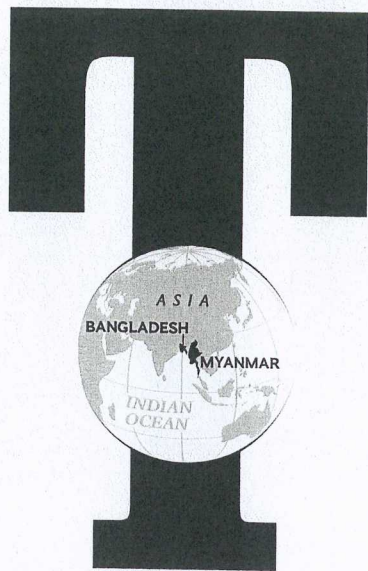


A  
WORLD  
ON  
THE  
MOVE



**THE CRYING INFANT** was wrapped in a donated red blanket. She was one day old and didn't yet have a name. Shortly before she was born, her parents had joined the exodus of Rohingya refugees from Myanmar to what soon became the world's largest refugee camp, known as the Kutupalong-Balukhali settlement, in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh.

¶ Photographer Turjoy Chowdhury was walking through the camps when he ducked into a small shack to find the source of a plaintive cry. As he snapped her photo, Chowdhury's head spun with the politics and persecution that had resulted in the scene before him: "Looking at those innocent eyes, I was thinking, What the hell is going on?"

¶ Rohingya children born in Cox's Bazar start life in a legal limbo. Because neither Bangladesh nor Myanmar offers citizenship to the Rohingya, they are stateless. ¶ For decades in the majority-Buddhist Myanmar, the Rohingya ethnic group—who are largely Muslim—have been considered foreigners, even though they've likely lived in Myanmar since at least the 15th century.

In 1982 Myanmar passed a law granting citizenship to its main ethnic groups. Later interpretations excluded the Rohingya and made proving their nationality nearly impossible. This allowed the government to give them temporary registration cards—not considered proof of nationality—rather than the necessary identity cards.

In August 2017 an attack on police stations by Rohingya militants sparked a crackdown by the Burmese military. Since then, more than 900,000 Rohingya, of an estimated million who lived in Myanmar, have fled into Bangladesh. Because Bangladesh doesn't recognize them as refugees, their movements are restricted, and they cannot access public services or become citizens. A repatriation deal between Bangladesh and Myanmar was struck in 2017, but conditions in Myanmar are still not safe for their return, human rights groups say.

Of the half million children living in Cox's Bazar, more than 30,000 are under the age of one, according to the UN. "The impact of being stateless creates great uncertainty for the future of Rohingya children," says Karen Reidy, a UNICEF spokesperson. "A child without any nationality can face a lifetime of discrimination."

A global "shift toward xenophobia" means statelessness, which currently affects 10 million people, may soon increase, says Amal de Chickera, from the Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion. "If you're stateless, it's not enough to ensure it's safe to go back [home]—you need a state to go back to."

Chowdhury's project, *Born Refugee*, shows the children as collateral damage of a conflict focused on ethnic identity. "One thing that comes to my mind all the time is John Lennon's song *Imagine*," he says. "A borderless world: this is what the project is all about." □