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MT CARSTENSZ FORUM: TRANSCRIPT ACU Art Gallery, 12 December 2015

IZZY BROWN, ANSWERING QUESTIONS AFTER VIEWING OF HER INTERVIEW WITH MUMA YUSEFA ALOMANG

VICTOR LASA So who is going to stop this? How is this going to change? It's one of those questions that remain open. Who is going to listen to Muma Yusefa and do something about it? It's just as well people like Izzy Brown makes the effort to go over there and raise awareness about the situation. So something I would like to ask Izzy: how easy is it to approach the local population and talk about this? How happy are they to talk about it? Is it a difficult topic for them to talk about, or are they happy to talk to foreigners?

IZZY BROWN People have got to a certain point where yes it is dangerous for them to talk to foreigners; it puts their lives at risk. Before I interviewed people, I asked them 'Do you feel comfortable being interviewed, do you feel like your life will be in danger?' The main comment I got from people was 'Our lives are already in danger, we've lost so much already, we are prepared to speak out about what is happening before we lose everything'. I found that quite intense, especially coming back with all this video footage. How should I use it? How would I feel if that person then was attacked by the military because I put it on Youtube. All that kind of thing went over and over in my mind. But the main message from people was that 'Yes, please, we want our stories to be told'. I sat at a house, and all day and all night, people came to me with their stories wanting to be interviewed, and wanting to share their experiences. Even though it was at great risk to themselves, they were wanting the world to know what is happening there

VICTOR LASA It is great risk, because for instance Muma Yusefa, among many other things, was arrested tortured, and interrogated for six weeks in the 1990s for allegedly giving food to Papuan fighters. So that authorities are looking for excuses to actively repress anyone who's trying to talk about the situation. Are there any questions for Izzy?

AUDIENCE Izzy how long ago was that film made, and have you heard of any changes or responses on the ground since?

IZZY BROWN That was made at the start of 2014, and since then we decided to focus the last Freedom Flotilla actions on what was happening in Freeport and try and raise awareness in that way. On the ground in Timika there has been a lot of civil unrest, there have been big protests, big demonstrations for referendums. The military crackdown has been harsh. There's been quite a few people killed there during 1 December independence rallies. There were also twelve students shot a couple of months ago at rallies. So the people's movement there is very strong, and they are taking to the streets, and they are taking a stand but they are faced with military repression constantly.

When I was there I remember the papers saying "Gun fire between rebel groups, two Indonesian soldiers shot" and this kind of stuff. But it was all written with a very pro-Indonesian slant, and it was very hard in Papua to get information. All the internet cafes are owned by Indonesians. There's no access to media at all except what the Indonesians are producing. So to actually find out what's going on inside West Papua while you are there was very difficult. It's actually easier to come back here and access the internet and find out what was happening on the ground over there. But there is a lot of information about Timika online and you can follow the developments. The military ... I think it is three million, or three billion a year from mining subsidies goes to the Indonesian military, and part of their thing I guess to show that they need money for security is to have fights with rebel forces. So a lot of that stuff is staged. They'll go in and burn villages and kill people and call them rebels and ask for a pay rise. So it's really nasty business.

VICTOR LASA Thank you very much Izzy. We'll move to Richard Muggleton, and we'll have more time for questions later. Richard has a very interesting life story, starting in 1944 when he was born. At fifteen he decided to join the Royal Australian Airforce. He was there for seven years when he decided he liked photography more than the Royal Airforce. So he did a four-year Diploma in Art and Design at the Prahran Art College, and after that was employed by the Victorian Plastic Surgery Unit as a clinical photographer. As a photographer he was invited to join the Australia Universities Expedition to Irian Jaya, the Carstensz Glacier, in 1971. That was his first experience, because he went back in 1972-73. So today he's here with the pictures that he made there as a scientific photographer for these exhibitions, that show us how Irian Jaya was before.