



09 September, 2009

**CASABLANCA - "That's why there are crimes, our children take drugs to forget it all ..." with a trembling voice with emotion, Houlans Hayat, 33, shows the miserable room in which she and her husband live with their four small children.**

- Boubker Mazoz nods, terrified by the conditions of poor housing disrepair, threatening at any moment to collapse, in which several families crowded, near the Highway between Rabat and Casablanca.

"It is a journey into another world, he whispers. It's hard to realize that people live like that in this century. It's inhuman, it is time that civil society gets more involved".

We are in Ben Sik, in the slums of Derb Lakhelifa, nicknamed Al « Hofra » ( "big hole"), where about 5,000 people survive in staggering unhealthy conditions. No running water or electricity (if not illegally connected). The repulsive collective health.

And in the midst of this nightmare in the streets littered with trash, dozens of children of all ages, playing loudly in the garbage, happily indifferent to the outside world.

Over the last forty years Boubker Mazoz, 58, has created several charities. Each project is funded by businesses, patrons or public subsidies. For five years he is working to help youth in the slums of Casablanca, to dissuade them from falling into drugs, crime. Maybe more ...

"The extremists are ready to exploit this situation" and, he said, the 12 suicide bombers who blew themselves up on May 16, 2003 in Casablanca, killing 33 people, came from Sidi Moumen, another slum in the economic capital of the kingdom.

His association Idmaj ("integration" in Arabic), brings together some 500 young people from poor neighborhoods like Ben Sik and Sidi Moumen.

"I found the children in these neighborhoods brilliant said Boubker Mazoz. But they are in a protracted waiting room.

"The goal is to reach out to desperate people living in poverty, to mentor and support them so they will support themselves, he says. We teach them to help each other, citizenship, respect for others. Once trained, educated, these young people become models, they give hope to those around them.

"There is a lot of violence here. Children are abused verbally, physically. By parents, by friends, by everyone. We, he says, we respect them, we listen to them."

In five years, 45 young people were able to visit the United States, where they were hosted by families in the context of a twinning Chicago-Casablanca and with support from the mayor.

"Mister Mazoz, Mister Mazoz ..." An elderly woman sitting on a crate implores him. Handicapped, she asked him find her a wheelchair.

"You'll have it this week," he promises. Three houses away, another woman would like a sewing machine. Again, he noted and promised to deal with it.

Following Boubker Mazoz in this Moroccan favela is not easy. Welcomed as the Messiah, he is constantly asked to solve a problem, intercede with the authorities.

"However, he confesses, it was not easy at first. There was a lot of hostility. Now we're at home. People have seen that we are serious, we're working on duration.

In the streets of Al Hofra a squad of young, proudly wearing Idmaj T-shirt, eventually sweeping and picking up garbage. It is 2:10 pm, the sun beats down and Boubker Mazoz moves to the other end of the slum to give the kick for a football match between two youth teams of the "big hole".