



The shelter that shone in the distance

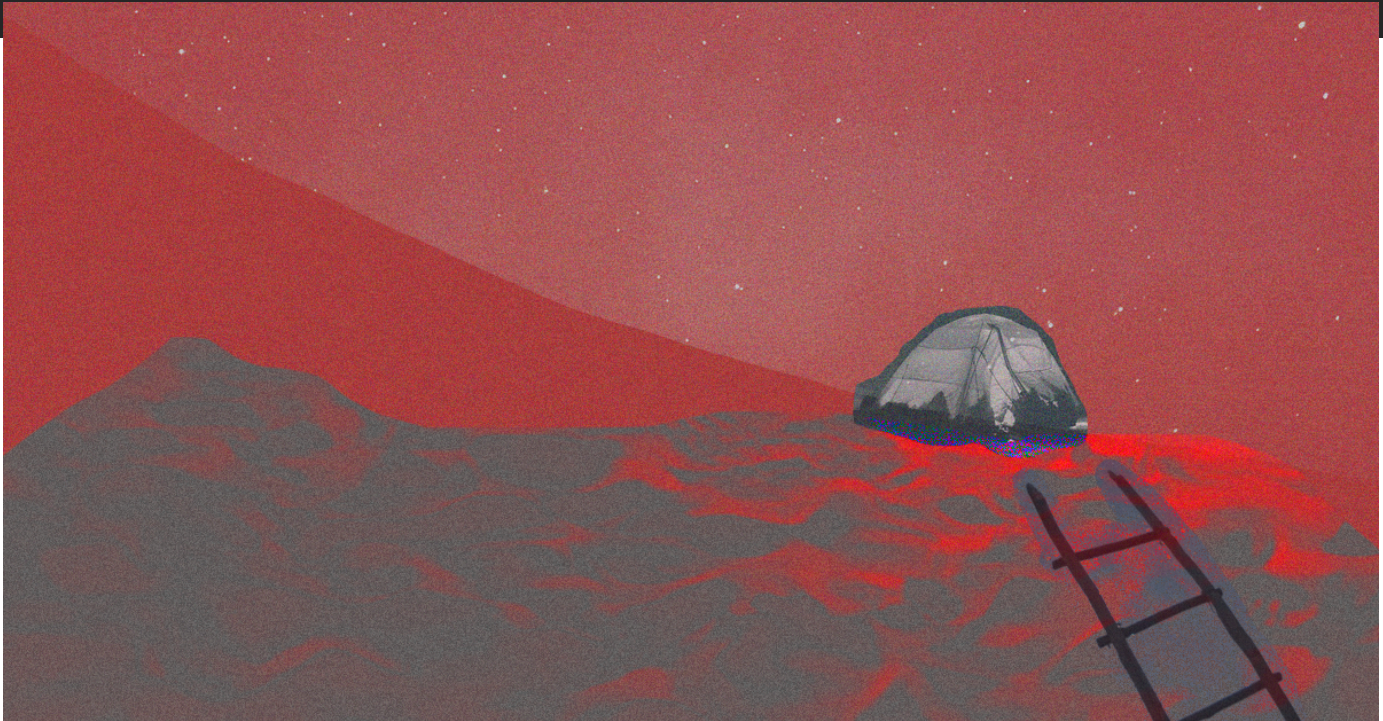
June 12, 2026, Delivering for people in an evolving humanitarian landscape / Identity / Migration / Stories

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Mamuch Bey

Poet, Spoken Word Artist and
Documentary Filmmaker



For the world's more than 120 million forcibly displaced people, the idea of refuge is not an abstraction – it is a horizon, an act of imagination, and sometimes the only thing that keeps hope alive. Yet as displacement becomes more protracted, more politicized, and more invisible to public attention, the language of solidarity risks being hollowed out. World Refugee Day, marked each year on 20 June, is a moment to resist that hollowing – to insist that the dignity and rights of displaced people are not seasonal concerns, and that solidarity is not a sentiment but a practice, one with concrete legal and humanitarian frameworks.

In this post, the fourth in our ongoing series “[Delivering for people in an evolving humanitarian landscape](#),” we depart from our usual analytical format to share a poem. Written by Mamuch Bey, “the shelter that shone in the distance” offers what legal and policy language often cannot: an interior account of displacement, the longing for protection, and what it means to reach – or fail to reach – safety. Timed to this year’s World Refugee Day theme of solidarity with refugees, and its call to uphold dignity and stand up for the rights of displaced people, the poem is a reminder that behind every case, every crossing, and every camp is a person who once looked toward a shelter they hoped would hold them.

ICRC Humanitarian Law & Policy Blog · The shelter that shone in the distance | Written and Performed by Mamuch Bey

The shelter that shone in the distance

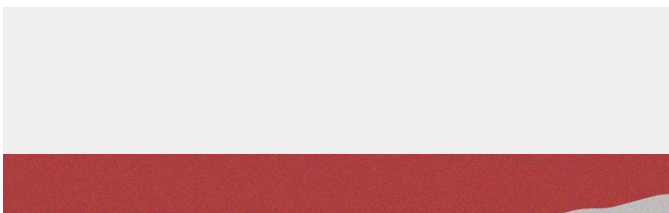
We left home to meet the sun in the distance.
The wind whispered which way to go,
as the earth marked steps before us for assurance.
We believed that home wasn't only where we came from,
but also any place that could keep us
and not bend our spines into questions.
As the ground measured
the weight of each step,
it also recorded our thoughts and wishes,
thus beholding us to a shelter shining in the distance.
Our arrival was met with a type of grand,
the kind that would remind a beggar of his royal rights.
We slept under iron castles that didn't
pierce the sky, and protected by plastic tents,
fragile and thin as the skin of our spine.
For years we built strongholds,
enough for minds that had learned to keep less,
made of bricks, each a memory

out of a mixture of mud and sweat.
But while this happened,
the world was slowly breaking bread,
portioning it for each family as it decided
those who must turn their stomachs
into heads, and hunger itself into health.
They made steak for each ceremony,
as they signed families back into survival,
forgetting the reality, that barely made us,
the bargain with the last breath,
before our arrival,
Our lives have become theater for fancy pens
that script any scene deserving of a reaction,
of applause,
that now bends our spines into questions.
Tell me about the silence
initially made for hope
but instead gave death more purpose.
Tell me,
about the reception
that slowly starves your dreams,
making you a stranger to your own tears,
and a culprit of existence
Tell me,
because if only those fancy pens could speak,
I'm sure one would tell you
"I can afford a meal"

— Mamuch Bey | Notes From the In-Between – Issue 003

Tags: human rights, humanitarian, humanitarian principles, identity, migration, poem, storytelling, world refugee day

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