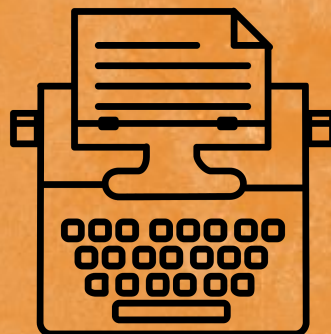


Title:

Author:

Occupy Climate Change (OCC!)

*Creative story
entry*



FORMAS



Saidia Under Water

Abdelhafid Jabri

Abstract: This is a speculative flash story happening in 2100 AD in Saidia¹, a coastal city in the Northeast of Morocco. It is about the effects of the sea level rise on the region and on the local people in case the planet's temperature goes up to four degrees celcius.

As a result of the sea level rise along the Moroccan coastlines to almost nine meters high, several coastal cities began to submerge. The economy of the country was at an alarming stage because tourism was heavily affected by this phenomenon which spared neither the rich nor the poor. Most experts thought that it was too late to find workable quick fixes since even developed countries were unable to face the crawling of the sea. One of the affected cities by this phenomenon is Saidia. Houses, hotels, and all administrative and leisure sites were beginning to go under water. Electric power plants had to shut down as drainage efforts collapsed in the face of this environmental crisis. This pushed local people to retreat to less endangered places or to neighboring cities like Berkane, Ahfir and Oujda.

Omar was one of the boys living in Saidia. He was a middle-school student in Charif Idrissi School. His family used to run a kiosk in the Cornice. Their house was situated two or three kilometers off the beach. However, the sea water had not only invaded their kiosk but had also surrounded the vicinity of their house as well as the antique Casbah whose walls were noticeably affected.² The soil no longer absorbed the water because many hectares of water-loving trees had been removed in the early 2000s for construction purposes by multinational companies. When Omar's father asked the authorities about compensation, they told him that only families with a house insurance against catastrophes would be compensated.

In the early afternoon of that cold, rainy winter, Omar's family packed their luggage and joined the long queue of families to quit Saidia on buses parked in an elevated area. The bus took a shortcut toward the crossroad of Berkane and Oujda. As soon as it reached the top of a hill, Omar jumped out of his seat to get the last view of Saidia from the rear window. He saw a flat light blue line of the sea stretching symmetrically and gracefully to the horizon from the Algerian frontiers on his right to the Spanish islands adjacent to Ras El Ma on his left. Water

¹ Saidia is situated at the Mediterranean Sea, Northward from Berkane city and Westward from the Moroccan-Algerian border.

² Being part of the local heritage, the 'Casbah' is an old fortress built by the Moroccan Sultan Hassan 1st in 1883 AD.

had already moved forward to the majority of the city's surface, and it was almost deserted except for police patrolling zodiacs.

"Come back to your seat, son!" ordered his father.

"I will, dad. I just want to have a last glance at my birthplace," said Omar wanderingly. "When are we going to see it again?" he then asked.

"God only knows, son" replied his clueless father.

Since that day, Saidia was declared an afflicted city and its beach became no more than an abandoned landscape. Ironically, it returned to the times when birds and fish were the only native inhabitants. As for Omar and his family, the aftermath of that natural disaster greatly touched their wellbeing. Omar could hardly find a school to pursue his studies and his father could not find a job. The only revenue was the small financial aid provided by the government to people who were in the same situation. There were many promises to find lasting solutions to this problem, but none was kept.

After years of hardship, Omar succeeded in his studies and had a scholarship to study landscaping in Europe. After a successful journey, he became a landscaper, a specialty which he considered as his favorite hobby. The first thing he did upon graduation was to get a loan and start a small landscape company. However, because his childhood memories of Saidia never left him, he applied for a call for projects funded by Morocco to rebuild the natural landscape of that afflicted city. To his joy, the proposal was selected, and his dream was made true: at last, he could do something for his homeplace.

"Father, I have finally achieved my dream, our common dream... I can now be an active member in the promotion of this afflicted land," he said beside his father's tomb.