

Festival delayed over concerns of damaging sea turtle nests

DHA photo



This photo shows preparations for a now-postponed music festival that is planned to be organized on a beach that is home to sea turtle nests.

MERSİN - Demirören News Agency

A Turkish pop music festival which was planned to take place on June 5-7 in Turkey's southern province of Mersin has been delayed due to concerns about the spawning period of the endangered *Caretta caretta*, after outcries from environmentalists and a lawmaker.

"We have abstained from harming the environment and listened to the public in Mersin, thus we delayed the festival," said PopFest 2019 organizer Hüseyin Çalışkan on May 28, stating that the event was postponed to a future date.

Engin said that the festival will contribute to the local economy, but protecting the environment was more important.

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This photo shows officials helping a loggerhead sea turtle, or a caretta caretta, crawling to the sea after laying eggs on the shore in Mezitli district of Turkey's southern province of Mersin.

Festival delayed to protect sea turtles on Mersin coast

The organizer of a music festival in the province of Mersin decides to postpone the event to a future date after a public outcry with concerns about the incubating caretta caretas in the area

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After a meeting with Neşet Tarhan, mayor of Mezitli district in Mersin, and Hasan Engin, head of the Mersin Industrialists and Businessmen Association (MESİAD), he said: "We will make a detailed announcement about the festival in a press conference soon."

Engin said that the festival will contribute to the local economy, but protecting the environment was more important.

"The festival, which will draw interest from across Turkey, has great importance in promoting Mersin. The event

will provide income to the local shops and increase the occupancy rates in the hotels. However, the right to life of all living things comes first," he said.

The announcement of the festival on social media stirred outcry on social media with the environmentalists asserting that sound and light pollution would severely affect the caretta caretas which lay their eggs on the seashore in this time of the year.

The incubation period of the caretta caretas generally started in May. They leave their eggs in 50-60-centimeter-deep holes. The baby turtles reach the sea

after 50 days.

Haluk Levent, a prominent Turkish singer and the founder of the charity network Anatolian People and Peace Platform (AHBAP), shared a message with his 1.65 million followers on Twitter, urging the musicians who would take stage to act.

"For years, we have organized rallies in that area for the sake of caretta caretas. We applied to the administrative court in Mersin. We forced a sparkling water company to set up a treatment unit. I am not telling you to cancel this festival but find a way to prevent damage in that

area," he said on May 27.

Murat Dalkılıç, one of the singers who would take stage and followed by 2.82 million users on Twitter, shared a notice about the cancellation.

Alpay Antmen, a deputy of Mersin and a member of the main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP), addressed a parliamentary written question to Environment and Urbanization Minister Murat Kurum on May 27, mentioning the planned - now delayed - event on the seaside in Gümüşkum Natural Park.

Recalling that the area was leased out to a private business in 2017, Antmen alleged that the terms of the contract were violated by the company.