



Denis Balibouse/Reuters

The Least We Can Do

GENESIS

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SHORT SYNOPSIS

A small group of women in British Columbia, Canada, are relieved when the Canadian Government votes to bring Yazidi women and girls to Canada as refugees and provide them with comprehensive trauma care for their ‘unimaginable suffering’.

The women are horrified to later discover that the government has not followed through on all its promises. The Yazidi were brought to Canada and then neglected. Trauma services are inadequate, unplanned, and failing. As the group urges the government to keep its promise, they encounter unexpected support along the way.

Directed by Moira Simpson

Produced by Women Refugees Advocacy Project (WRAP)

“They came to destroy us.”

Contact: Chris McDowell wrapforjustice@gmail.com
Documentary 52 min., English, Canada, Copyright 2020

Film Synopsis

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The Least We Can Do follows a small group of women in British Columbia who are relieved when the Canadian government votes to bring Yazidi women and girls as refugees to Canada and provide them with comprehensive trauma care for their ‘unimaginable suffering’.

The women are horrified to later discover the government has not followed through on all its promises. The Yazidi were brought to Canada and then neglected. Trauma services are inadequate, unplanned, and failing. As the group urges the government to keep its promise, they encounter unexpected support along the way.

The women form the Women Refugees Advocacy Project, WRAP, and team up with Rev. Majed El Shafie and Anna-Lee Chiprout of One Free World International. Together, they are committed to supporting the Yazidi women and girls. In a surprise turn of events, Majed brings a Yazidi refugee family, Adiba and her two nieces, to Vancouver to speak out. Local Yazidi people who are survivors of a previous genocide appear at the first public event.

Collectively, they advocate for the Yazidi women and girl refugees by speaking out publicly and bringing a trauma care petition to the Canadian Parliament in Ottawa.

The genocide survivors also receive outspoken support from Member of Parliament, Jenny Kwan, and Senator Mobina Jaffer, who draw attention to the extreme suffering of the Yazidi women and girls.

Background

The Least We Can Do tells the story of Canada’s response to the Yazidi genocide, the decision to bring Yazidi women and girl survivors to Canada as refugees, and the failure to provide them with promised trauma care. The film chronicles the activism of a small group of BC women who organize Canadians across the country to come together to urge the government to keep its promise.



Featured Characters

The story is told through the eyes of passionate Canadians, including:

A group of women in BC (WRAP) whose horror at reading about the victimization of the Yazidi motivates them to fight for comprehensive trauma care.

Adiba, a Yazidi survivor of ISIS' enslavement, brought to Canada from a refugee camp in Iraq, comes to Vancouver to speak.

Rev. Majed El Shafie, who was tortured as a young man for his religious beliefs, is a notable Yazidi advocate and the founder of One Free World International, an organization advocating on behalf of persecuted religious minorities.

MP Jenny Kwan and Senator Mobina Jaffer engage with the federal government to act on behalf of the Yazidi refugees.

Members of a local Yazidi family living in Canada

Many years ago they arrived as refugees themselves, having survived a previous genocide against their people.



Rev. Majed El Shafie, Founder
One Free World International



Adiba, Dilkhaz and MP Jenny Kwan



Women Refugees Advocacy Project

Locations / News and Photographs

The action in the film takes place in Vancouver and Ottawa, and is illuminated through text and photographs from the war in Northern Iraq and news stories in Canada, US, Germany and the Middle East.

Permissions obtained from copyright holders for text and photographs as required.

Timeline

August 3, 2014

The genocidal attacks by ISIS against the Yazidi begin in Northern Iraq. Many are murdered, the men are shot, or beheaded, older women murdered, boys forced into ISIS training camps, and thousands of women and girls enslaved to be sold, raped, and tortured.

October 25, 2016

In the House of Commons, Members of Parliament voted unanimously to bring 1,200 Yazidi refugees to Canada.

July 7, 2018

The Women Refugees Advocacy Project (WRAP) launches a Yazidi trauma care petition after discovering through news articles that Canada was not providing promised comprehensive trauma care for the Yazidi refugees. Instead, the government chose to push the 'workload' onto existing social services already overwhelmed by the influx of thousands of Syrian refugees, and entirely unprepared to help female victims of genocide.

September 26-29, 2018

Rev. Majed El Shafie comes to Vancouver, bringing with him a Yazidi family. The family includes the courageous young woman Adiba, a new refugee to Canada and survivor of ISIS torture who has chosen to speak out. Adiba is accompanied by her two nieces, also survivors.

October 29, 2018

The Yazidi trauma care petition is delivered to MP Jenny Kwan in Ottawa by Adiba and Yazidi women living in British Columbia (survivors of a previous genocide), and a WRAP representative, Chris McDowell. A press conference is held in the Parliamentary Press Gallery by Jenny Kwan, providing a platform for Adiba and the other Yazidi women to describe the horrors of the genocide and urge the government to act – to provide trauma care and to bring more Yazidi refugees to Canada.

Epilogue

- The Yazidi trauma care petition was tabled, but no action has been taken.
- 360,000 Yazidi are living in refugee camps throughout the Middle East.
- Over 3,000 Yazidi women and children are still missing.
- ISIS was "defeated," and yet they continue to escape justice and commit war crimes in Syria and Iraq.
- Yazidi survivor Nadia Murad won the Nobel Peace Prize for her ongoing effort to end the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war.
- Adiba carries on speaking out for Yazidi survivors.
- Rev. Majed El Shafie and One Free World International are delivering aid to Yazidi refugees in Northern Iraq and Syria.
- The WRAP women contributed to making this film and continue to advocate for trauma care.

July 2020 Documentary film *The Least We Can Do* is completed.

Director's Bio

MOIRA SIMPSON

Moira Simpson's work as an award-winning freelance director, cinematographer and editor of documentaries spans more than 40 years and encompasses many National Film Board of Canada, independent and television docs.

Her work in film and video has always been informed by a passionate belief that film can be a powerful impetus for social justice.

For more details:

<http://womenrefugeesadvocacyproject.ca/documentary/>

Moira Simpson IMDB (Internet Movie Database)

<https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0801129/>



Credits

Music: BRUCE RUDELL

Sound Design & Mix: CHRIS MCLAREN

Colour Correction and Mastering: DEVAN SCOTT, MOVING IMAGE AGENCY

Produced by the members of the WOMEN REFUGEES ADVOCACY PROJECT

Christine McDowell, Peggy Thompson, Elizabeth Walker, Barbara Shuman, Leslie Timmins,
Dr. Leora Kuttner, Barbara Etches, Crystal Verge, and Moira Simpson.

Director, Cinematographer, Location Sound and Editor: MOIRA SIMPSON

Documentary trailer

The Least We Can Do trailer, 2.5 minutes

<https://vimeo.com/446929331>

For more information

Women Refugees Advocacy Project:

<http://womenrefugeesadvocacyproject.ca>

German model of Yazidi trauma care:

<http://womenrefugeesadvocacyproject.ca/trauma-care/>

Acknowledgements:

<http://womenrefugeesadvocacyproject.ca/thank-you/>