

Contrast VR and European Forest Institute Release VR Film on Climate Change

The Disappearing Oasis Details Climate Change's Impact in Morocco

[DOHA, SAN FRANCISCO, BARCELONA] (April 24, 2018) – Al Jazeera's Contrast VR and the Lookout Station, the European Forest Institute (EFI)'s science-media initiative, today announced the release of *The Disappearing Oasis*, a new virtual reality film on the M'hamid Oasis, a region in southeast Morocco that has been affected by climate change and threatened by the encroaching Sahara. The film uses immersive storytelling to report on climate change, one of the world's most pressing issues.

The Disappearing Oasis describes how cultural organizer Halim Sbai and other residents of M'hamid struggle with what is happening to their oasis – a fertile land in the desert. The film includes immersive scenes of lush areas full of vegetation that fade into empty lands with palm trees half-covered by sand.

"I feel that there is injustice," says Halim. "We do not create the causes of climate change, we just experience the effects."

Studies show that the Sahara Desert has expanded by almost 10 percent during the past century. Desertification threatens the livelihood of more than 2 million people living in the oases of Morocco. Halim says the region's locals cannot save the oases by themselves, and that they need to make sure the world sees how the region has been affected by climate change. Through music and the arts, Halim hopes to raise awareness about the issue and inspire future generations in the region.

The Disappearing Oasis was directed by Contrast VR Producer Viktorija Mickute and shot and edited by VR Post-Production Lead Maria Fernanda Lauret.

"VR is a powerful visual tool for audiences to dive into the story and see the effects of climate change with their own eyes," said producer Viktorija Mickute. "Too often the world talks about climate change only when disasters hit. It's important to shift our focus to communities that are struggling daily with the impact of changing climates. These communities can help us understand the gravity of the problem and can offer solutions."

"Trees and forests play a key role in regulating biodiversity, climate, soil and water, ensuring the resilience of susceptible regions to climate change," said EFI's Director Marc Palahí. "At EFI we connect knowledge to action, bringing research to policymakers, the media and the public. Our Lookout Station media partnerships aim to tell science-based stories about climate change in an innovative way."

The Disappearing Oasis will be released on [AJ+](#) and [Vimeo](#), and shared across Al Jazeera English (AJE) online, Contrast VR and European Forest Institute social channels.

About Contrast VR

Contrast VR is Al Jazeera's immersive media studio, specializing in the production of compelling 360-degree video, augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) content. The studio also collaborates with existing departments across Al Jazeera Media Network to produce best-in-class 2D and 3D content. Contrast VR produces unique documentaries, videos and live streams that push the boundaries of narrative storytelling while taking viewers directly to the front lines of the biggest news events in the world. Learn more about the studio at contrastvr.com.

About Lookout Station

The Lookout Station offers a space where journalism and science communities can meet and connect for digital storytelling and communication around the topic of climate change. Through a number of projects, the initiative aims to (re)build trust between scientists and storytellers by tackling challenges that prevent collaboration.

About EFI

The European Forest Institute (EFI) is an independent international science organisation which generates, connects and shares knowledge at the interface between science and policy. EFI has 28 member countries who have ratified the Convention, and 115 member organizations in 37 countries, working in diverse research fields.

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