

SE News
HD **Forrest fights slavery**
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Australian **mining billionaire** unites world's religious leaders to try to free 30 **million** slaves

The terrified screams of a traumatised sex-trafficked teenager, witnessed by an Australian **billionaire**, have led to a history-making alliance between three of the world's major religions to end slavery.

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At the Vatican on Monday, West Australian **iron-ore** magnate Andrew Forrest (right) launched the Global Freedom Network – a group led by Pope, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Grand Imam of al-Azhar in Egypt.

The network aims to free the world's estimated 30 **million** slaves, and has set itself specific, ambitious targets to achieve this.

It has taken almost a year of negotiation to pull together. However, its roots, Mr Forrest told Fairfax Media in Rome, lie in an experience that deeply shook him, and changed his business practice and his life.

"This isn't something I've tripped over; it's something I got dragged into," the tycoon said.

Five years ago his daughter Grace, aged 15, volunteered at an orphanage in Nepal – but then found out that the children she had been looking after had been "groomed" for sex work.

"It was horrible for [Grace]," Mr Forrest said. He set up a team to find out what happened: the children had been trafficked via India into the Middle East.

Mr Forrest travelled to Asia and met some of the victims.

"There was one kid there [from Kathmandu] who could only say she had been sent to a land where the men wore long dresses," he said.

Her ordeal began when she was only nine, and three years later she was put on a plane back to India. "She hadn't spoken for several months. She gave her story and from that point on she would only rock on her bed and whimper," Mr Forrest said.

"When I walked through the little columns of beds to this kid, she was wailing at the back and just rocking from side to side. The screams she let out when she saw an approaching male, and the horror and revulsion and the terror on her little face will be stuck with (my wife) Nicola and I forever."

Mr Forrest started researching the slave industry. He commanded a review of all his supply chains at Fortescue and required affidavits of all suppliers that they had reviewed their own supply chains, and to his disgust found that "three or four had trouble signing that affidavit".

He felt "really awful". It led him to resign as chief executive of Fortescue, taking a position as non-executive director, and now he spends most of his time in philanthropic causes.

"It all spins off that experience really - to live a useful life you've actually got to help others."

In 2010 he started building Walk Free Foundation, which launched in 2012. Last year it published a Global Slavery Index, identifying the countries where the problem is most acute.

He is also pushing corporations to clean their supply chains.

"You're up against defensive chief executive and chairmanship behaviour," he said.

At a lunch of executives of major corporations chaired by Bill Clinton last year, Mr Forrest forced most of them to admit they had slavery in their supply chains.

"Then we had a really constructive conversation," Mr Forrest said, after they realised their culpability and the risk to their public image.

But there was a gap that frustrated him.

"Wherever we've gone around the world we've found quite significant gaps: the holy texts, no matter which one you turn to, has ambiguity in it around slavery," he said.

"That, we knew, was being used as justification by slavers all over the world."

Last year he found an opportunity to close that gap. A meeting of **mining** executives and charities last year at the Vatican (Forrest is Christian, though not Catholic) gave him a chance to engage with the Church on the topic.

Pope Francis has identified slavery as one of the evils he is most keen to combat: in his first Easter message last year he said human trafficking was a threat to peace and he instructed the Vatican's Pontifical Academy of Sciences to focus on the issue.

"He is of the view that it is one of the worst scourges of humanity," Mr Forrest said.

Mr Forrest proposed an alliance between multiple faiths and his Walk Free Foundation. He got the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, on board, and then flew to Cairo and recruited the grand imam of al-Azhar, Ahmed al-Tayyeb, one of the highest scholarly authorities in Sunni Islam.

In a major coup for the nascent Global Freedom Network, Sheikh Tayyeb agreed to join the group and issue a fatwa, or religious ruling, officially published on Monday. It declares that "the worst type of human trafficking [is] the kidnapping of women and girls", prohibits "modern-day slavery in all of its types", and commits al-Azhar to an official study, which will "clearly explain the position of Islam on slavery".

"This was just unbelievable," Mr Forrest said. "There has never been an operating agreement between [Catholic and Islamic institutions] ever in history."

This joint venture between the faiths will be a "major operating **company**", Mr Forrest pledges.

The GFN's aims include:

- All global faiths to remove any slavery-related organisations from their supply chains and investments.
- 162 governments and 30 heads of state to endorse the GFN by the end of 2014.
- Political leaders to slavery-proof government supply chains.
- The G20 to adopt a new anti-slavery and human trafficking initiative.
- 50 multinational businesses to commit to "slavery-proofing" their supply chains.

It defines slavery broadly, including sex trafficking, forced labour and forced marriage.

"When I heard the news [that all parties had agreed to the venture] I have to admit I became emotional, this is going to change everything," Mr Forrest said.

He met the Pope privately last month once, and won't reveal the details, but says: "The Pope wants slavery beaten or mortally wounded so it will never recover, by 2020."

The group will set a budget, raised from big donors to a global fund to be launched at Davos next year, to help governments close the gap between policy and enforcement, to set up strategies and put them into action.

"This is set up like a high-achieving, measurement-driven, totally target-oriented **company**," Mr Forrest said. "It's like a hard-edged business. We are out to defeat slavery, we are not out to feel good. This is our mission. You see the complete hopelessness in the eyes [of enslaved people]. It's like I'm stuck, I will never get help, I am dirt. Then you know that you can't rest until you free them."

MODERN SLAVERY THE FACTS

29.8 **million** people are in modern slavery globally

10 Countries with greatest prevalence as a percentage of population

- Mauritania
- Haiti
- Pakistan
- India
- Nepal
- Moldova
- Benin
- Cote d'Ivoire
- Gambia
- Gabon

Slave labour contributes to the production of at least 122 goods from 58 countries and generates \$32b profit

SOURCE: GLOBAL SLAVERY INDEX 2013

The 10 nations with the highest incidence of slavery

These countries account for 76% of the total estimate of 29.8 **million** in modern slavery

Pakistan

2,000,000 - 2,200,000

Bonded labour affects men, women and children largely from rural areas who travel to cities to find work, and has been reported in many industries, primarily brick kilns, but also in agriculture, fisheries and **mining**.

Ethiopia

620,000 - 680,000

Domestic workers travelling under illegal private employment agencies are particularly vulnerable as are girls who can be subjected to child marriage.

Nigeria

670,000 - 740,000

An estimated 15.88% of the estimated total 29.6 **million** people in modern slavery are in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Bangladesh

330,000 - 360,000

Large numbers of women and girls are reportedly trafficked to India and Pakistan annually and children, including boys, are exploited and trafficked for sex and labour.

Democratic Republic of Congo

440,000 - 490,000

One of the world's poorest countries, despite a wealth of resources; 90% of men working in mines in eastern DRC are trapped by debt bondage.

India

13,300,000 - 14,700,000

Men, women and children, many enslaved in their own villages by debt bondage or born into slavery, work in construction, textiles, brick-making, mines, fish and prawn processing and hospitality.

Russia

490,000 - 540,000

Migrant workers endure extortion and physical abuse; anecdotal evidence suggests that forced labour camps still operate in Siberia.

China

2,800,000 - 3,100,000

Severe forced labour in brick kilns in the north; forced labour in modern industries including fashion and computer supply chains.

Myanmar

360,000 - 400,000

Slavery includes reports of deceptive recruitment of women for **sale** as brides in **China**, forced labour of adults on plantations and in industry and forced labour of children in tea shops, home industries and as beggars.

Thailand

450,000 - 500,000

An explosion in global demand for seafood has led to an increased need for cheap migrant labour, including on fishing boats. High numbers of children are exploited, particularly those from ethnic minorities and hill tribes.

SOURCE: THE GLOBAL SLAVERY INDEX 2013

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