

As revolution sweeps throughout the Arab world, much is written of the displacement of ordinary citizens at the hands of their oppressors; the Syrians who fled to the Turkish border, the Egyptians who fled to Italy.

Yet, while Western eyes are fixed upon the refugees of the Arab-Spring, a humanitarian crisis has engulfed another part of the world for decades; that of the Burmese exiles.

Fleeing religious persecution and militaristic oppression wrought by their rulers, tens of thousands of Burmese citizens have abandoned their homeland and searched for a life free of discrimination, only to find that discrimination has remained the only constant in their ever-changing life.

To tell the untold plight of these refugees, photographer and human rights campaigner Simone Novotny travelled to Delhi, which accommodates some 12,000 Burmese exiles, to garner photographs and first-hand accounts for an exhibition entitled 'I Am a Burmese Woman Living in Delhi'.

'A lot of the talk in the media is focusing on making the changes there, with the regime, instead of the people who leave,' explains Simone. 'That's what I wanted to focus on; after they leave Burma there is still problems.'

The exhibit, held at the Human Rights Action Centre from June 20th-24th, showcases as much, with images of forlorn faces coupled with impoverished living conditions in which the refugees are forced to live. Short passages of each individual's circumstances accompanying the images all share the same despairing theme.

'The life they were hoping for goes beyond just getting the refugee base; they want a life of dignity,' she adds. 'I wanted to focus on that part – after you leave a country where you are persecuted, do you have the life you should be having?'

Indeed, the life captured in the exhibit showcases a life of anything but dignity.

An account from 'I am Reng Jung', a widow with 2 children, reads that 'Indians really look down on us. They say bad words, they spit on the vegetables we try to collect.' Another from 'I am Nu Khin', a 50-year-old widow with 2 children, tells of how her 'children are discriminated at school. They are 'beaten and often come home crying. Going on to say how she 'constantly fears dying' from 'malnutrition' but can't seek medical support because 'government hospital doctors clearly avoid Burmese refugees'.

The root cause of this stigma towards the Burmese refugee populous from Indians is deeply ingrained, insists Simone.

'I think Indian society is still very (much) divided and there is still a lot of discrimination between Indians themselves,' she states. 'Even though the caste system has been abolished, the discrimination that they practice amongst themselves gets even harsher towards people from other countries. You can especially see that with women.'

This brings to view the most horrific accounts of all. An excerpt from 'I am May Yi', who fled to Delhi with her husband when he escaped from a Burmese prison, tells of how she was 'sexually abused' at