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## Sounds like James Bond, but not the least bit funny

**A WELL-FOUNDED FEAR** 8.30pm, SBS: "We will decide who comes into this country and the circumstances under which they come." Just another brick in the wall really – the wall of fear, loathing and prejudice in which real people with desperate needs are reduced to the status of illegal immigrants and enemies likely to stain the velutinous fabric of Australian society.

John Howard's bulldog bravado, allied with a grey and uncharitable mindset within the Department of Immigration, did little to enhance Australia's reputation as a fair, tolerant and hospitable nation. It was a statement that appealed to the culture of panic while affronting benevolence shown towards those in need of hope. Hope likely, in most cases, to be repaid in generations ahead. This important doco follows the footsteps of Phil Glendenning, director of the Edmund Rice Centre, as he tracks the destiny of refugees and persecuted individuals refused entry to Australia because their fears were not deemed sufficiently well-founded to warrant intervention. Individuals unable to satisfy the criteria were rejected

and, in many instances, repatriated to countries that were patently unsafe. More than a few have died or "disappeared". People deemed a nuisance were sent to Syria where they languish in appalling hardship, their dreams and aspirations amputated. But a few have made it to safe havens where they rejoice in the simplest of freedoms – walking their children to school, enjoying the possibility that there really is a future.

Inevitably some will become disenchanted or capitulate to desperate endeavours but what percentage will descend to criminal activity or become a burden on communities that offer them a chance? Tolerance and social justice are crucial to the moral health of our society. Giving a voice to those with none is essential when contemptible things, done in our names by politicians – whose recourse to lies and deliberate disinformation shames us all – are left unresolved. *A Well-Founded Fear* might sound like a James Bond film but it shows the best of us and the worst. Which reaction to injustice comes first? Empathy or anger?