

## **TAKSIM PLATFORM'S QUESTIONS TO MAYOR KADIR TOPBAŞ AND ITS DECLARATION - OCTOBER 2012**

The planned Taksim Project divides Taksim into two parts - underground and aboveground - and tears it away from the public by turning it into a subterranean highway junction. At the moment, preparations are being made to implement this project without opening it to public discussion.

Mayor Topbaş had created a wave of optimism when he mentioned having doubts about this project which was bound to have serious repercussions for himself as well as the public. However, we come across some baffling statements in his last speech. Mayor Topbaş describes Taksim as “a transit point”. This may be his own point of view, but there are many people who live and/or work in the Taksim area. Furthermore, Taksim Square is a meeting point, a space of self-expression for millions of people of all ages, thoughts and beliefs from all walks of life.

Mayor Topbaş has stated that work will continue day and night to complete the project as soon as possible. This means that 14,315 piles will be bored into the ground round the clock for months, turning Taksim Square into an inferno of dust, rubble and noise. Perhaps he is hoping that people will finally give up and abandon Taksim after losing their sleep and sanity.

Mayor Topbaş has declared that the Cultural and Natural Heritage Conservation Board has given approval for one tunnel entry. The interesting detail here is his usage of the expression “in the first stage”. At this point, Taksim Platform has some questions for Mayor Topbaş:

1. How many tunnels are there in the 1/5000 plan which is valid for Taksim AT THIS MOMENT?
2. If there are five tunnels, some of which have been objected to by the Conservation Board as well as the municipal team, why not make another plan amendment?
3. We have been told that when UKOME (Transportation Coordination Center of Metropolitan Municipality) brought the one-tunnel project to the Conservation Board, they stated that the five-tunnel project had been abandoned. Is this true?
4. You have said that the Conservation Board has approved the Tarlabası tunnel. What did the Conservation Board have to say about the other tunnels? How can we obtain the written text of this Board decision?
5. Is this project so necessary that it must be implemented in spite of causing great upheaval in the Taksim area and destroying the green environment? We think that the decision on this subject should be made by experts who understand the needs of the public. We feel that the public should be asked if they prefer to have a gigantic barracks building in the place of green Gezi Park which provides oxygen for all. We have been putting this question to people for over a year now, and not one person has given a positive answer.

Taksim Platform is a conglomeration of different voices; not only that of architects and urban planners but more importantly, that of the people. It includes members of resident associations and guilds who live and work in the area. Right from the beginning, it has been Taksim Platform's wish to save Taksim from being an arena for political controversy and power demonstration. We feel that Mayor Topbař hears but ignores our voice. We request that he reconsider the justified warnings of the experts and the public before it is too late. Our suggestion to Mayor Topbař is that he withdraw this project immediately instead of implementing it in stages. We request that he open it to discussion at a consultation assembly which will include experts. Needless to say, we are ready to do our part in this enterprise. TAKSIM BELONGS TO US ALL!TAKSIM PLATFORMU [www.taksimplatformu.org](http://www.taksimplatformu.org)