Kutupalong is the largest official refugee camp in the Cox's Bazar area. It was home to 13,901 refugees before the latest surge. Another 99,705 people lived in two nearby makeshift camps. In this satellite image, taken May 26, the green, hilly areas around the camps are relatively unoccupied. Three months later, the flood-prone, southern tip of Bangladesh is a hostile place for a refugee crisis. Refugees arriving in the extension sites face “inhospitable, hilly terrain with insufficient drainage and little or no road access,” said the IOM, which coordinates management of the sites. Refugees avoid settling on flat areas that can easily flood and build their makeshift bamboo and tarpaulin shelters on steep slopes.

Based on ethnographic fieldwork among Burundian refugees living clandestinely in Nairobi and living in a refugee camp in Tanzania, the article argues that displacement can be about staying out of place in order to find a place in the world in the future. I suggest that the term displacement describes this sense of not only being out of place but also being en route to a future. Burundians in the camp and the city are doing their best to remain out of place, in transition between a lost past and a future yet to come, and the temporary nature of their sojourn is maintained in everyday practices. Such everyday practices are policed by powerful actors in the camp and are ingrained in practices of self-discipline in Nairobi. Comparing the two settings demonstrates that remaining out of place can take on different forms, according to context.