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UNITED NATIONS NATIONS UNIES

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UN IN ACTION

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KAREN REFUGEES LIVE IN EXILE IN THAILAND

VIDEO

AUDIO

NARRATION

PAW MIE LA SAYS GOODBYE AND
GETS IN A VAN

At twenty-five, Paw Mie la Winsay is on a journey she never dreamt of. She's a Karen refugee who for the second time is starting a new life. (10.5)

BURNING HOUSES AND VILLAGES

She carries with her the memories of a civil war that has torn her homeland in Burma, now known as Myanmar, apart. (7)

PAW MIE LA WIN: (Karen) F

PAW ON CAMERA

"Burmese soldiers came to our village and tortured the villagers. We heard explosions, gun shots and bombs exploding. We were so terrified that we left our village." (14)

NARRATION

KAREN SOLDIERS ON PARADE

The Karen are Myanmar's largest ethnic minority, and have been fighting for self-determination since 1948. (8)

DESTROYED HOUSES / VILLAGERS

WALK WITH BELONGINGS

In a nearly sixty-year civil war, thousands of villages have been destroyed. Millions of Karen villagers have been forced to flee their homes. (10)

REFUGEE CAMP

In 1995, Paw Mie La and her family crossed the border into Thailand. They found refuge in Tham Hin Camp, one of several shelters set up by the Thai authority to help the displaced Karen. (12.5)

PEOPLE FETCH WATER / KIDS PLAY

SOCCER / SCHOOL

For nearly two decades, various international organizations have provided the camp residents with all the daily basic necessities, including a well-established school system.

REFUGEES SIT AROUND

(11)
But the Karen are forbidden to leave the camp to make a living outside. Many just sit around all day. Unable to return to Myanmar, their lives are in limbo. (11.5)

PAW MIE LA SINGS

The restricted camp life is a challenge especially to young people like Paw Mie La. Gradually she had made new friends. (8)

PAW MIE LA ON CAMERA

PAW MIE LA WIN: (Karen) **F**

"When I feel lonely, I hang out with my friends. Sometimes I go to the library to read. I also weave bags and clothes to pass time."
(9.0)

PAW TEACHES AT SCHOOL

NARRATION

She also teaches in the school, trying to make herself useful to her community. But having grown used to the camp, Paw Mie La is now presented with a challenge – that’s also an opportunity – to resettle in a new country. (13.5)

PAW MIE LA ZIPPS UP BAG AND
RIDES MOTORBIKE

PEOPLE WEIGH LUGGAGE
PAW SAYS GOODBYE

In 2004, after years of negotiations, the UN refugee agency, UNHCR, reached an agreement with ten nations to resettle Karen refugees living in camps in Thailand – some one hundred and fifty thousand of them. (15.5)

NAEEM WITH A GROUP OF
REFUGEES

Naeem Durrani is the field officer for the UN Refugee Agency. (3.5)

NAEEM ON CAMERA

NAEEM DURRANI: (English) **M**

“It started last year from this camp, and it’s moving on to other camps, and we hope that we’ll try to find the most durable solution for these people who have been here for the last twenty years or so.” (11)

PEOPLE SEND OFF LOVED ONES
INSIDE PASSENGER JEEP

NARRATION

Despite the promise of freedom, not everybody wants to go to another country. Te Ler Wah is the Secretary of the Camp Committee. (8.5)

PEOPLE FARM

TE LER WAH: (Karen) **M**

TE LER WAH ON CAMERA

Most Karen are farmers who love to work the land. Besides, their relatives are still living inside Myanmar, so one day they want to go back home.” (10)

REFUGEES

NARRATION

Others worry about an uncertain future.

Raymond Bu is one of them. (5)

RAYMOND BU ON CAMERA

RAYMOND BU: (Karen) **M**

“If we go there, we’ll only get low paying jobs or no jobs at all.” (3)

VAN DEPARTS

NARRATION

But for Paw Mie La, her choice is clear.

PAW INSIDE CAR / AT AIRPORT

Instead of continuing life in the camp. She has chosen to take her chances in a new land. (10)

PAW MIE LA ON CAMERA

PAW MIE LA WIN: (Karen) **F**

“I don’t know what life will be like in Australia but I will try my best.” (4)

PAW AT AIRPORT SHOP / LOOKS AT NARRATION

BOOK ON AUSTRALIA

The resettlement of displaced Karen is one of the largest UNHCR programs aimed at resolving one of Asia’s most protracted and forgotten refugee problems. (9)

PAW WAVES GOODBYE AT
AIRPORT

For Paw Mie La, it’s another journey that she hopes one day will lead her towards her homeland in Myanmar. (7.5)

UN LOGO

This report was prepared by Patricia Chan
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