

# To Move Between and Often Within

*Theophilus Kwek*

■ **ABSTRACT:** In February 2017, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) released a damning report of human rights abuses perpetrated against the Rohingya. The report was based on interviews with Rohingya fleeing from Myanmar since 9 October 2016, with research continuing up to January 2017. Many recounted personal experiences of violence and physical, life-threatening harm. The report received some attention among humanitarian agencies (many of which have been banned from accessing Rakhine state) but was largely ignored by the international press. Headlines that week focused on the Trump administration's attempts to defend its travel ban. This poem contains fragments and modifications of the report. It is not an attempt to supplant the voices of those at the heart of the report, but—by stripping down its language—an attempt to make (and mend) our ways of reading (and hearing) their stories.

■ **KEYWORDS:** displacement, eyewitness, OHCHR, poetry, Rohingya, violence

*All titles (in bold), and some lines in the poem are taken directly from the Flash Report of the OHCHR's Mission to Bangladesh, 'Interviews with Rohingyas Fleeing from Myanmar since 9 October 2016', published on 3 February, 2017 and available at <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/MM/FlashReport3Feb2017.pdf>.*

## **To move<sup>1</sup> between, and often within**

1. Go in a specified direction  
or manner; change position; Alter  
the space, or shape of; Change one's place  
of residence or work; (Of a player)  
change the position of a piece in a board game;

*townships, procedures to secure<sup>2</sup> travel*

Depart. 2. (Of a door) Make hard to open,  
fasten, or lock; Protect against threats,  
make safe; Succeed in obtaining, especially  
with difficulty; Fix (something)  
so that it cannot be moved or lost.



*are onerous and time<sup>3</sup>-consuming.*

3. A moment or definite portion of time allotted; The appropriate or expected time, in particular of childbirth or death; The indefinite continued progress of existence; A prison sentence;

*Failure to comply<sup>4</sup> with requirements*

An instance or occasion. 4. To act in accordance with a wish or command; Meet specified standards; Late 16<sup>th</sup> Century from Latin *complere*, fill up, fulfil (the original sense was “accomplish,”

*can result in arrest<sup>5</sup> and prosecution.*

Hence “oblige” or “obey”). 5. Seize by legal authority; Detain; Stop or check (a process, a disease); A sudden cessation of movement; To attract attention (as in, “the stillness of the place arrested her”).

### **Several victims mentioned**

Death

, the destruction of property and the displacement of 140,000 people due to shooting at close range due to stabbing by knife due to beating by the security forces by five army officers in front of our eyes of the foetus due to random firing and her two sisters killed  
[. . .] Maybe

they held each other tight, that could be why they seemed to be hugging in there, my brother said.

### **Families may have had members killed,**

Your pen wavers on the stroke, severs *beaten, raped, and / or taken away* “and” from “or.” After calamity, a small *to an unknown location, while at the same time* chance, a breath – such sweet distance, in *their homes were burned and looted. For most* this language of yours. You tell me

*interviewees, separation*

it is a good and merciful tongue.

*from their families is a major concern.*

In our own it never rains, but pours.

### **My Father**

*stood up, which is when a grenade came* listen: here the things I  
*was killed at the same time as I was shot* remember. the armed  
*who was also living with me* men were wearing green uniforms,  
*a prayer leader* some with plain patterned pants, and some with  
*was slaughtered with a knife* a kind of camouflage pattern, like  
*was called out from all of us women and children* leaves. They  
*totally burned, together with three others* were the same color  
*paid the army up to 1 million kyat for my release* as helicopters.

### **Have crossed the border pictured below**

My country sells its islands whole.	<i>This led</i>
My country lets its cities grow.	<i>to many</i>
My country takes care of your soul.	<i>Families</i>
My country keeps your taxes low.	<i>Moving</i>
My country holds its secrets close.	<i>from village</i>
My country builds above the sea.	<i>to village</i>
My country makes your emperor's clothes.	<i>and</i>
My country lets your country be.	<i>Ultimately</i>
My country has its own to feed.	<i>leaving</i>
My country is your country's womb.	<i>the country</i>
My country knows it has no need.	
My country says it has no room.	<i>for safety.</i>

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