

Mohamed Mahdy

Here, the doors don't know me

In a fishing Village, the Mother of Azza wrote in her last letter that she sits under the tree she planted in front of her house reading the Quran as the birds gather around her, remembering the house she built with her husband for just 25 EGP. She remembers that he was so kind, filling the holes with papers so the cold wind couldn't enter covering her with plastic bags to warm her, every morning. It was heaven there, but this house no longer exists now, it's just a memory.

Here, The Doors Don't Know Me is about a fishing village, a community of fishers around the Mahmoudiyah canal in the Al max neighbourhoods in Alexandria, Egypt near my home. It was called the Middle East's Venice because it had the same vibes and beauty as Venice, Italy. When I started photography, I used to pass by every day on my way home. It was one of the most attractive locations for amateur photographers to practice because of the beautiful landscape, ancient culture, and friendly people.

One day residents woke up to the news that they had to leave their houses, their history, and possibly their lives as fishers. The Doors Who Don't Know Me began with my trying to understand these questions through their stories: What does a home mean? What does displacement mean and how does it affect mental health? And how does it feel just waiting for someone to come and change your life forever? In an attempt to understand these questions,

I collaborated with the protagonists from 2016 to 2021. In addition to documenting their lives in photographs and collecting archives, I gave them a blank paper to write their last letter. People on the shore used to receive messages in bottles containing love letters, or someone's last words. Now it is the people on the shore who wants to send letters to the upcoming generations and the whole world.

(I have built this interactive photo essay to give an overview about what's happened & what I gathered in the research so far: <https://mohammedmahdy.com/25/>)

TI choose this topic because they're my community and this's my region, all of my interests is focused on social justice, environmental change, and our culture in Egypt as I grow up with a belief to be a reason for my community and with the visual storytelling, it's a powerful tool to amplify my community voice in my country and the whole world.

I do believe if every photographer looked around his community he will find a lot to say so I have spent most of the last 7 years of my life focusing on the community/ friends around my home and you feel with time this is your role as you have been growing in this place not anywhere else.

And it relates to the theme because the project is about the memory of the place and people and how demolishing or displacement affects mental health and force the identity to fade away.