

Black White Sand

By Rena Karanouh

I went to Ramlet el Bayda today.

It is the only free beach in Beirut.

The only sand beach in Beirut.

White sand.

The smell hit me the minute I opened the car door.

The acrid stench of oil. Heavy. Suffocating. Immediately it gave me a headache. I felt the nausea spread from my stomach to all over my body. The more I smelt it the more dizzy I felt.

They had bombed people, buildings, ports, bridges, roads...everything...and now it was the environment's turn.

As I walked on the sand I could feel the tears welling up.

I couldn't believe what I saw.

I saw black.

The sea is black.

The sand is black.

And it will be black for a long long time.

The oil spill had happened when the Israelis bombed the fuel tanks in Jiiyeh.

And now...what? Hezbollah is hiding divers in the sea?

What will their excuse be?

'It was a mistake...'

'We didn't mean it...'

What?

I saw a crab moving on top of the sand.

The black sand.

It was digging a hole in the black sand.

There was black on top of its shell.

Where is it to go?

What has happened to all those fish and animals in the sea from this disaster?

Shall we place them on that ever growing list:

-510 civilians killed.

- 1850 wounded.
- Over 700,000 persons displaced.
- Massive destruction of Lebanon's infrastructure.
- Pollution of the sea.
- Death of fish and sea life.

It was not enough to ruin a country....now... also the environment....the sea...already we have heard that this oil spill has reached Syrian shores...and probably it will reach beyond...

So I sat on the beach....watching the black waves crash onto the black sand. I watched and watched...there is nothing left to say. Nothing left to feel...it was like the final stab...the death blow....

And now...finally...

They took our sea from us...

What more can they do?

What is left?

And as for that poor crab...stuck in a world he didn't ask for...slowly seeing all around him die...we are that crab....we have oil on us...our home is gone...our lives destroyed...our neighbours dead....what will that crab do? Where will it go? How will it eat? What will it eat?

I couldn't keep looking at the sea....the smell was getting stronger and stronger...my dizziness was becoming overwhelming...I took one last look at the sea...black waves crashing...black waves crashing...it was intoxicating...I didn't want to watch it anymore and I couldn't stop looking at it...black wave after black wave...rolling in...white becoming black...white to black....

This is not another story for CNN and BBC...this is our home...our sea...our life...

I wish now I didn't go to the beach. I wish i had remained in my self imposed hope that it 'couldn't be that bad'.

I wish I hadn't seen the truth in front of me today.

I wish I had remained blissfully ignorant.

But since I am no longer ignorant...I want all of you to know...

Close your eyes..and imagine...

Imagine black waves crashing.

Imagine black white sand.

Now open your eyes...

I still see black waves crashing.

I still see black white sand.

Now imagine it happening for the next ten years.