

URBANISM WATCH

Urbanism of Prizren
under constant watch

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Release #1

PRESS RELEASE

Institutions suffocate the area around the Complex of Albanian League of Prizren

Starting from July, EC Ma Ndryshe began with the implementation of the project “Urbanism of Prizren under constant watch”, financially supported by the Kosovo Foundation for Open Society (KFOS). The need for overseeing the developments in the sector of urbanism has naturally emerged as a result of a numerous adverse developments during the post-war and transition period that were manifested in urban degradation and lopsided spatial planning. This project aims in installing a permanent monitoring system of the state activity (both levels of power and the judiciary) in the field of management and urban development in the city of Prizren, with particular emphasis on its Historic Centre, in order to ensure order in terms of urbanism.

Based on these principles, EC Ma Ndryshe, over the month of July, has reviewed the issue of the construction of an individual dwelling house near the Complex of Albanian League of Prizren (*hereinafter ALP*), regardless of concerns and objections raised by those responsible for this Complex for the suffocation of the space around the most visited historic monument in Kosovo.

Although the first application for construction of the house adjacent to the League of Prizren by the owner A. P. was submitted to the responsible institutions in February 2003, they have failed to broker proper solution for compensating the owner thus to release of the space near the Museum Complex of the League of Prizren. The forewarning of the house owners was not addressed genuinely by local and central level institutions.

It is worth noting that in May 2007 local government had demolished the former building of the Municipality (on the left of the museum) in order to create space and a park for the ALP Complex. Five years later, with the permission of the municipal and central government a green light was granted for stifling the area surrounding the ALP (on its right), although those responsible of the Complex of ALP had opposed such a thing, given the vision for the development of the monument as an important touristic point, which also belongs to the first historic zone of Prizren.

Institutional neglect of several years has led the house owners to repeat their application for construction permit for housing in May 2012 since the old structure (P+0) was uninhabitable. According to the documents provided by DUSP, this Directorate had forwarded this application to the Institute for Protection of Historic Monuments in Prizren (*hereinafter IPHM*) on July 3rd, 2012. On July 17th, IPHM addresses this application to the Cultural Heritage Department of the MCYS, since the issuance of permits/approvals by local authorities is suspended as of June 2010.

Assessment and Review Committee of conservation–restoration requests/projects of Cultural Heritage in its meeting of 27 July 2012 “grants its approval for the construction of the house, according to the delivered project, since it has adhered to vernacular citizen–style design.” Based on this approval, on 1 August 2012,

the MCYS validates this approval with a formal decision. Thereafter, IPHM in Prizren, on 16 August 2012, provides its consent for the design of the main project plan. Following this procedure, DUSP, in September 2012, allows the owner of the structure to demolish the existing structure and, in October 2012, accepts the right for construction of the individual housing structure, with storey-height B+P+1.

The house owner A.P. has proved very punctilious in this case as he had followed all the procedures foreseen to be granted with a permit and only thereafter began the works on building the house. Meanwhile, municipal and national government institutions were not sufficiently watchful in preserving the areas around important historic monuments.

EC Ma Ndryshe reminds that, in order to preserve architectural values, local government had exchanged its properties with the owners of Musa Sheh Zade's house, whereas recently it has also announced the House of Shuaip Pashë Spahiu of a general interest and that is – after the investment of EUR 110,000 from the municipal budget in the property subject to a court proceedings. In addition, without explaining fully the ownership compensation issues, municipal government had demolished several small shops at Sinan Pasha Mosque to free up the space around this monument, for which case the municipality still faces justice. Whereas, in the specific case, there was no initiative to compensate the owner of the house near the ALP and to free up the space around the most visited historic monument of Kosova.

Law on Cultural Heritage of Kosova, Article 6 Paragraph 4 defines that, "Architectural monuments under temporary or permanent protection shall have a Protective Zone which is 50 meters from the perimeter of the monument", a provision which, in this case, was not adhered to by the relevant institutions itself.

EC Ma Ndryshe ascertains that even when a citizen shows responsive, institutions fail in fully applying their duties on preservation and development of Cultural Heritage.

EC Ma Ndryshe herein recommends the institutional triangle – DUSP, IPHM and MCYS to be more careful with legal interpretations thus much more active in the field during the review of applications for construction permits near important historic monuments.

EC Ma Ndryshe urges local government not to apply double standards on expropriations related to the Cultural Heritage and its development.

"Urbanism of Prizren under constant watch" shall continue monitoring and publicizing the findings in the sector of urbanism and spatial planning, as well as with addressing institutional responsibility.

Sincerely,

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