



With their country locked in a decades old military dictatorship, many Burmese long ago gave up their dream of a return to normalcy and left for other countries. Now a new generation is creating a mass exodus while economic and societal pressures make it difficult to sustain a life. As they flee their homes, these Burmese take on the human rights status of migrants, refugees, stateless, trafficked, forced labor, or even enslaved, although most simply identify with the word survivor. They also enter developing countries, such as Thailand, that are ill-equipped to ensure their basic rights.

The Burmese have their fates sealed before they even leave home as they sign up with brokers, often countrymen, who promise to get them to Thailand and beyond, but end up selling them into servitude in the fishing, farming and sex industries. Many have to work for months without wages in order to pay off their trafficking debt. But even paying off that initial debt does not mean they are free, as brokers and employers inside Thailand continue to treat them as commodities. This Pulitzer project looks at how the approximately 3 million Burmese living in Thailand survive on a daily basis and sheds new light on the latest data released by the UN and other humanitarian organizations on the plight of migrants in developing countries.

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