It is also known that many children lose their lives due to home accidents each year. Therefore, home safety standards similar to those that apply to the playgrounds must be established to ensure the physical safety of children. It must be remembered that these incidents can be prevented and the state is responsible for providing necessary information to prevent them.

On the other hand, children are reprimanded by the neighborhood residents when they play on the streets. Children are forced to utilize abandoned buildings/ruins in the neighborhood as their play areas both at home and on the street are limited by the adults. **The incidents that occur in the ruins, as stated many times by the participants during the field study, not only worry children but also adults.** Urgent action must be taken to inspect, renovate and secure these ruins/abandoned buildings that emerged after the conflicts in 2015-2016.

Thus;

1. Children's recommendations for the abandoned buildings/ruins must be realized,
2. The access to the abandoned buildings/ruins must be restricted,
3. Safety fences or warning signs must be placed around the abandoned buildings/ruins with collapse hazard
4. Actions to fight substance abuse must be planned realistically, with the poverty factor in mind,
5. Allegations of sexual violence towards children must be investigated.

The impact of the armed conflict in the area is still felt by children. There are multiple reports of rights violations during and after the conflicts, most of which were caused by armored vehicles and resulted in the death of children. Moreover, impunity for the security forces who violated the rights of children worries the residents. Armed and armored vehicles in Suriçi represent danger rather than a sense of security. Therefore, the armed and armored vehicles must retreat from the area.

There are also incidents where children could not use certain play areas due to discrimination. The discrimination towards children varies based on gender, disability, or ethnicity. Girls are not able to play on the streets as much as boys can, as the parents do not allow their daughters, arguing that the streets are unsafe. Disabled children also cannot go outside without someone accompanying them as the streets and playgrounds are not accessible. Syrian immigrant children are subject to discrimination by other children on the playgrounds. **The state is the main party that is responsible for the discrimination, which is a direct outcome of inefficient state policies.**

Thus,

The community is responsible for working to ensure the safety of streets and gender equality in Suriçi.

Accessible and inclusive playgrounds must be built for disabled children, and the city must be reorganized for accessibility.

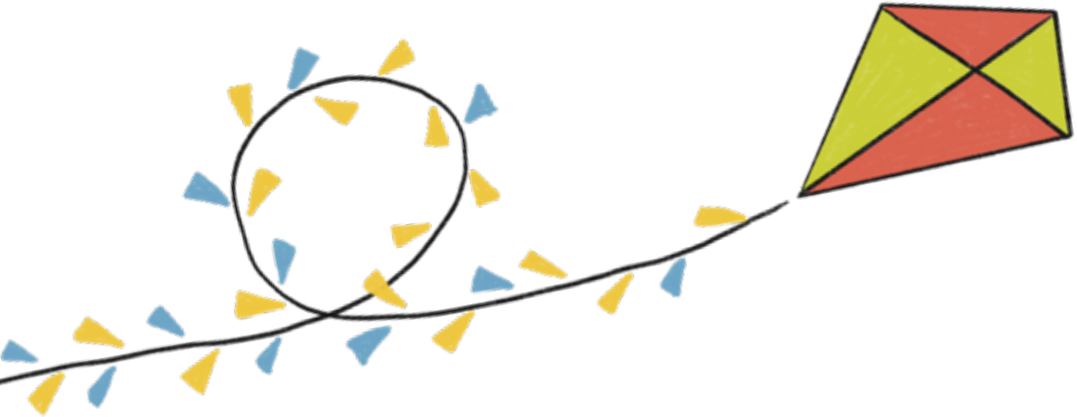
Projects highlighting co-existence must be implemented to resolve the discrimination against immigrant children.

To discuss the chain of responsibility for the recommendations listed above, we would like to remind you that the primary responsibility belongs to the Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Services, which is responsible for the Child Protection Coordination, and we would like to call the ministry and local administrations for their duty to fulfill their coordination responsibilities. Besides, Diyarbakır Governorate has also an important responsibility in terms of children's rights due to the governorate's role in urban planning. The governorate needs to act in cooperation with civil society organizations. Moreover, considering the influence it has, the media is also responsible for including children's right to play in their agenda, raising awareness, and determining the social perceptions of the issue. Therefore, the media needs to create content about children's right to play with a rights-based language.

However, we know that the collaborative efforts of many children's rights civil society organizations have been suspended after the trustee is appointed to the municipalities in Diyarbakır. For this reason, it is the state's obligation, as per the CRC, to pass the necessary legislation to prevent arbitrary interruption of rights-based projects for children. CRC considers the arbitrary interpretation of the projects aiming at the best interest of children as a clear violation. This includes Turkey's reservation on Articles 17, 29, and 30, which covers children's right to use their mother tongue. The state must comply with the calls made by the Children's Rights Committee for lifting the reservations on these articles.



Civil society organizations, trade unions, professional chambers, and independent researchers in Diyarbakır must include children's rights in their agendas and push for reminding the obligations and responsibilities of public authorities to prevent and eliminate inequality and violations of children's rights, including the right to play.



Children’s Play Areas in Suriçi with Photos: Playgrounds and Streets

Figure 8: Children’s Playgroup in Cami Kebir Neighborhood



Figure 9: Children’s Playgroup in İskender Paşa Neighborhood



Figure 10: Playground in Dabanoğlu Neighborhood



Figure 11: Playground in Ali Paşa Neighborhood



Figure 12: Playground in Melik Ahmet Neighborhood



Figure 13: Playground in Lalebey Neighborhood



Figure 14: A Street in Dabanođlu Neighborhood



Figure 15: A Street in Ziya Gökalp Neighborhood



Figure 16: A Street in İskender Paşa Neighborhood



Annexes

Table 43: Total Population of Suriçi Neighborhoods By Years

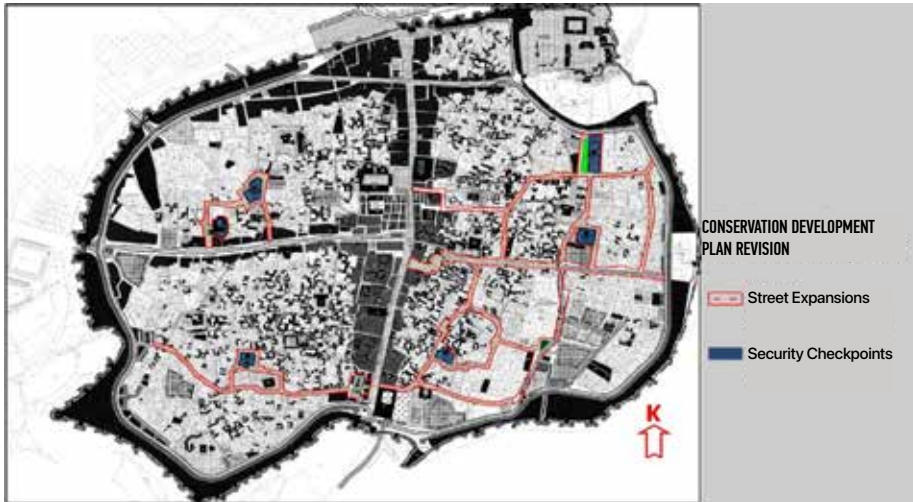
Neighborhoods	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Abdaldede	1.189	1.127	1.126	1.096	981	896	881	811	781	715
Ali Paşa	4.981	4.563	4.184	3.567	3.285	2.985	2.963	2.324	1.711	1.481
Cami Kebir	1.907	1.813	1.680	1.458	1.380	1.265	1.218	1.129	1.004	897
Cami Nebi	2.899	2.804	2.796	2.624	2.562	2.437	2.273	2.157	1.970	1.961
Cemal Yılmaz	2.845	2.780	2.580	2.476	2.393	2.104	2.084	1.976	1.822	1.595
Cevat Paşa	4.200	4.034	3.740	3.418	3.350	3.256	3.297	3.070	2.754	2.639
Dabanoğlu	4.456	4.484	4.361	3.968	3.964	3.705	3.908	3.735	3.452	2.940
Fatih Paşa	7.640	7.005	3.557	6.135	5.989	5.153	5.096	4.829	4.590	3.879
Hasırlı	8.208	7.844	7.361	6.879	6.712	5.696	5.599	5.416	5.128	4.267
İskender Paşa	8.135	7.864	7.627	7.298	7.101	6.720	6.459	6.059	5.769	5.179
Lalabey	4.737	4.279	3.765	3.425	3.300	3.000	2.853	2.493	2.120	1.951
Melikahmet	8.214	7.983	7.418	7.231	6.985	6.793	6.427	5.906	5.592	5.787
Savaş	3.358	3.330	3.162	2.934	2.776	2.409	2.402	2.295	2.178	1.861
Süleyman Nazif	697	678	656	599	568	514	513	450	421	397
Ziya Gökalp	4.364	4.262	4.102	3.947	3.681	3.408	3.260	3.052	2.865	2.607
Suriçi Total	67.830	64.850	58.115	57.055	55.027	50.341	49.233	45.702	42.157	38.156

Source: The data in the table above are retrieved from <https://www.nufusune.com/> and rearranged by years. The neighborhoods where the field study is carried out are highlighted.

Table 44: Play Area Checklist

INDICATOR	Yes	No
Are there any main roads or busy streets near the playground?		
Are there any crosswalks, signs, or traffic lights on the way to the playground?		
Is there rubber flooring on the playground?		
Are there any buildings with a collapse hazard near the playground?		
Is there an electrical installation near the playground? If there is, does it pose a vital risk?		
Is the playground accessible and inclusive for visually impaired, hearing impaired, or physically disabled children?		
Does the playground have the features and areas for allowing girls and boys to play together?		
Is the playground organized only for boys to play?		
Does the playground have the features and seating to accommodate children and their parents?		
Are there any toilet facilities or access to clean water near the playground?		
Are there any mechanisms in place for children to apply in the event of any rights violations (security or reporting mechanisms)?		
Are there pits or construction sites near the playground?		
If there are pits or construction sites near the playground, are they encircled with safety tape or fences?		
Are the components of the playgroup on the playground fixed properly to prevent any risks?		
Is the playgroup's height adjusted to prevent falling?		
Is the playground set up to prevent children from getting their arms or legs stuck in openings or between rails?		
Is the playground installed in a green space?		
Are there pedestrian or bicycle paths on the playground?		
Is there an adequate shade structure on the playground?		
Is there adequate lighting on the playground?		
Is the equipment on the playground sufficiently hygienic?		
Is there a broken piece of equipment on the playground?		
Are there age-appropriate play materials and areas on the playground?		
Is the equipment height adjusted to prevent severe fall injuries to children?		
Are there any sharp edges on the playground that may cause injuries to children?		
Are the surfaces impact-attenuating, especially in the areas with a risk of falling?		
Are there any signs indicating the intended age groups or levels of challenge on the playground?		
Is there a police station or another building frequently used by security forces near the playground?		
Are there any armored vehicles such as panzer, TOMA, Akrep, etc., near the playground?		

Map 1: CDP Revised for Security Checkpoints (Police Stations) After the Conflicts



Map 2: CDP Green Spaces



Map 3: Neighborhoods in Suriçi



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