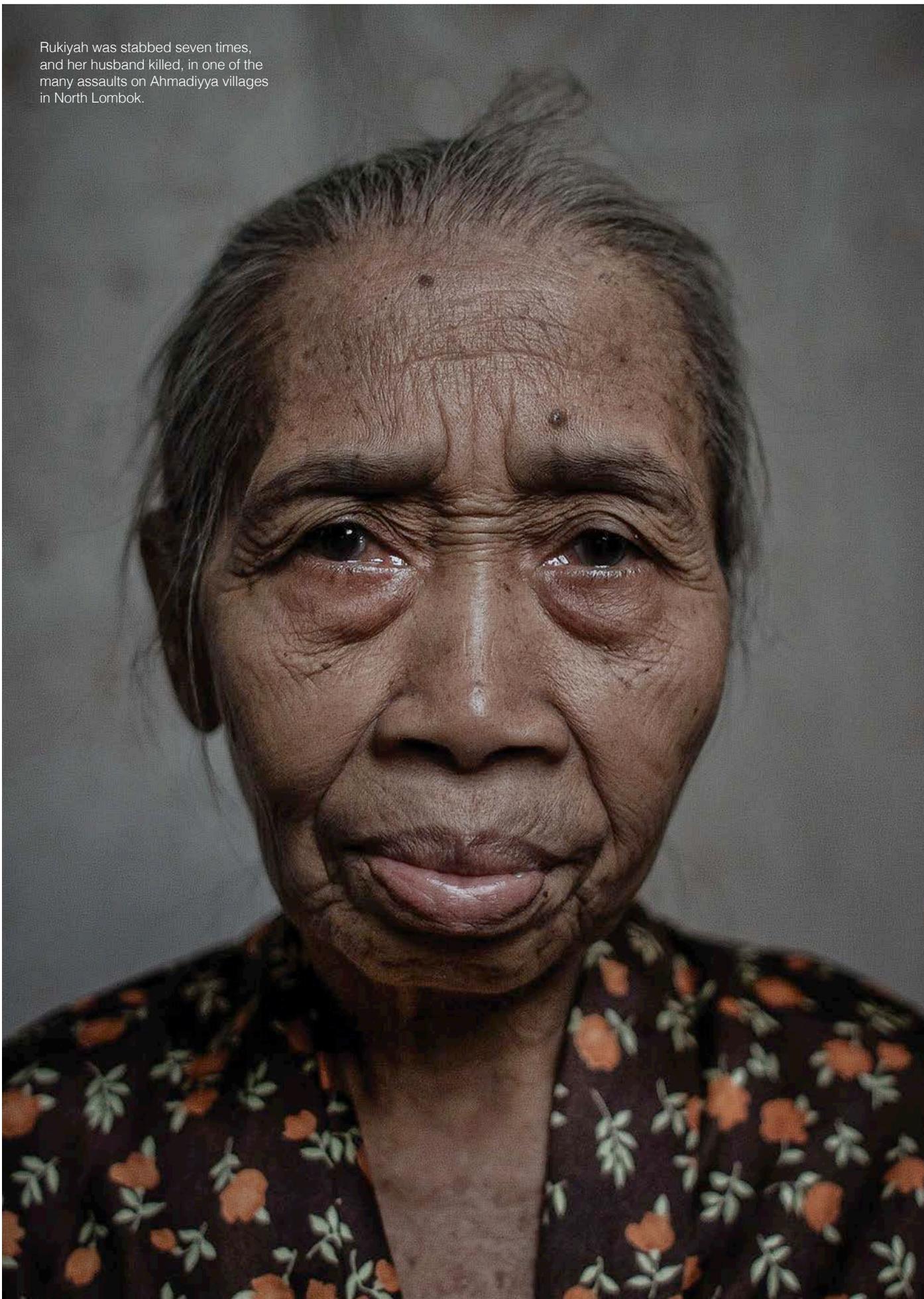


Rukiyah was stabbed seven times, and her husband killed, in one of the many assaults on Ahmadiyya villages in North Lombok.



## HUMAN RIGHTS

*For five years photographer DWLANTO WIBOWO has documented the plight of a small religious minority in Indonesia, trapped 'in transit' after being forced from their homes almost a decade ago.*

# Transito: Refugees in their Own Land

*By Richard Walker and Dwianto Wibowo*

There are few who know about the plight of the Ahmadiyya, who are persecuted in their home countries for their religious beliefs. Fewer still know about those Ahmadiyya displaced from their traditional villages in Lombok, Indonesia, and now living in poverty in the 'Wisma Transito' shelter. But photographer Dwianto Wibowo has been working for three years to document the situation of the residents of Transito and their ongoing struggle for a safe future.

The Ahmadiyya are a religious group who consider themselves Muslims. However, many mainstream Muslim groups reject Ahmadi beliefs and consider them outside accepted Islamic practices. Some go so far as calling them heretical.

For this reason Ahmadiyyas have faced persecution around the world since the movement's inception in the late 19th century, and it was religious persecution that forced the current residents of Transito out of their homes and into the camp.

On 4 February 2006, a local religious leader incited people to attack houses belonging to Ahmadiyya in the small village of Ketapang. While this was not the first attack, it was one of the worst. The mob carried machetes, threw stones at residents and set fire to houses. Many houses were burned, their occupants forced from the village and all their property destroyed or stolen. Dozens of police were present, but did little to intervene. The families fled to a makeshift shelter in Mataram, which became the Wisma Transito.

Around 34 Ahmadiyya families are now facing an uncertain future in Transito. Until recently the Ahmadiis were living in severe poverty. However, while life is by no means easy, Dwianto says there have been some improvements in the camp recently.

Electricity and water supplies, which were often cut by the authorities, have been largely restored, and some Transito residents have started farming on land belonging to their relatives, although the threat of persecution and violence is ever-present.

This small group of Ahmadiyya are forgotten and alone. Without the efforts of people like Dwianto Wibowo, their plight may have gone entirely unreported. But for the people in the camp, having their story heard is not enough. Despite numerous attempts to seek a resolution with local authorities, they remain in limbo and their hopes are fading. "To be honest, we can't stand anymore to live in [the] camp", says resident Bashirudin. "Initially, we asked for replacement of assets to the state and justice for the incidents; now we just hope for freedom and security".

For now, the residents of Wisma Transito are safe, as long as they remain inside the confines of the camp. Hope for the restoration of a peaceful and free life remains, but no one can say when this hope might be realised, and the immediate future of the residents is uncertain. Even the name itself seems a cruel joke, as if they are in transit. In reality - at least for now - there is nowhere else for them to go. R



Suhaenah rests next to one of the makeshift rooms of Transit camp.



Hariyani cooks in the emergency kitchen, constructed with woven bamboo and with a wood stove. A few families own a gas or traditional stove and have their own cooking cubicles.



Asisudin shows off his baby pigeon on the streets of Transito camp. Some of the residents entertain themselves with raising pigeons and other hobbies.

# From Little Things Big Things Grow

*Many refugees are resettling in regional areas. SUSAN CUNNINGHAM, facilitator of Families in Cultural Transition writes about refugees in the Riverina.*

**L**eeton is a rural town in the Riverina area of southern NSW, home to a population of 11,000, including around 60 Afghan men, the majority of whom are Hazara.

In Refugee Week 2014, Leeton was declared a Refugee Welcome Zone by the Shire Council, and the story behind the proclamation involves many Leeton residents, including a courageous mayor and a Hazara refugee who has made Leeton his home.

Afghan men have been coming to Leeton since the early 2000s and most have found regular employment in the town's meatworks. They are a small but visible minority in a town steeped in its agricultural roots. Locals had started to engage informally with some of the men, but it was a STARTTS program that helped the men find a new level of trust and friendship in the town.

PHOTO: SMALL RED GIRL

