

### ***Destruction and Memory. Library.***



Housed in a former home and site of violence, the library is one of the few places where Kobane residents can source Kurdish books. “It was a genocide,” says Adnan Hassan, who had left Kobane a day before ISIS attacked the city. This saved his life, but not his 11 family members who lived together in this three-storey building.

Two of Adnan’s sisters managed to hide in time, but had to spend the night listening to their family members being killed; the two sisters only managed to escape the house at two in the afternoon the following day.

Slowly taking a drag on his cigarette, Hassan remembers the first day back home. “I had to clean my family’s blood,” he says.

A year later, he founded a humble library on the first floor of the building. The space is cold and electricity cuts off every so often, much as it does across Rojava. My translator’s sister was married to Adnan’s brother – she was also killed in this house.

“They always wanted to have a library at home,” says Hassan. Now, this space has become a gathering point for Kobane massacre survivors, who have also written a book together. The library houses various meetings and is also one of the few places where Kurds can source books to read in their own language. “People come here every day. After seeing all the books and all the things, they remember their own families and cry,” says Adnan.

The building itself, with the library programme inside, became a symbol of mourning, but also a symbol of hope. Therefore, with the limited means at his disposal, Hassan has succeeded in creating a space of memory and healing in this small and often dark space.

“Everything in this home reminds me of my family and all my memories,” says Hassan. “My sisters couldn’t come back, because when they see the house, it reminds them of the killing.”

The change of use inside, as well as the library programme itself, have helped the family both cope with the tragedy and change the symbolic meaning and memories that the house represents. Instead of destroying memory, the family opted to reshape it.

Furthermore, the building acts as a physical monument for the future: “It’s so important for the community, because when they read [the books there], they will learn [about] everything [that happened],” says Hassan.

When electricity briefly returns, Hassan switches on the lamp. Out of the dark, various family objects come to light, like a school bag that belonged to Adnan’s sister, Rudi, who studied in Istanbul. Next to it, university notes from another sister, Gulistan. “All these things were important to her,” says Hassan.

“With this library, I feel like I made the wish of my brother and his wife come true,” adds Hassan. “This way, they will always remain alive. This library gives me strength and the will to live.”

Read more: <http://rojava-story.herokuapp.com/#/chapter/3>