

# June 16. International Day of the African Child

Omar is 8 years old.

He's not even 1,5 meter and already has risked his life several times, aspiring a life with dignity.

First, lacking [#safepassage](#), he felt the need to jump into the sea and swim with all the strength he had from Beni Enzar to [#Melilla](#). It's only a few kilometres that separates the one sea shore from the other, but it's at least six hours swimming through this sea to avoid to be seen by the security forces.

Once there, injured but alive, he decided not to enter one of the centres for minors in the city. Omar is just a child but well informed, and in the streets of Melilla, where he lives, he tells us that he heard from relatives and friends that stay(ed) in those centres that there is a lot of administrative violence: minors living there have to leave the centre the day they turn 18 without having had the opportunity to process their documents which would have enabled them to legalise their situation in Europe.

Only being 8 years old Omar lives on the street, sleeps on the street, eats on the street. He grows up on the street.... and at night, without having access to legal pathways, he goes to the harbour, looks at the ferries, looks for positions, options, corners, and tries to make himself invisible. Until he succeeds. Other children have lost their lives trying.

We don't know how many times he tried to hide in one of the ferries that depart from Melilla to reach the peninsula unseen, if he arrived injured, if he went alone, if he was scared.

It's called "risky". For many children on the move living in Melilla it seems to be the only viable option to reach human rights, dignity and a future on the Iberic peninsula. Even though it is an incredibly dangerous and unsafe practice. Even though it has cost so many lives.

We think about Omar. How an 8 year old child, hidden in a boat for hours, feels. In the dark.

We think about the worries his family must have, about the difficult decision he made to leave... just for himself or also thinking of his own community.

We think about the situation he lived in at home, which made Omar jump into the sea, first swimming, then hiding, trying to find a better life, without any guarantees however, and, probably, trying to support his family. Some day.

Omar is an 8 year old child.

Do you remember yourself at that age?  
Think about a memory of those times.  
Then, think about Omar.  
What do you feel?