

Permitted to remain

a photo journal zine



Al Siew



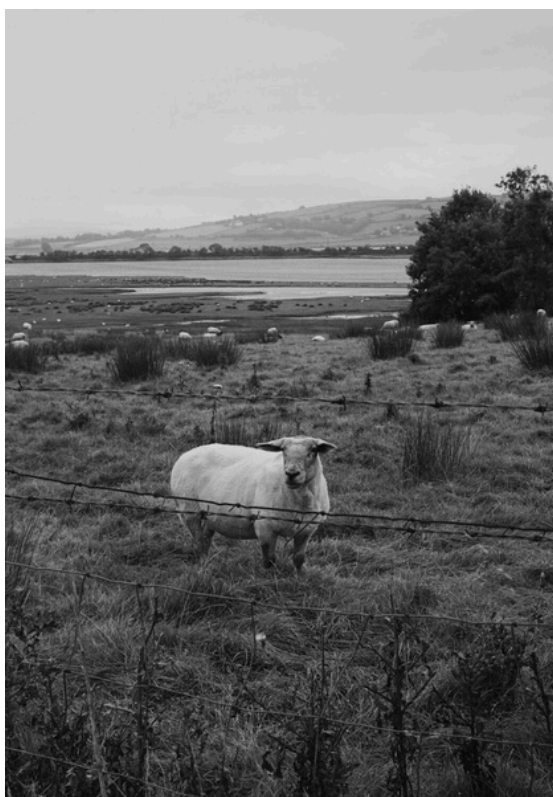


More than a month since we left Malaysia to live in Ireland and still no luck on the housing front.



Since we arrived, we've had a grand total of zero viewings. Houses get snatched up so quickly—every listing disappears as fast as it goes up.





Welcome to Ireland

... where for the price of a single room in Dublin, we could rent a three-bedroom, two-bathroom semi-detached house anywhere else in Ireland. The drawback to that is a lack of public transport. If you're lucky, there's a petrol station nearby that doubles as a diner, post office, and mini-mart. If not, you're stuck with buses that show up once every two hours to take you to the next town.

We're lucky to have friends, who left Malaysia just a couple of years earlier and are kind enough to house us while we search for a place of our own.

They shelter us, give us rooms to work in, drawers to fill but most crucially a proof of address. If it weren't for their generosity, I wouldn't be able to do all the bureaucratic things you need to do to restart your life.





Ghosted

I paid €50 to see a GP in Donegal hoping he could write me a prescription for some meds I required. I had all the necessary medical documents from home to verify that I needed these life-saving meds but Ireland's healthcare system decided they won't recognise these documents. I have been on these meds for the past six years with no trouble. What I was seeking was continued care for which I was glad to pay out of pocket, no cost to the public. But this just wasn't an option for a migrant in Ireland.

In order for them to dispense the meds, I'd have to start from the back of the queue in their system which could mean months, possibly years, before I would even be seen by a specialist. That is out of the question. I do not want to, and cannot, live without these meds. I appealed to the GP and he told me he would "study" my case to see if he could help me skip the queue. I never heard back.

Our options are limited and we are running out of time. My next dose should be in a few months and we don't want to risk waiting any longer for housing or meds to become available. At this point - three months into our time in Ireland - we've only had one viewing and it was for a tiny one-bedroom flat in Waterford, two and a half hours away from Dublin. We immediately agreed to it but then were ghosted by the landlady.



Some days it feels as if
I've traded in one trauma
for another. The rising
living, housing, and
energy costs coupled with
the inaccessible
healthcare make me
wonder if there is no
place for me in this world
that I can breathe easy.





Maybe the world is your
oyster but life is a
compartment plate and
you have to choose which
freedoms to take and
which to sacrifice.



Moving on

I spent years preparing for a life in Ireland—poring over her history, politics, culture; devouring books, films, music; developing a taste for Guinness, and even attempting Irish on Duolingo.

Yet, Ireland's healthcare bureaucracy does not reflect the country's values. Despite how deeply I feel about Ireland, her people, and the time I cherished living just over the border from Derry, the love was not reciprocated.

The Irish are, without a doubt, some of the loveliest people I've met outside of home. But I can't remain in a place that ignores my pleas and would rather see me suffer than provide a simple piece of paper granting me the right to live.

It's heartbreaking that I couldn't truly call Ireland my own. Anywhere else will always feel like a second choice, but at least I might have a shot at a dignified life.







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Chronicle of an attempt
at migration to Ireland.

alsiew.com

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Al is a communications specialist currently based in Malta. Before that, he lived in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia where he founded a barbershop with a focus on inclusive barbering. This is his second zine.