

**PLACE**

Cox's Bazar

**DATE**

14 December 2023

## ROHINGYA STORYTELLERS WIN PRESTIGIOUS 2023 NANSEN REFUGEE AWARD



- *Four talented Rohingya photographers living in Bangladesh have received the 2023 Nansen Award.*
- *The photographers and storytellers were recognized for their work telling the stories of their fellow Rohingya, a stateless minority from Myanmar.*
- *The Nansen Award honors individuals, groups and organizations who go above and beyond the call of duty to protect refugees.*

Four Rohingya refugees living in Cox's Bazar have been jointly recognized as the 2023 regional winners for Asia and the Pacific of the [UNHCR Nansen Refugee Award](#).

The storytellers – one of whom was born in Kutupalong camp to refugee parents, while the other three were forced to flee their country and find safety and shelter in Bangladesh in 2017 – find and tell stories from their community by using their smartphones and cameras, sharing the documented stories on social media.

By portraying the lives of their fellow refugees truthfully and with empathy, **Abdullah Habib**, **Sahat Zia Hero**, **Salim Khan** and **Shahida Win** encourage people around the world to learn about the Rohingya communities through the eyes of Rohingya refugees themselves. "Through my lens, I try to capture the strength and courage of Rohingya refugees, illuminating our stories to the world," Salim says.

"There are so many stories to tell here," Sumbul Rizvi, UNHCR Representative in Bangladesh says. "Stories of hope, love, loss and longing for a life back home in Myanmar. The extraordinary images that these four storytellers share with the world provide a fascinating window into the world of the Rohingya, a view that might otherwise never be seen outside these camps."

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Their hope is to eventually bring about change for the Rohingya who remain displaced in Bangladesh. "We don't want to be a forgotten community," says Zia. "I want people around the world to see the Rohingya people as human beings, like everyone else." Abdullah adds: "Through these narratives, we try to amplify the voice of Rohingya, building a bridge to connect the outer world."

The four had their images published in international media, contributed to photography magazines or exhibitions, and gained thousands of followers on social media. In addition to amplifying Rohingya voices through their own work, they also conduct workshops to train others. They have expanded the community of refugee storytellers able to use and understand film, photography, and poetry to express themselves and share crucial information on public health and how to respond to the fires and floods that regularly affect the camp. "Rohingya women are more vulnerable in my community," Shahida underlines. "I want to be their voice, to share their stories through my lens and to describe their feelings through my poetry lines".

Established in 1954, the [UNHCR Nansen Refugee Award](#) honors individuals, groups and organizations who go above and beyond the call of duty to protect refugees, as well as internally displaced and stateless people. Over the years, more than 60 individuals, groups and organizations have received the Award for their extraordinary service and outstanding work for people forced to flee their homes. Since 2017, Regional Winners have also been recognized for their humanitarian efforts.

The awards were presented at a ceremony in Geneva on 13 December at the [Global Refugee Forum 2023](#). In their absence, a recorded message from the four winners was played during the event. The four received a certificate of recognition for their outstanding service and dedication, and while there is no direct financial reward, their humanitarian programmes and outreach work in the camps will be further supported and strengthened.

**QUOTES:**

- *Abdullah Habib – photographer, filmmaker and Nansen Award winner 2023: "We lost everything, even our country."*
- *Mohammed Salim Khan – photographer and Nansen Award winner 2023: "My aim is to document the challenges we face, and to tell stories that benefit my community."*
- *Sahat Zia Hero – photographer and Nansen Award winner 2023: "We don't want to be a forgotten community. I want people around the world to see the Rohingya people as human beings, like everyone else."*
- *Shahida Win – photographer, poet and Nansen Award winner 2023: "If I do not convey these messages to the outer world, who will do it?"*

**NOTE TO EDITORS****About UNHCR**

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, is a global organization dedicated to saving lives, protecting rights and building a better future for people forced to flee their homes because of conflict and persecution.

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In Bangladesh, UNHCR provides life-saving assistance and shelter to nearly one million Rohingya refugees who fled their homeland of Myanmar due to violence, persecution and human rights violations.

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REFUGEE AWARD****Multimedia assets**

- [B-Roll](#)
- Video - Meet the Nansen Winners:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XiG4ZrEB6jg>

**About the winners**

- **Abdullah**, 29, fled Myanmar in 2017. A photographer and documentary filmmaker, he was a recipient of the inaugural International Art Contest for Minority Artists in 2022.
- **Zia**, 29, fled Myanmar in 2017. He is a documentary photographer, photography teacher, and the founder and editor of Rohingyaatographer Magazine.
- **Salim**, 31, was born in Kutupalong to parents who had fled earlier violence in Myanmar. He is a photographer, volunteer firefighter, and disaster emergency trainer.
- **Shahida**, 27, fled Myanmar in 2017. She is a photographer and poet whose storytelling focuses on women's experiences and female empowerment. In 2023, she performed her poetry at the annual Dhaka Lit Fest in the Bangladeshi capital.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION AND SCHEDULE INTERVIEWS, PLEASE CONTACT:**Mostafa Mohammad Sazzad Hossain; [hossaimo@unhcr.org](mailto:hossaimo@unhcr.org); +880 131 304 6459