

**A LARGE NUMBER OF PHOTO MANIPULATIONS IN
BBC NEWS INDONESIA VIDEO ABOUT
PT. KORINDO IN SOUTH PAPUA**

By: Father Felix Amias MSC

In recent days (early November 2020) a video produced by BBC News Indonesia and its affiliates has circulated, highlighting PT. Korindo's ("Korindo") oil palm plantation activities in South Papua region, specifically in Asiki in Boven Digoel Regency and Mam in Merauke Regency. BBC News Indonesia also published an article in KOMPAS.com (local newspaper) on Thursday, November 12, 2020, presenting several pictures or photos depicting violations of law and human rights. However, I would like to respond and explain what was actually happening in the location through this article.

1. Why am I Telling My Opinion Here?

Here are the reasons I am expressing my standpoint:

- a. I am from Asiki and Getentiri. I was born and raised there, and all my family lives there as well. We also have a forest next to Korindo's operational area, which several untrustworthy companies have tried to lay their fingers on to date.
- b. I experienced difficulties in the past (1960s-1970s), it must be admitted that now there are many new developments that stemming from the contributions of Korindo to the community. These new developments include: employment opportunities, telecommunications networks, schools and hospital – arguably the best in Boven Digoel Regency – that affect community's economic cycle.

Other people may experience financial difficulties and famine during the Coronavirus outbreak, while the people there are still doing just fine (excluding aomw lazy persons). I said that because I lived there recently for four months (July-October), I just went to Jakarta on October 28, 2020 (the end of previous month).

2. Why only Korindo is always under the spotlight?

During the last four months there (July-October 2020), I did not see the activities of Korindo as depicted in the video released by BBC News Indonesia and an article in KOMPAS.com. The question is: Are they old pictures that are kept up to date for certain purposes? Why only Korindo that continues to be highlighted, while there are also other companies residing around Muting and Bupul? The Korean company is not only Korindo, there are also other Korean companies, so why are they not being highlighted?

If it aims to defend the interests of the community on the grounds that the community should not lose the forest and that the forest is the lungs of the world, then all the companies around there should be highlighted as well. If the only one highlighted is PT. Korindo and the other companies are allowed to freely clear land for their plantations, then it is clear that you are not really defending the people but only manipulating the people for your own interests. I say that because the pictures in the video and especially in the article seem manipulative to lead public opinion to believe that Korindo violated the law and human rights.

3. Comments on images in video and article

- a. I have seen that picture of land clearing that shows the bare ground surface since a long time ago (circa 2011). It has now been planted with oil palm and is in production, therefore, there is no new land clearing any more. That was an old image that is constantly being used again and again in propaganda.
- b. There is a photo showing a pile of abandoned mole wood. Korindo has plywood factories that will utilize the wood, but the log pile gives the impression that it is a picture from another place. In January 2020, my friend who works for an NGO in Jakarta and I went to the recently cleared land by PT. Bumi Mitra Mardaya (BMM) between Anggai and Getentiri villages, the location is called WISIBINO. The logs were piled up just like that and many of them have started to rot, apparently this company has run out of working capital, that being the case, they could not continue their operational activities. I still have the picture (which was taken by a drone) and when I compared it with the image in the video and the article released by BBC News Indonesia, it seems similar, the picture was taken from WISIBINO. In order to prevent misinformation like this, it should be stated in which location and when the picture was taken.
- c. The picture of the people inside the shack next to the Digoel River in front of Asiki is not the hamlet and customary rights owner that was kicked out by Korindo. They are people from a neighboring village who had come to live next to Digoel River to raise pigs. The reason I said that is because one of the shack owners is my cousin, Mrs. Yustina Kemon. Mrs. Yustina and her husband live there to raise pigs. Mrs. Yustina's father and my father are biological siblings.
- d. In the opening of the video, you can see a woman dancing in traditional clothes. As an Auyu clan, I can confirm that it is the woman of the Auyu clan because I was able to recognize the traditional clothes and how she danced. Korindo's subsidiary, also known as POP-B, on Auyu customary land is only located in Getentiri, sometimes there were minor problems but they were resolved. Lastly, (in the end of previous year) there was an installation of barrier, but it was resolved. In essence, we, the Auyu clan, have no problem with Korindo because

most of our forests are not part of its concessions, so what do you mean putting an Auyu woman (mama) dancing scene there?

- e. I also read on KOMPAS.com where Wahana Lingkungan Hidup (WALHI) wrote an article about land compensation in Boven Digoel - South Papua amounting IDR 100,000 per hectare. What I know is that there is no term "compensation" but the term known as "land release funds or *tali-asih*". The "compensation" here means as if after being given IDR 100,000, the community has no right to get anything else from the company, this is not the case.

Meanwhile, the "land release funds or *tali-asih*" imply a "bond" between the company and the community to jointly manage the land because the community still has the right to get assistance from the company when the company is operating. The company has a CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) obligation, such as building public facilities, developing plasma plantations for landowners, supporting the children's education of hamlet and customary rights owners and so on. Those are the things that Korindo has been doing to date. Even those who claim to be the hamlet and customary rights owners have a monthly allowance, and I got this information from a reliable source at Korindo (but it is unethical to explain further here).

4. Conclusion

- a. I do not see the video that was released by BBC News Indonesia as a means to stand up for the people, because there are a lot of photo manipulations in it, which also means it was used for personal gain instead.
- b. There are many other companies that are neighbors with Korindo, but why only Korindo has been in the spotlight and criticized while others have not. I see this as something done because of business competition and not purely a way to stand up for the community.

I wrote this because I feel that as a person who comes from there, PT. Korindo has brought us many conveniences. All of you people from outside of Papua just dropped by for a moment then left counterproductive comments, while Korindo and we, the indigenous people, live there for days, months, and years. We are the ones who go through good times and bad there, not you.

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