

Dancing with fire in limbo: the consequences of Myanmar migrants' ambiguous legal status in Thailand

With Dr. Sai Kyi Zin Soe, University of Sydney

Thursday, May 30

10:30 AM – 12:00 PM

409 Tier Building

This presentation explores the challenges faced by Burmese refugees in Thailand, who navigate the precarious circumstances of displacement and legal ambiguity. Drawing on social science research, it examines the drivers of forced migration from Myanmar, including the intensified civil war, persecution of ethnic minorities, and economic hardship. In Thailand, these refugees are officially classified as "illegal migrants," leaving them in a state of limbo without access to essential services and vulnerable to arrest and deportation. Simultaneously, Burmese nationals face pressure to conform to their communities' expectations regarding political activism and in-country revolution. The presentation emphasises the importance of understanding these complex realities through a social science lens to inform holistic, rights-based approaches to development policy and practice. By advocating for legal recognition, refugee empowerment, and research-informed strategies, this presentation highlights the transformative potential of social science in shaping policies that bridge the gap between displacement and belonging, positioning refugees as agents of change.

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