
HEYBELIADA'S NEW ERA: A DELICATE BALANCE BETWEEN CULTURAL REVIVAL AND CARRYING CAPACITY

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Haluk Direskeneli

One of Istanbul's most distinctive island communities, Heybeliada has recently returned to public attention through two major developments. Statements indicating that the long-closed Heybeliada Greek Orthodox Seminary may reopen following extensive restoration work, together with ongoing plans to repurpose the historic Heybeliada Sanatorium for Islamic religious education and youth activities, have sparked a renewed debate about the island's future.

These developments represent far more than the restoration of two historic buildings. They also raise broader questions concerning cultural heritage preservation, public use, diplomatic symbolism, tourism pressure, and the long-term sustainability of island life.

Reviving Historic Institutions

Founded in 1844 to educate Orthodox clergy, the Heybeliada Seminary suspended its educational activities in 1971 following changes in Turkey's higher education legislation. Over the decades, the institution retained symbolic significance both in the context of Turkey's minority policies and in Turkish relations. Today, preparations for its reopening are being closely followed not only from a religious perspective, but also as an important matter of cultural diplomacy.

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