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Escape From the Walls

When the barricades erected to defend the freedom of an entire people, move back, closing to grip on themselves, they lose their effectiveness and turn into bars of jail. Think about the Burmese people as a free people is almost a utopia. Walls. Concrete walls, walls of words, walls of thoughts. Like impassable border, the elements that seem to be congenial in the history of Burma are just the walls. In a country such as the armored Myanmar, where people are free to do and think only what is imposed by the military junta, the only way to freedom is to flee. They are trying to rebuild a new form of freedom in other lands, in other countries. Often, however, the situation does not improve too much. In Malaysia, the Burmese refugees of Chin state, living in hiding in the abandoned buildings of Kuala Lumpur and a camp in the jungle. This community, mostly Catholic, organized in the C.R.C. association, arranging the subsistence and organization of its population with schools and services at UNHRC. This work aims to focus the gaze on the walls of isolations which confine the ideas, opinions and daily life of this people.



Oppressed and persecuted by the military junta for decades in power in Myanmar, many Burmese citizens have fled to Malaysia and Thailand in attempt to rebuild their lives free from the tyranny of dictatorship.



The image that links the Burmese refugees with any kind of jail, the overlap of their faces to a railing or some type of prison, has become a dramatic tradition. Here, some members of the Chin Refugee Committee in Kuala Lumpur.



Almost all of them had followed the same road to reach Kuala Lumpur: Thai-Burmese and Thai-Malaysian borders. Here, a group of refugees living in apartments in a building that they occupied on the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur.



Recently arrived in town after a very dangerous and exhausting journey, this young mother found accommodation for herself and for her son in an apartment already occupied by five other refugee families.



**These people can survive despite the precarious conditions of their life.
In this apartment of an abandoned building in Kuala Lumpur live five families.**



The Chin Refugee Committee (C.R.C) was established in 2001 as help center for Burmese refugees. The C.R.C. was founded and it is still consists by the refugees.



The apartments are empty and desolated: there aren't furniture or any kind of basic sanitation. They eat and sleep on the floor.



Different kind of prisons shut these people outside the borders of their country as well. The lack of freedom of action and expression, the condition in which illegal immigrants are forced to live, compromise the possibility of a "normal" life for them.



Burmese children are often forced to play at home: the risk of being identified by Malaysian police could bring them and their families to the arrest, or worse, to repatriation.



Clinging to the bars of the railing as a prison, this little girl, come to town from a few days, seems doesn't feel good yet in her new home.



After a flight more longer than five days, hidden in a van, this girl has just arrived in Kuala Lumpur from southern Burma border. Exhausted and sick, being all rooms already occupied, she found accommodation only on a balcony.



Since 2004, the C.R.C. assists and supports young mothers and their children by providing to give them accommodation and support statement.



Although the Government of Malaysia has not ratified the international refugees policy of 1951 and that the Burmese refugees living in total secrecy, the police accept and tolerate their presence even if they often do mass arrests and repatriations.



The C.R.C. has managed to organize study classes in which children can follow the school classes held by the members of the community.



This little girl seems to catalyze in herself the whole weight of the condition of the Burmese people.



The teacher are checking the homework of an English language made by her class student.



Why am I forced to be a refugee? This is the question everyone ask any time without ever receiving any answer.



Classes are formed according to different ages of the children. In the classroom there aren't desks and chairs, schoolboys are forced to read and write on the ground.



The Chin Refugee Committee attends to requesting the status of refugee to UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) in Kuala Lumpur for every person who, fleeing from Myanmar, arrived in town in search of refuge.



Many refugees reach the Malaysian capital every day. Spaces in the city are not sufficient to accommodate the continuous flow of people, so the less lucky, they are forced to live outside city, hiding in the jungle.



The situation in the camp is weak enough to become unsustainable if nobody does anything soon to help these people: the hygienic conditions are poor, lacking food, lacking an acceptable source of drinking water, no any kind of healthcare.



The Chin State is one of the most militarized states of the Union of Myanmar. In the beginning, many Burmese fled to India but the lack of paths in the jungle and the strong military presence along the border have hijacked the exodus of refugees into Malaysia. Precarious pile dwellings are the only accommodation in the camp.



Some of these people living in the camp for more than five years. The local people know of their presence and often if they do not have enough money to bribe the policemen there is a risk of being arrested. This Burmese child decorated her room with actors and singers pictures cut from the pages of fashion magazines.



In Myanmar, many people are forced into labor camps forced to perform public works like roads, bridges, water systems. They are often subjected to torture, arbitrary arrests and many of them are killed by the soldiers because dissidents.



A woman with her child picks up the little water available that can be drawn from a small stream that runs near the camp. Water must be boiled several times to be made drinkable.



The idea of flight to India was left due to poor protection from the UNHCR office in New Delhi and due to the distance (1600 miles) of this office. This woman prepares a small meal for herself and her family.



All ethnic groups of Burma as Shan, Karen, Mon, Chin, Karenni are fighting the military junta who oppresses the country. Especially along the Thai border rebel militias continue to fight for independence and freedom from dictatorship. Here, a man are preparing a fishing nets hoping to recover some fish for dinner.



Since in 1950 the Prime Minister U Nu pursued a policy of "One race, one language, one religion" erasing all forms of local culture. All those that do not conform to his dictates were pursued. As if he would erase off the past, this man is washing his body into the stream at the refugee camp.



The policy of "One race (Burma), language (Burmese), religion (Buddhism)", led to the persecution of any person who speaks the dialect, who was originally an ethnic group and who are not Buddhist. The members of the Chin State, the Catholic majority, here, in the land of Malaysia, built a church in the center of the camp in which to practice their religion without fear of being harassed and shot by the army.