

a film by Mélanie Carrier and Olivier Higgins



WANDERING

A ROHINGYA STORY



FREEDOM

All I want is freedom.
Freedom to be a teacher and teach.
Freedom to be a doctor and cure.
Freedom to be a leader and bring peace.
Freedom to be a friend
and hear what my people say.

All I want is freedom.

KALA MIYA (KALAM)
KUTUPALONG CAMP REFUGEE
POEM OPENING THE FILM

DIRECTORS STATEMENT

It was following a shocking Facebook post from the Kutupalong refugee camp in February 2018 by documentary photographer Renaud Philippe, that we became aware of the sheer extent of this major humanitarian crisis that has received so little media coverage. Overwhelmed by the magnitude of this situation and the power of Renaud's photos, we suggested that we join forces to create this film with as the main objective, alerting the public to the tragedy of the Rohingyas in exile.

What started out as a short film project quickly became a feature documentary project. From the start, our idea was to make a deeply immersive film, far from a purely informative document. It attempts to make us experience the daily life in the largest refugee camp in the world, where more than 700,000 human beings live in a cramped 13 km² area.

The role of Rohingya refugee Kala Miya (Kalam) was central in this film. It was Renaud who first met Kalam in February 2018 during his first stay in the camp. Kalam naturally became an ally and the film crew's guide out in the field. As a fixer, translator and sound recorder, he was the one who ultimately made this film possible. Over the course of the discussions, Kalam's personal story and the poetry he wrote was so meaningful, so universal, that we decided to make it the narrative thread of this film. To us, the dreamlike and poetic approach of *Wandering, a Rohingya Story* is a way of doing justice to the refugees inside.

Following the filming in Kutupalong camp in October 2018, we met the small Rohingya community in Quebec City (Canada), our hometown. Soon, we met Mohammed Shofi who lived for nearly 18 years in the Kutupalong camp. He became an ally and a friend and the long translation work began with him. He also became the narrator of this film, his soft, calm voice, reporting Kalam's story.

In *Wandering, a Rohingya Story*, light and darkness live side by side, as do strength and despair, resilience and a deep sense of injustice. At the heart of this film, is an underlying theme, childhood; both painful and enlightening, forcing us to question: how is it still possible that such violence can still exist today? Who will be the next victims?



THE ROHINGYAS & THE KUTUPALONG CAMP

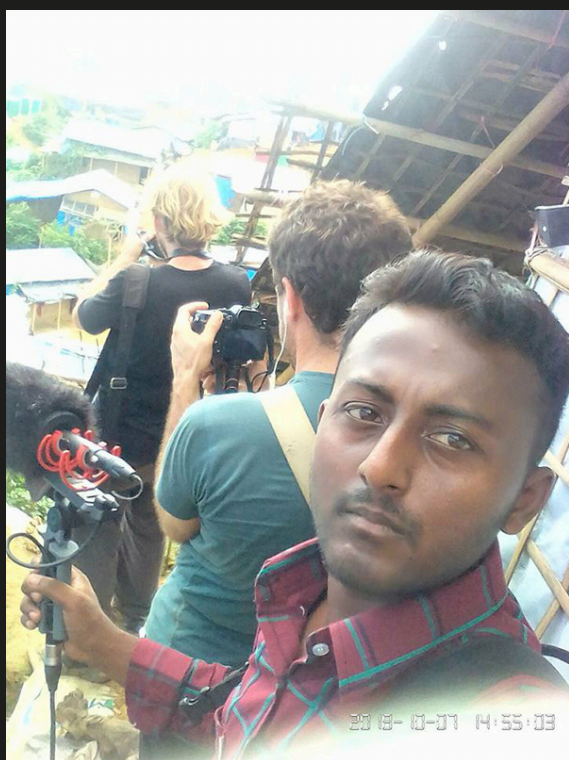
Inhabited by more than 700,000 people on a surface area of 13 km², Kutupalong is by far the world's most populous refugee camp. Located southeast of Bangladesh, it was created in 1991 to accommodate Rohingya refugees. A Muslim minority in Myanmar (formerly Burma), which is mostly Buddhist, the Rohingya were persecuted by nationalists, notably those from the Burmese military.

After decades of tension between the two peoples, the year 2017 marked an unprecedented escalation of violence. Burning of entire villages, large-scale massacres, torture and sexual assault forced the Rohingya into mass exile. Within a few weeks, several hundreds of thousands of men, women and children fled their country to find refuge in Bangladesh.

Victims of a genocide decried by the United Nations, the Rohingya are also stateless, in other words, without legal nationality, because no country considers them citizens. Confined to makeshift camps, stripped of their freedom and terrorized by the horrors they experienced, they live a life without hope, daily suffering the hardships of a major humanitarian crisis, which so far has been for the most part ignored by the media.

KALA MIYA | POET, TRANSLATOR & FIXER

Kala Miya is a Rohingya born in the village of Long Doon Foki Daung Nga Kuu Ya in the province of Maung Ya in Arakan State in western Myanmar (formerly Burma). In 2012, he fled his country of birth because of violence toward the Rohingya community and sought refuge in India. He has lived in the Kutupalong refugee camp in Bangladesh since 2018. He has worked as an English teacher in the camp and as a translator and fixer for journalists and non-governmental organizations. He was a key collaborator during the filming of the documentary *Wandering, a Rohingya Story*, acting as a translator and directing interviews on site. His poetry, written in the world's biggest refugee camp, became the narrative thread of the film. His poems are also part of the multidisciplinary exhibition *Wandering, a Rohingya Story* on display at the Quebec National Museum of Fine Arts (MNBAQ).



MOHAMMED SHOFI | NARRATOR

Mohammed Shofi is a Rohingya born in the village of Buthidong in Arakan State in Myanmar (formerly Burma). In 1990, he fled his country of birth because of violence by Burman nationalists against the Rohingya Muslim minority. He lived for 18 years in the Kutupalong refugee camp in Bangladesh before being accepted as a refugee in Canada in November 2008. He settled in Québec City with members of his family. Very actively involved in the community, he quickly learned French. In addition to contributing significantly to translation of the feature-length documentary *Wandering, a Rohingya Story*, he became the film's narrator. Shofi also shares his life story at the very end of the exhibition *Wandering, a Rohingya Story*, which was created at the Quebec National Museum of Fine Arts (MNBAQ).



RENAUD PHILIPPE | PHOTOGRAPHER & CO-DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Renaud Philippe grew up and lives in Québec City. An award-winning documentary photographer, he has mainly focused for the past 15 years on the long-term impact of armed conflicts on civilian populations. He concentrates principally on South Asia (India, Nepal, Bangladesh) and East Africa (South Sudan, Uganda, Kenya), always independently, often in times of crisis.

He collaborates regularly with the *New York Times*, the *Globe and Mail* and *Le Devoir*. *The Guardian*, *National Geographic*, *The Atlantic*, *MacLean's*, *Le Monde diplomatique*, *Canadian Geographic*, *Le Figaro*, and *Days Japan* are among the publications that have featured his work. His committed photographic series have received several awards, including the National Newspaper Award, the Picture of the Year International, the Flash Forward Award of the Magenta Foundation and the National Magazine Award.

In February 2018, he visited Kutupalong camp in Bangladesh for the first time to shoot a photo report. Subsequently, he will return in October to co-direct the photography of the film *Wandering, a Rohingya Story*, with Olivier Higgins. His pictures are also part of the multidisciplinary exhibition *Wandering, a Rohingya Story*.

www.renaudphilippe.com

Instagram : @renaudphilippe



MÉLANIE CARRIER
OLIVIER HIGGINS

DIRECTORS
PRODUCERS

Born in Québec City (Canada), Olivier Higgins and Mélanie Carrier are biologists by trade. They discovered video while documenting their numerous adventures. In 2007, they directed and produced the documentary film *Asiemut*, which chronicles their 8000 km cycling trip from Mongolia to India. This film won 36 awards abroad, was distributed in 40 countries and was broadcast on several television networks, including ARTE, RTS, RTBF, RAI, VIAJAR, PHOENIX, Televisio de Catalunya, Al Jazeera, etc.

In 2010, the director-producer couple founded MÖ FILMS, an independent production company, devoted to documentary films, whose objective is to contribute to the debates and societal challenges of our times. Their second film, *Encounters*, selected by the National Geographic Society, won several awards abroad and their environmentally-themed satirical short film *Ice Philosophy* was presented at numerous festivals.

Their documentary feature film *Québécoisie* examines the relationship between Quebecers and the First Nations. It was nominated for a Jutra Award and, amongst other prizes, was awarded at RIDM, RIFF and received the prize “Work of the Year” by the Québec Council of the arts. It was then broadcast on TV5 Monde in approximately twenty languages.

After giving more than 400 film talks in Québec, Europe and the United States with their films *Asiemut* and *Québécoisie*, Mélanie and Olivier released their documentary feature film *Wandering, a Rohingya Story*, which examines the Rohingya refugee crisis in Bangladesh. Along with this latest film, they produced and designed a multidisciplinary exhibition, including the works of several artists, at the Quebec National Museum of Fine Arts (MNBAQ).

The two directors receive funding from major organizations like Telefilm Canada, SODEC, the National Film Board (ONF), Quebec Council of the arts and Canada Council of the arts.



SYNOPSIS

Within a few months, the Kutupalong refugee camp became the biggest in the world. Out of sight, 700,000 people of the Rohingya Muslim minority fled Myanmar (formerly Burma) in 2017 to escape genocide and seek asylum in Bangladesh. Prisoners of a major yet little publicized humanitarian crisis, Kalam, Mohammad, Montas and other exiles want to make their voice heard. Between poetry and nightmares, food distribution and soccer games, they testify to their daily realities and the ghosts of their past memories. The spectre of wandering, waiting and disappearing is all around. In this place, almost out of space and time, is it still possible to exist?

www.wandering-themovie.com

Trailer: <https://vimeo.com/408136896>
<https://www.facebook.com/ErranceSansRetour.WanderingARohingyaStory>

TEAM

WITH THE INVALUABLE PARTICIPATION OF REFUGEES FROM THE KUTUPALONG CAMP.

SCRIPTWRITERS, DIRECTORS AND PRODUCERS **OLIVIER HIGGINS, MÉLANIE CARRIER**
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR **RENAUD PHILIPPE**
DIRECTORS OF PHOTOGRAPHY **RENAUD PHILIPPE, OLIVIER HIGGINS**
SOUND RECORDISTS **OLIVIER HIGGINS, KALA MIYA (KALAM)**
EDITORS **AMÉLIE LABRÈCHE, OLIVIER HIGGINS**
POEMS **KALA MIYA (KALAM)**
NARRATION **KALA MIYA (KALAM), OLIVIER HIGGINS, MÉLANIE CARRIER**
NARRATOR **MOHAMMED SHOFI**
COLORIST **JÉRÔME CLOUTIER**
SOUND DESIGNER **PIERRE-JULES AUDET**
SOUND MIXER **LUC BOUDRIAS**
ORIGINAL MUSIC **MARTIN DUMAIS**
GRAPHIC DESIGNER **MARIE-RENÉE BOURGET HARVEY**
PRODUCTION **MÖ FILMS**

TECHNICAL SHEET

production: September 2020
length: 88 minutes
country: Canada
sound: 5.1
ratio: 1.85 :1
original version: Rohingya
subtitles: French, English, Spanish, German, Japanese

AWARDS & NOMINATIONS

BEST FEATURE DOCUMENTARY - CANADIAN SCREEN AWARDS
NOMINEE BEST CINEMATOGRAPHY - CANADIAN SCREEN AWARDS

WINNER BEST DOCUMENTARY - IRIS AWARDS
WINNER BEST CINEMATOGRAPHY - IRIS AWARDS
WINNER BEST EDITING - IRIS AWARDS
NOMINEE BEST SOUND - IRIS AWARDS
NOMINEE BEST MUSIC - IRIS AWARDS

GLOBAL DOCS AWARD - DOCSMX / MEXICO
PEOPLE'S CHOICE AWARD - FCVQ / CANADA
BEST FEATURED DOCUMENTARY - FICFA / CANADA -
BEST FEATURE DOCUMENTARY - VUES SUR MER / CANADA - OPENING FILM

NOMINEE FOR SOS KINDERDÖRFER WELTWEIT AWARD
& BEST OF FEST SELECTION
36 TH DOK .FEST MÜNCHEN / GERMANY

FESTIVALS

2020

SEMINCI / VALLADOLID, SPAIN - OFFICIAL COMPETITION
RIDM / MONTRÉAL, CANADA - OFFICIAL COMPETITION
DOCSMX / MEXICO, MEXICO - OFFICIAL COMPETITION
FCVQ / QUEBEC, CANADA - OFFICIAL COMPETITION
FICFA / MONCTON, CANADA - OFFICIAL COMPETITION
42ND INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF NEW LATIN AMERICAN CINEMA / CUBA
FIF DE TÜBINGEN / TÜBINGEN, GERMANY - OFFICIAL COMPETITION

2021

36 IÈME DOK .FEST MÜNCHEN / GERMANY
27TH RENDEZ-VOUS FRENCH FILM FESTIVAL / VANCOUVER, CANADA
RENDEZ-VOUS DU CINÉMA QUÉBÉCOIS / QUÉBEC CANADA
VUES SUR MER / QUÉBEC CANADA - OFFICIAL COMPETITION
10TH BELLEVILLE DOWNTOWN DOCFEST / BELLEVILLE, CANADA
CARROUSEL INTERNATIONAL DU FILM DE RIMOUSKI / RIMOUSKI, CANADA
39TH FESTIVAL CINÉMA D'ALÈS - ITINÉRANCES / FRANCE
MOSCOW INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL - DOKER / RUSSIA - OFFICIAL COMPETITION

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

DISTRIBUTION - CANADA

SPIRA

a/s Sébastien Merckling
distribution@spira.quebec

DISTRIBUTION - INTERNATIONAL

MÖ FILMS

a/s Mélanie Carrier
melanie@mofilms.ca

DISTRIBUTION - SPAIN

PACO POCH CINEMA

distribucio@pacopoch.cat
www.pacopoch.cat/cinema

PRESS RELATIONS

pixelleX communications

a/s Caroline Rompré
caroline@pixellex.ca

AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

Pictures from the film

Director's picture

Poster

Excerpts from the film (Vimeo link) which can be shared in press articles

The filming of this documentary was made possible thanks to the people who generously contributed to the crowdfunding campaign. This film was also produced thanks to the financial participation of the MELS FUND, the Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec and the Canada Council for the Arts. SODEC also provides a financial contribution to the promotion and distribution of this film.

MÖ FILMS – www.mofilms.ca

MÖ FILMS is an independent production company based in Quebec City, Canada, devoted to documentary films whose objective is to contribute to the debates and societal challenges of our times. Issues related to identity, social fabric, territory, environment and social justice are all subjects that inspire our projects. MÖ FILMS documentaries have won numerous awards and are broadcast around the world.

SPIRA – www.spira.quebec

SPIRA is a cooperative devoted to independent filmmaking, born in 2015 from the merger of Spirafilm and Vidéo Femmes, which had both been around for nearly 40 years. Spira's core mission is to support the production and distribution of independent films, whether short or feature. Each year, about thirty works benefit from its various creation support programs. Spira also distributes documentaries and fictions on various Canadian and foreign markets, including festivals, theatrical, television, the web, etc.

www.wandering-themovie.com



THE EXHIBITION AT THE QUEBEC NATIONAL MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS (MNBAQ)

Presented in the old prison building of the MNBAQ, this multidisciplinary exhibition combines video projections, photographs, children's drawings, dioramas and sculptures, poems, testimonies and ambient sounds in order to immerse us in the world's largest refugee camp, the Kutupalong camp in Bangladesh.

Conceived and produced by Mélanie Carrier and Olivier Higgins of MÖ FILMS, this moving exhibition brings together the work of several highly talented artists and collaborators including Renaud Philippe, Marie-Renée Bourget Harvey, Kala Miya, Mohammed Shofi, Karine Giboulo, Rosalie Gamache, Louis-Robert Bouchard and Keven Dubois.

AVAILABLE ON REQUEST
Pictures of the exhibition
[Vimeo link to get a video visit](#)

PHOTOS
Poster and camp : Renaud Philippe
Exhibition Wandering, a Rohingya Story : Idra Labrie (MNBAQ)