

THE ITCH OF HELPLESSNESS

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"My name is Rachid and I am 19 years old. I remember that night - before I woke up in the morning - I dreamt that I was back home in Morocco. We were in the living room with the whole family. Laughter and the smell of tea was all around the house. We were chatting, everything was so calm, when suddenly I woke up. I came back to reality, I was in my shack. I could still feel the memory of the smell of tea in my dream. But seeing that I was not with my family and that I could not go back to them, made the pressure in my chest that has been with me every day since I arrived in this hell called Melilla come back immediately.

Right next to me was my friend. We built our shack and our lives in Melilla together. He was sitting with a blank stare and scratching between his fingers. That whole area was full of wounds and he was scratching as if he wanted to tear his skin off. Eventually, I also started to feel an intense itch - especially at night - in my hands and I would scratch until I bled.

I don't remember exactly when and how, but suddenly this intense itch spread all over my body. I scratched between my legs, arms, armpits and even my private parts. It hurt and itched so much that I was full of wounds that bled when I scratched. One day I went to the hospital out of desperation, as I still had this horrible, sharp itch all over my body, and I felt very weak and had a severe headache.

The doctor who attended me told me that I had scabies and to cure me I had to take a shower before and after applying a special cream for it. I also had to wash my clothes and sheets every day. While he was telling me all this, I thought about how to do this while living on the street, without being able to have a shower or wash my clothes, only having those that I was wearing. Finally, he gave me an injection that made my headache go away and he gave me the prescription for the cream, which I couldn't afford since I only had one euro in my pocket, that a lady had given me yesterday for cleaning her car.

Every week that goes by, the itching gets worse and worse and more and more sores appear. Sometimes, just sometimes, in order not to feel the pain, I try to remember that smell of tea that brings me back for a moment to my home and in turn, the memory of those dear people who make it up."

This story is fictitious but it is inspired by the experiences of the children themselves in this situation.

From Solidary Wheels we want to denounce the bad conditions in which migrants live in the streets of Melilla. Due to the lack of sanitation there is an increase of people with scabies and their condition can get worse.

The Public Health Department should take responsibility for this problem, since article 19 of the European Union directive 2013/33, states that member states must ensure health care and provide the necessary treatment for asylum seekers who suffer from any disease. However, in Melilla, no one is receiving any treatment, nor for scabies. Besides, this law does not apply to undocumented migrants, so they are completely helpless and forgotten.