



Danish artist Rosan Bosch says the "Free Zone Exhibition," on display until Oct. 25 in Istanbul, is about "how we have to accept each other to create a space for diversity."

# FREE ZONE EXHIBITION STARTS UNDER SHADOW OF ATTACKS

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The signpost that was attacked Saturday in Beşiktaş was titled "Worship Area" and featured a Christian cross, the Jewish Star of David, the Muslim crescent and an image of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. This attack, however, has hardly been covered at all in many of the media outlets that covered the Tophane attack with such vigor. Questions remain as to why almost none of Turkey's mainstream media channels and newspapers did not remark upon about the unfortunate incident.

Speaking with Today's Zaman, iDANS Festival General Director Aydın Silier explained that all forms of attacks on the freedom of expression should be condemned, regardless of their source. Silier also stated that in their statement the CHP insisted that the attackers "did not damage anything but just protested such an artwork." Asked whether the condemnations following the attack were satisfactory, he said that it has not yet been condemned as it should have by society.

Bosch, who was present during the raid, told Today's Zaman that 10 minutes after they put up the "Worship Zone" sign a group of people came and took it away. "There was a big crowd of people and the sign was gone. So we walked over there and we saw that they carried it away and put it down. ... After a while we put the sign up again and then the discussion started. Since I do not speak Turkish, one of my assistants tried to talk to the crowd and it was impossible. ... We tried to

talk and they were screaming, 'Take it away,' etc. They did not listen to us. The scene was escalating and it became very violent and we decided to put the sign down on the earth because I was afraid that they were going to attack my assistant," she recalls, adding that there were also people who tried to stop these people. "There was a large crowd and some of them were the loudest and they said they were from that political party," she added.

Asked what in particular the group was angry about, Bosch says they were upset that the image of Atatürk was being used to imply that there is something religious about his social status. "They said that that was unacceptable and you should not make that comment. My reason putting it among the other symbols was that when I came to this culture from outside, I noticed that talking about Atatürk was a sensitive thing to do. People were not talking about Atatürk in the way that they would talk about politics. They talk about him with the same caretaking as when you talk about a religion. I do not say that Atatürk is a religion. The sign was just trying to put a visual image on this sensitivity. ... The sign is not a political statement, it is actually putting something into discussion and, well, we can say that it worked, but too violently for my taste," she says.

According to Bosch, what is important about the project is that it comments on what we allow or do not allow ourselves and each other in our daily lives. "This can be a law that forbids something, or it could be something you just don't



do because it is not appropriate. For example, one of the signs says 'Hugging Area', which is about embracing somebody. They are playful signs in a way. Another sign is creating a 'Show-off Area', which is a place where boys take a round to show how strong they are or what beautiful new clothes they have on. When we were putting the signs up in Beşiktaş, immediately two young boys came and started to do push ups," she explains.

The project, which has been featured in Swe-

den, Denmark and Hungary previously, is part of the iDANS festival, which reflects on contemporary life in an urban context, Bosch says. "It is about private and public space. The festival wanted to do a project which kind of goes out of the theater so that the city becomes a part of the art festival," she says, adding that when she first came here, she did research on how she could make signs for Istanbul. "The signs change in every country, while some of them stay the same, since some things are the same everywhere. The 'Show off' sign was also in Sweden, since boys show off for girls everywhere," she adds.

Another sign, titled 'Respect Diversity', featuring a cat wearing different objects on its head, such as a hat and a headscarf, was also in other countries featuring different objects. "When you come here from abroad, you are not a part of the political discussion so you just observe and some things are just illogical. I saw a woman with a headscarf walking on the street and on top of her scarf, she had a wig. I asked people around and they said, 'Oh she is probably going to university and it is forbidden to put on the headscarf in the universities.' For me this project is about how we have to accept each other to create a space for diversity," she says.

The "Worship Area" sign is now gone but a new sign depicting the attack itself can be seen in various parts of Beşiktaş, Üsküdar and Kadıköy along with 24 other signs until Oct. 25. For more information, visit [www.idans.info](http://www.idans.info).