

# HUMAN RIGHTS, TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE AND ARCHITECTURE

Caption: Barış Ülker, "Saturday"

**ESRA AKCAN**

**FEBRUARY 3, 2022  
NOON - 1:30 PM EST**

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**Free and open to the public**

Ever since the concept of human rights crystallized with the eighteenth-century people's revolutions around the world, it has implicitly become a reference point in discussions about space. Despite challenges from skeptics and authors with different moral philosophical convictions, the concept of human rights continues to be relevant today for commitments to rectify injustice and ensure equality, or political actions to protect human dignity, enable participatory democracy and foster reparatory justice. This lecture foregrounds the relations between human rights and architecture. It concentrates on the related concept of transitional justice that emerged as accountability for large-scale past abuses came to the forefront of grassroots human rights movements and entered the lexicon of international law in the 2000s. This lecture defines architecture's role in an extended notion of transitional justice and in healing societies after intense upheavals and internal conflicts. It projects on architectural programs of reparation by defining a healing space as one where political harm is confronted.

Esra Akcan is Michael McCarthy Professor in the Department of Architecture at Cornell University. Her research on modern and contemporary architecture and urbanism foregrounds the intertwined histories of Europe and West Asia, and offers new ways to understand architecture's role in global, social and environmental justice. Akcan received awards and fellowships from the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Studies at Harvard University, Graham Foundation (3 times grantee), American Academy in Berlin, UIC, Institute for Advanced Studies in Berlin, Clark Institute, Getty Research Institute, Canadian Center for Architecture (2 times scholar), CAA, Mellon Foundation, DAAD and KRESS/ARIT. She is the author of *Landfill Istanbul; Architecture in Translation; Turkey: Modern Architectures in History* (with S. Bozdoğan) and *Open Architecture: Migration, Citizenship and Urban Renewal of Berlin-Kreuzberg*. Her upcoming books are *Building in Exile*, *Abolish Human Bans* and *Right to Heal*.



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Co-sponsored by the Research Group on Democracy  
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Presented in association with the Spaces of  
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