



Email Rachel

@Rachel_Smalley

Rachel Smalley

Rachel Smalley is a radio host for Newstalk ZB and TV host for TVNZ's Sunday and Q&A programmes.

The Forgotten Millions: Inspiration from Irish peace

We need you to help The Forgotten Millions. The Herald and World Vision are running a major campaign to raise funds and help the millions of children left homeless by war in Syria. With your help we can make a difference to the children and their families in desperate need throughout this region.



Emanuel Youkhana, leader of Assyrian Christians in Northern Iraq, has opened his church to those fleeing Isis. Photo / Jo Currie, World Vision

If religion is part of the problem, writes Rachel Smalley, it could be part of the solution.

FAQ: WHAT IS THE FORGOTTEN MILLIONS CAMPAIGN?

I first met Reverend Harold Good eight years ago in Belfast, Northern Ireland.

He was a Methodist minister, something of a black sheep in Northern Ireland, but that's why the IRA liked him.

Two years earlier, they had chosen him to witness the decommissioning of their weapons at a secret location. It was a poignant, delicate and fascinating moment in Northern Ireland's Peace Process.

Here was a man of God standing between warring Catholics and Protestants at great risk to his own life.

Not everyone wanted peace, and a bomb or a bullet could have killed him at any moment.

"What made you do it?" I asked him as we sat together in a pew at his church.

"I was doing what I could to bring peace to this land," he said.

Rev Good had always preached peace. Throughout the Troubles he had used his church to shelter families from the bullets and flying rocks of rioting loyalists and republicans.

"The way I saw it was that religion was part of Northern Ireland's problem, so religion had to be part of the solution too."

Many years later, I recall his words as I am sitting in Iraqi-Kurdistan. The Archimandrite Emanuel Youkhana, the leader of Assyrian Christians in Northern Iraq, is sitting opposite me. He too has opened the doors of his church to shelter Yazidis and Muslims who are fleeing Isis.

"I am trying to deal with the outcome of a major crisis and when it comes to saving lives, you do what you can."

I ask him what he needs and he says "understanding, empathy and engagement".

The crisis requires a global solution he says. The Middle East can't solve this problem on its own.

"Technology has made our world very small. Conflicts and ideologies spread because of the internet. Oceans no longer divide us.

"New Zealand, Australia and Iraq? We are all neighbours now. I am sorry for this, but we now live in the same small village."

But while the world is becoming closer, he says, when it comes to values people have never been more divided.

"What is the human cost of all this? The world is turning a blind eye to the human rights of these people. Girls have been raped, women and children are being sold in markets. Where is the outrage?"

THE FORGOTTEN MILLIONS

Children of the Syrian Crisis



Together with World Vision, we are calling on Kiwis to support The Forgotten Millions campaign.

More than 5.6 million children are in desperate need of humanitarian assistance as the result of the Syrian crisis.

With your help we hope to raise money to provide them with food, shelter and other basic necessities of life.

Donations so far:

\$229,604

I ask him what he means by global solution and he becomes animated, throwing his hands in the air and looking skyward.

I quote Rev Good's line and suggest that if religion is part of the problem, should it also be part of the solution?

He nods.

"I am a man of faith but I am a realist too. Religion is not a museum. It cannot become close-minded. Religion has to be dynamic, it has to be a living, evolving body."

He continues to travel into Isis-occupied areas of Iraq to reach civilians who are trapped by the fighting. If he is caught by Isis, there is little doubt he will be killed.

I ask him if it is worth risking his life for. "Yes. Of course."

And what if he is captured?

"I would look the Isis fighter in the eyes and tell him I will keep him in my prayers. And I would tell him that he is persecuting his God by doing these crimes in his name.

"You cannot slaughter people in God's name."

I suggest that would almost certainly cost him his life.

"Yes. I know this," he says.

He is quiet for a time and then I ask him what he prays for.

"When I pray, I pray for peace but I don't ask to lighten our burden. I ask for help to strengthen our shoulders."

He apologises and tells me he has to go. It is late and he is very tired.

"You have come all the way from New Zealand for a conflict. Next time, perhaps you can come as a tourist," he laughs.

And then his face becomes serious again as I stand to leave.

"We cannot give up on this. Do you understand me?"

I nod.

"We may be helpless but we are never hopeless," he says. "There is always hope."

Syria campaign

•**Goal:** To raise funds to support 12 million Syrians, including 5.6 million children, who have fled their homes to other parts of Syria and neighbouring countries since the Syrian civil war began four years ago.

•**Partners:** The *New Zealand Herald*, broadcaster Rachel Smalley and World Vision, one of 21 non-government organisations (NGOs) working in a United Nations-led coalition in Syria and surrounding countries.

•**The need:** The 21 NGOs said last week they needed US\$8.4 billion (\$11.4 billion) to respond to the crisis.

How can I make a donation?

You can make online donations, phone donations and offline donations.

[MAKE AN ONLINE DONATION HERE](#)

Phone donations can be made on **0800 90 5000**.

Offline donations can be made by printing off the form below and filling it out ([app users tap here](#)). Or look in the print edition of the *Herald*.



World Vision



My gift is \$

1. Cheque

Please find enclosed a: cheque (made payable to World Vision)

Or

2. Credit card

Please debit this amount to my credit card: Visa Mastercard

Diners Amex

Card number:

Expiry date: /

Name on card:

Signature:

Donations of \$5 or more are tax deductible. Registered charity CC25984

For tax receipt purposes please provide:

Full name:

Address:

Postcode: Phone:

I would like to receive more information about World Vision NZ

Send the completed form to: **World Vision New Zealand**
Private Bag 92078, Victoria St West, Auckland 1142

Rachel Smalley is a host on Newstalk ZB.

- NZ Herald

© Copyright 2015, APN New Zealand Limited