

## **"I Just Wanted To Die," Says Human Trafficking Victim**

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**By Mohd Haikal Mohd Isa**

ALOR SETAR, May 28 (Bernama) -- "There was only one thing on my mind - death. I wanted to die because dying would be easier than living," said a Rohingya migrant who managed to escape from the transit camp in Wang Kelian.

Speaking exclusively to Bernama today, Nurul Amin Nobil Hussein, 25, said during the two months he was held at the transit camp in Wang Kelian last year, he lost all hope of surviving and only thought of death.

"I was locked up in a cage like the goats and chickens, and all the time, I was surrounded by death. Each day, five or six of us would die, either from illness or were beaten up and shot," he said.

He added that the Rohingya migrants were crammed into what could be described as small coops which housed between 200 and 300 people, with the men and women kept in separate cages.

He said about five to six guards who spoke Thai would patrol round the clock, armed with sticks, knives, pistols and rifles, watching the estimated 1,500 people held there.

"The detainees were not allowed to talk. Anyone who talked would be beaten up. The guards often screamed 'sleep, sleep, sleep,' ordering us all to sleep, and not talk among ourselves," he said.

Nurul Amin said the "coops" were surrounded by sticks and built on soft ground, and when it rained, it would become muddy, and the detainees only given plastic covers to sit on.

When it rained, the detainees would stand or sit in the muddy water, causing many to be infected with diseases which led to death, he said.

"Many of the detained Rohingyas suffered swollen legs from sitting too long in the mud, resulting in them not being able to move and eat, and finally died," Nurul Amin, who was from Maungdaw, Myanmar, said.

He said they were given very little food - rice with some anchovies, and potatoes to keep them from getting hungry, nevertheless, causing many to die of starvation.

Describing what happened in the transit camps as "hell on earth", he said there were many gruesome and sad things which he would never forget for as long as he lived.

One was how the guards mercilessly beat a 12-year-old child to death just because his family in Myanmar did not have the money to pay for his freedom.

"There was also a baby who was only a few months old who died of starvation after its mother who was ill and hungry could not produce breast milk. Not long after the child died, the mother died too," he said, sadly.

Nurul Amin said the guards also raped several of the women.

"We could hear the screams of the women being gang-raped by the guards. What was worse, some of the women became pregnant after that," he said.

The guards, he said, were worse than animals.

He finally made up his mind to escape the camp after two months as he felt he would die soon in those conditions and because he had no money to pay the syndicate.

According to Nurul Amin, the syndicate members demanded payment from him as a condition for letting him go to Malaysia, and if he failed to pay, he would be held longer in the transit camp, and eventually die there.

"I could not pay them because there was no more money after I sold off all my property and land to come to Malaysia. They would beat me to death if I did not pay them," he said.

Faced with the possibility of being detained longer and beaten to death by the syndicate members, he and five others made up their minds to escape at 1am after they saw the guards had fallen asleep.

He had to crawl hundreds of metres in the dark, before running towards the jungle, not knowing which direction he was heading.

"Whatever the condition, if I failed to escape, they (the syndicate members) would shoot me dead or if I continued to stay in the camp, I would be beaten to death because I had no money.

"Death was better than living," said Nurul Amin, adding that he paid RM6,500 to travel by boat for 22 days from Maungdaw to the border between Myanmar and Thailand.

Nurul Amin said as soon as they arrived at the border town, the Rohingya migrants would be taken in pick-up trucks to southern Thailand on a journey which took 10 to 11 hours.

Meanwhile, another Rohingya migrant, Mohamad Osman Nurul Amin, 22, talked about his experience when he was detained in another transit camp in the jungle of Padang Besar, on the Thailand side, last year.

"It was hell. Everyday, the thought of death would always play in my mind. At that time, death was the best way to end all the suffering," he said.

Like Nurul Amin, he also witnessed murders and deaths among Rohingya migrants at the hands of the camp guards who cruelly beat or shot them dead.

However, he was luckier than Nurul Amin as his family could afford to pay the syndicate to release him after only one month in the transit camp.

"Even today, I still cannot accept how anyone could be so cruel to another human being," Mohamad Osman said.

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