

# Hotel Waria

By Giorgio Taraschi/Echo





Traditionally a target of harassment and intimidation in the world's most populous Muslim country, transgenders in Indonesia – also called “waria”, a term that combines the Indonesian for woman (wanita) and the word for man (pria) – have lately been fighting for better acceptance, thanks to the work of some trail-blazing activists who have themselves endured decades of hardship. After seeing many colleagues fall victims to AIDS and other fatal diseases, “Mami” Joyce now takes care of 20 young transgender sex workers who are living with her as if in a big family. “Mami” Yuli, a prominent human rights campaigner, has set up a shelter for elderly transgenders, partly funded by a network of churches and a government that until three years ago still deemed them “mentally ill”. Also thanks to their efforts, there are signs that the future is getting brighter for this marginalized community, which activists estimate to be at least 3 million-strong in Indonesia. But much still needs to be done, and the threats by recently-emboldened Islamic radicals show that any step towards more tolerance can meet fierce resistance.

















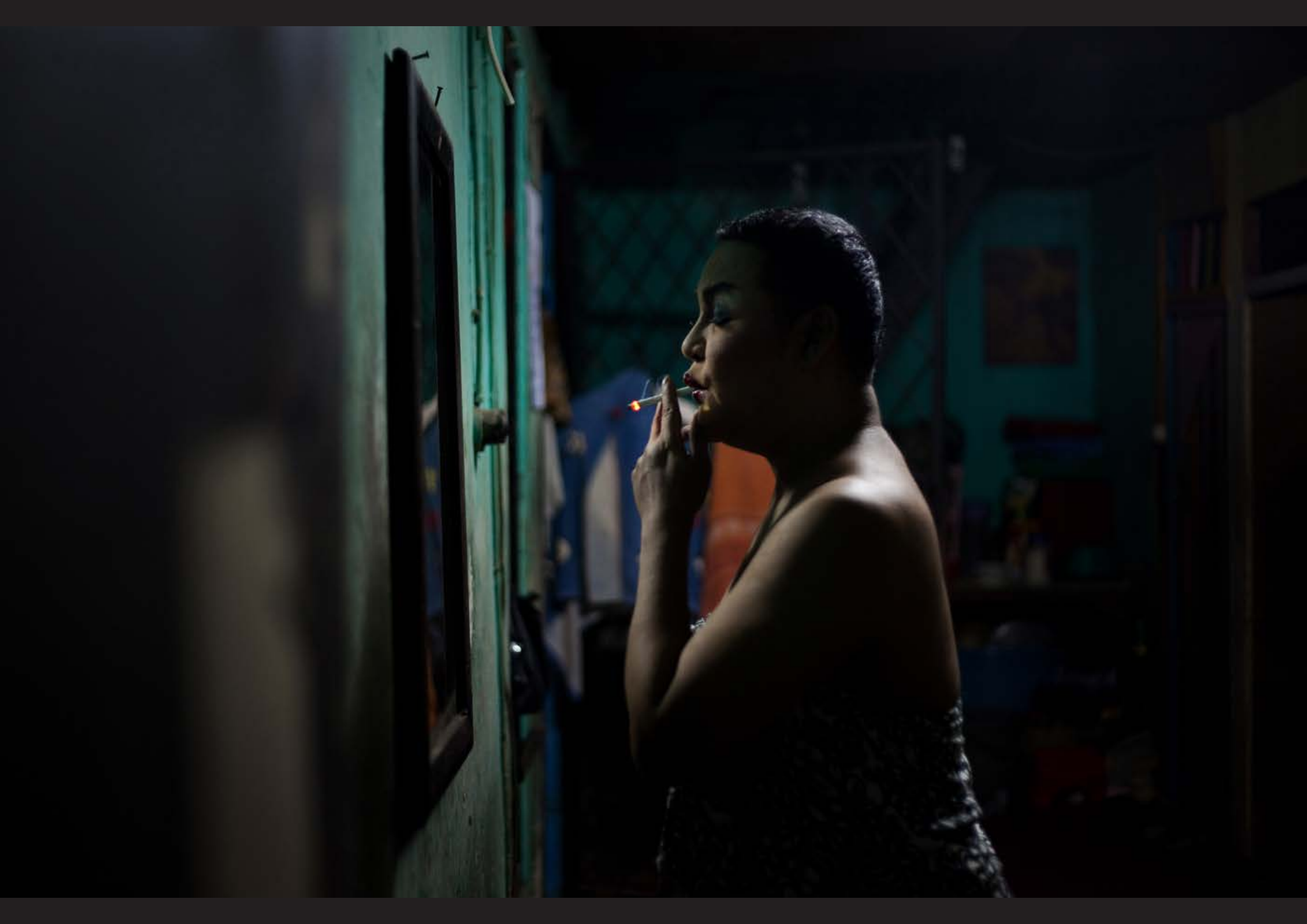


















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