

One hundred meters away

Dir: Juan Luis de No

60'/66' - emf/TVE/Odisea - 2008



The autonomous city of Melilla, a territory of 12.3 square kilometers under Spanish sovereignty, and therefore part of the European Union, is geographically situated on the African continent and surrounded by Moroccan territory. The 8.3 km long double fence that encircles the entire city is the symbol of the great separation between two worlds, the rich north and the poor south. In 1985 the Berber residents of Melilla found themselves in an inconceivable situation: they did not officially belong to any country and the winds that were blowing from Europe turned them into foreigners on their own land. After weeks of uprisings, Spanish citizenship was recognized for approximately 30,000 Berbers. At this time construction of the great fence began – a mental, political, economic and also physical fence. Thanks to the existence of the new border, the Melilla economy entered a period of brutal growth. Melilla is a 'free port,' i.e., the merchandise that arrives there does not pay tax while at the same time the geographic nearness to Morocco makes Melilla the ideal place to introduce merchandise into Africa without paying the tariffs imposed by the Moroccan government. Asian, American and European products arrive in large containers and at this point, a system of smuggling – which is unofficially allowed – floods all of Morocco and other African countries with cheap products. Thousands of Moroccan men and women have been congregating for years near the border in the city of Nador, to get their hands on some of the breadcrumbs left over from the big party. In just a few years, what was a small border town has become a large urban center surrounded by neighborhoods with shacks where the poorest of the poor pile up, waiting to change their lives thanks to the border. Some are waiting for the chance to get into Melilla and then on to Europe under a truck or hidden in a ferry, while others simply come to the city every day to sell cigarettes or peanuts to some of the thousands of people that are milling about there. Most end up working for the smugglers, creating a significant workforce, seemingly 'invisible' to the authorities on both sides. It is in this atmosphere that the characters in this movie get by, each quite different from the other, but with something in common. The border determines their lives. One hundred meters away is a movie about these lives.



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