

Reflect on a photograph – pt 2



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Knowing the dangers on land, where they can be arrested for working illegally, and at sea, where they can drown, these men set out to collect shrimps on a cloudy day, hoping to make some money to feed their families.

The three men depicted in this photograph are zoning out into the sea with a sense of familiarity. Maybe their thoughts travel to the days they spent on it when migrating to Bangladesh, or to the horrors they came across upon the deadly sea. Or maybe they are admiring it, for all the things it has given to them that the land does not; transportation, food, a place to live. Perhaps, the sea is the only place these stateless men can call home.

This picture is strong in the elements of perspective, light, and shadow, and movement. Each of these elements helps to depict the disposition of the men. The waves of the sea and the motion of the clouds can represent the passing of the bad and good times, while the stillness of the men may represent the silence of hope. The photographer was able to capture that one single moment when everything just stopped around them, while they stood still, contemplating life, wondering where it will take them next.

The sea holds the stories of many more Rohingya men, women and children who have crossed it, many of whom have drowned on their way to the borders of Bangladesh, Thailand, Malaysia and beyond.

Overall, the issue of the Rohingya is a crucial one, and is not talked about as much as it should be. As a Bangladeshi, I feel deeply disturbed that we as citizens of a “democratic” country have no say in how we want a crisis like this to be managed. This injustice, this inhumanity, it brings a nation down, rather than holding it up. Bangladeshi culture is always seen as being welcoming and accepting of others. So it is very disappointing to see how little importance these helpless people are given.

We must change the way the Rohingya are treated. For more people to actually feel the need to make change, they must be able to connect with the emotions of these Rohingya and empathise with them. Saiful Huq Omi’s photographs help us to do this.

Inara Jamal

Age 17