

## CHAPTER 4 : YOSEPHA ALOMANG, AN AMUNGME WOMAN'S FIGHT AGAINST FREEPORT AND MILITARISATION.

I don't know how many souls have been sacrificed in defending our right to live on our land. Their deaths have not ended the exploitation of Isorei - namely our sacred mountains, the home of our ancestors' spirits - to obtain gold, copper and nickel. The rivers which are a source of our livelihood have been polluted, the forest which is the home of fauna and part of Amungme and Kamoro culture, is being destroyed by the thousands of tons of waste dumped into the environment every day (Alomang, cited in Mote, 1999:12).

### **Introduction**

This chapter will focus on Yosepha Alomang, and the varied strategies she has utilised in her long history of resistance to the Freeport mine, and the militarisation of the area in which she lives. The national and international publicity she has received, is testimony to the effectiveness of her activism in exposing and challenging the brutal impact of Freeport and military violence upon her community. Since November 1999, Yosepha's voice has joined the nationalist chorus, as she sees independence as the only way to achieve her goals.

Born in 1949, Yosepha Alomang is originally from Tsinga, Belakmakama, in the Puncak Jaya region. In the mid 1950s, her family along with the majority of Amungme from Tsinga, on the invitation of Catholic missionaries, moved to Akimuga on the south coast. Despite their fear of malaria in the coastal areas, these Amungme were persuaded that their prospects would be brighter in Akimuga, where the church provided health and educational facilities. Her schooling stopped in grade four following the death of her parents. Yosepha married Markus Kwalik in 1972, and in 1973 she moved to Timika (Mote, 1999:12).

### **Expropriation and Destruction of Land**

An outspoken critic of the Freeport mine, and member of the Amungme Tribal Council LEMASA (*Lembaga Musyawarah Adat Suku Amungme*), Yosepha Alomang has initiated numerous actions in opposition to both the Freeport mine and the Indonesian military which provides security to the mine. In 1994, she along with several others, was detained for a month and tortured. However, far from being silenced, she has continued to organise and speak out in order to expose the environmental devastation caused by Freeport, and the ongoing human rights abuses by both Freeport personnel and the Indonesian military.

The appropriation of Amungme lands in the Western Highlands began in 1967 with the commencement of the Freeport mine, which is owned by New Orleans-based Freeport McMoran Copper and Gold Corporation. Other shareholders include the Indonesian Government owned PT Freeport Indonesia, and British owned Rio Tinto. Since then, the Amungme and Kamoro peoples have lost at least 10,000 hectares of their land without compensation (ACFOA, 1995:1-3). Freeport has concessions of 3.6 million hectares, and is Indonesia's largest tax payer (The Australia West Papua Association, 1995, n.p., Rubin cited in Marshall, 2000, n.p.). 220,000 tonnes of ore are mined daily, pouring 212,000 tons of tailings into the surrounding area ('Freeport Indonesia Sets Aside US\$150 MLN for Land Reclamation', 2000, n.p.).

### **Resistance to Freeport and Militarisation**

In 1974, a year after Yosepha Alomang moved to Timika, Freeport began constructing Grasberg, the world's largest open-pit mine. Local people were evicted from their lands, including their gardens upon which they relied for subsistence ('Papuan housewife tells sufferings of her people', 2000, n.p.). Organised resistance to the mine in 1977 involved Amungme people and OPM guerillas, who blew up Freeport's pipeline to the coast. Indonesian military reprisal was fierce, - villages were bombed and strafed, and whole communities were forcibly resettled away from their traditional lands, near to the coast (ACFOA, 1995:1).

Since then, the Indonesian Government has justified a heavy military presence in the area, and a close relationship between Freeport and the military, as necessary for state security and vital national development (Rumbiak, 1996:19). This approach has been a source of resentment and conflict between the local people, and Freeport and the Indonesian security forces. According to John Rumbiak (1996) of the Jayapura-based human rights organisation IHRSTAD (Institute for Human Rights Study and Advocacy), large projects like Freeport with their 'security apparatus are a major threat to the ability of the local communities to stay in touch with one another or even with their gardens' (p.19).

In 1985, the Timika Indah company housing complex was built, causing much anger amongst local people. In protest at the loss of their vegetable gardens, a group of women confronted Freeport personnel, who according to Yosepha, responded:

‘This is state land. Do you reject development? What are you doing here? You’ll be eaten by guns’. We, the women answered, ‘We are always being shot dead, so we’re not afraid to die’ (Mote,1999:12).

### **Women’s Leader and LEMASA Member, Undeterred by Torture**

In 1992, Yosepha led a protest group of women who built a large bonfire on the Timika Airport runway, temporarily stopping all flights. This was in response to the expropriation of their land to build the airport, the Sheraton Hotel and surrounding offices (Mote,1999:12). In 1994, Yosepha became a member of the newly formed LEMASA, and continued to be vocal in her opposition to the mine, and the activities of the security forces (Mote, 1999:12). In October 1994, along with Yuliana Magal, Mathius Kelanangame, Yakobus Alomang, and Nicolaus Magal, she was detained and tortured by security forces. This was because the security forces suspected them of helping the OPM leader Kelly Kwalik, a relation of Yosepha’s husband. An eye-witness account by one of those detained, was included in Bishop Munninghoff’s 1995 Report, on a series of human rights violations in the Timika area between 1994 and 1995 (Munninghof, 1995:4). The Report states that Freeport containers were used to hold prisoners who were tortured (Munninghof, 1995:13). According to this Report, in response to her interrogator Yosepha stated:

I didn’t do anything. I am just one of the common people. I have no job, I am a housewife. But we have a common activity, the women have a cooperative and I am the chairwoman of the cooperative. If the officer of the cooperative does things which are not good I am the one who tells them. I am the one who usually speaks out and criticises. I am also responsible for Timika and this community so that they can become good. But now you give me this prize for it, you put me in a cell, you torture me. I don’t want to speak now that I know you have all these notes, I don’t want to speak any more. I will be silent (p.13).

Yuliana Magal, a widow, was badly tortured, accused of being close to Kelly Kwalik. Yosepha’s account of Yuliana’s experience is also in the Report. Unable to speak Indonesian, she couldn’t understand what her interrogators were asking.

So to make Yuliana talk they prodded her with the muzzles of their weapons they pointed at her forehead and put a heavy iron weight on her head for an hour till she was exhausted. Then they took the weight and put it on her shoulder for another hour. Then she had to kneel and she had to cradle the weight for another hour. Then they put the gun against her breast to force her to talk. Then they fondled her breast to find out whether Yuliana was afraid or not and put a stethoscope there for about an hour. Then because they couldn’t do anything more to make her talk they brought her back to her cell.

We were held and tortured for one month (from 9 October to 10 November, 1994) at the police station in Timika (Alomang, cited in Munninghoff, 1995:13).

### **Militarisation and Resistance**

For the local people who have not been forcibly relocated from their lands, the military presence in the area makes life very difficult, particularly for women who farm the land. During some periods they have had to report to a guard post when they go to and from their gardens, and contend with questioning, and accusations of communicating with the OPM. According to Pieter Yan Magal (1996), the supervisor at a boarding house, attached to a Freeport - provided high school in Timika, the impact of Freeport on the Amungme people has been devastating.

The main impact has been suffering, spiritual and physical suffering. Our sacred sites have been destroyed by their sophisticated technology, and they do not value us as human beings. Rather they see us as creatures in the process of becoming human (Magal, 1996:20).

Timika, the town built to serve the Freeport mine, illustrates Fanon's portrayal of colonial space which separates the well-fed from the hungry. 'This world...cut in two is inhabited by two different species' (Fanon, 1963:30). For the foreigners, it is a town of great wealth, a 'piece of Europe grafted onto West Papua where lots of Europeans, Canadians, some Filipinos and Americans wander in shorts, very relaxed' (Balazo, 2000:24). In stark contrast, the Amungme who work in the mine, live down the hill, in tiny houses built in rows along unpaved roads. Further down the hill are the Amungme hamlets, where the inhabitants, mainly women and children, are under constant surveillance (Balazo, 2000:24).

Local resistance against both Freeport and the military became more organised under LEMASA. In response to a large demonstration by local people against Freeport in March 1996, the CEO of Freeport McMoran Gold and Copper, James Moffet, met with forty representatives of Amungme and other tribes, under the gaze of high level army and government officers. Among those present was Brigadier General Prabowo, a long-time officer of Kopassus<sup>1</sup>, and son-in-law of then President Suharto. At the meeting, LEMASA executive director Andreas Anggaibak, expressed the view of the indigenous people that Freeport should be closed down (Anggaibak, in 'Comments on Negotiation Process Between

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<sup>1</sup> Komando Pasukan Khusus, Special Forces Command.

the Irianese Tribes with James R. Moffet, CEO of Freeport McMoran Gold & Copper at Sheraton Hotel, Timika, March 14, 1996', 1996, n.p.).

Also at the meeting, Yosepha Alomang and other leaders presented a list of prerequisites to be met, before a meeting of the Amungme, Freeport and the government could be held, and a negotiation process could start. These included: the dismantling of Freeport's Security Department; the replacement of particular managers (names given); community development leaders to be replaced by indigenous people; scholarship priority for Amungme students; job recruitment priority for the Amungme; provision of Freeport capital and work contracts for indigenous people; all activities on Amungme land to be negotiated with LEMASA; and improved living conditions such as proper housing, and health facilities for the indigenous community (Anggaibak, in 'Comments on Negotiation Process Between the Irianese Tribes with James R. Moffet, CEO of Freeport McMoran Gold & Copper at Sheraton Hotel, Timika, March 14, 1996', 1996, n.p.).

Freeport's response to these demands was to offer a Trust Fund, whereby each year, 1% of gross annual revenues (US\$15 million) be provided for community development (MacLellan, 1997:28). Various attempts were made by the company, military and government officials to pressure and intimidate the local people into accepting this offer. These included a payment of Rp 500 million to Andreas Anggaibak from the government official Hussein Usman. People who refused to sign the agreement accepting the 1% Trust Fund, were told they would be considered supporters of Kelly Kwalik, the OPM leader. Tom Beanal, a LEMASA leader was threatened with imprisonment or death. LEMASA had already decided to reject the offer at a meeting on June 29<sup>th</sup> 1996. A demonstration in protest against the fund was held in Timika on July 18<sup>th</sup>, and attended by some 2000 Amungme, Dani, Mee/Ekari, Moni, and Nduga people. Some of these people associated themselves with a challenge in the New Orleans District Court, with the company being charged with environmental destruction and human rights abuse. At the demonstration, Yosepha Alomang asked that Mr. Hussein return the Rp 500 million to Freeport ('Again 2000 Local tribal people in Timika made a Protest', 1996, n.p.).

The militarisation of the area has been accompanied by involvement of the military in commercial activities which are socially harmful and disruptive. A member of the Regional Assembly, and himself from Timika, Anton Kelanangame told the online news service

Detikcom, that alcohol consumption was creating problems, and ‘women were being used as sex objects’. He suggested that these activities had backing from members of the armed forces. ‘Timika is like a military base and virtually every army unit is present there, the Marines, Kopassus, Brimob, Paskhas and Kavaleri’<sup>2</sup> (cited in Imran, 2000, n.p.).

In April 1999, in protest against the impact of the largely military-run bars and brothels in Timika, Amungme women held a demonstration. Singing hymns, they broke into warehouses and confiscated cases of alcohol. They broke down doors of bars and brothels, demanding they be closed down. Yosepha Alomang, one of the organisers of the protest, spoke scornfully of the military: ‘The military has treated us like dogs for years but now they will have to go’. She pointed to the 240 cases of confiscated beer, and jeered, ‘The weapons of ABRI’ (Murphy,1999:1).

### **Legal Action Against Freeport**

By August 1996, 2000 people from six different tribal groups had associated themselves with a legal challenge started by Tom Beanal in April 1996, claiming environmental destruction and human rights abuse against Freeport. They were represented by the attorney Martin Regan, who filed the suit in the New Orleans District Court. Intimidation continued, with the confiscation of signed claim forms by a military intelligence agent, who took them to the district military commander. LEMASA staff and elders including Yosepha Alomang tried repeatedly to get the document back from both the military and the police. According to Yosepha, the new military commander said ‘he needs time to study the document whether or not it relates to any political activity such as GPK’ (LEMASA, 1996:1-2).

On March 5 1998, a State Appeals Court ruled that the New Orleans Court did have jurisdiction over Yosepha Alomang’s class action lawsuit, which claims personal injury and environmental damage on behalf of the Amungme people against Freeport McMoran Copper and Gold (1998, Untitled report, n.p.). In April 1998, accompanied by Rev. Isak Onowame, Yosepha went to New Orleans, and along with local human rights and environmental activists, held a demonstration outside the residence of the Executive Director of Freeport there (Mote, 1999:12).

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<sup>2</sup> Mobile Police Brigade, Special Forces and Cavalry.

Yosepha was planning to leave Timika for a further overseas trip to attend the Annual General Meeting of Rio Tinto shareholders in London, held on May 13<sup>th</sup> 1998. However, following intimidation by security officials, she was finally prevented from boarding her plane (Survival International, 1998, n.p.). Although Yosepha herself was unable to address the shareholders at the meeting, Survival International circulated a leaflet giving information about Yosepha, her detention in 1994, her legal battle with Freeport, and the supportive relationship between the Indonesian military and the company (Survival International, 1998, n.p.).

Whilst Yosepha's lawsuit class action was eventually dismissed with prejudice in March 2000, following the dismissal of Tom Beanal's case in November 1999 ('State Court Dismisses With Prejudice Complaint Against Freeport-McMoran Copper & Gold Inc', 2000, n.p.), the publicity gained from these cases, and the continuing scrutiny faced by Freeport, suggest that their efforts have not been in vain. In February 2000, the Indonesian Environment Minister, Soni Keraf, threatened Freeport with closure, in response to reports that the widely eaten molluscs in the rivers surrounding the Grasberg mine were contaminated, and mangrove forests destroyed (Elder, 2000, n.p.). Furthermore, following an accident at Freeport in May 2000 in which several people were killed, the Indonesian organisation Forum for the Environment, or Walhi, has decided to file a lawsuit against Freeport. It has called for a temporary halt to its operations, as well as a review of Freeport's contract ('Environmentalists demand Freeport's temporary closure', 2000, n.p.).

### **Independence Demands**

By November 1999, the focus of the Timika protesters had broadened and become national, partly in response to the sense of a new opportunity which was created by the victory of the pro-independence cause in the UN organised referendum of August 30<sup>th</sup> in East Timor. Yosepha Alomang was one of the organisers of a demonstration held there in that month, in which more than 8000 people demanded the recognition of West Papuan independence, and the complete withdrawal of Indonesian troops (Ondawame, 1999:1-2). There was a crescendo of political activity in many parts of West Papua in advance of December 1<sup>st</sup>, the anniversary of December 1<sup>st</sup> 1961, when the Morning Star flag was raised alongside the Dutch flag outside the newly elected People's Council. On December 2<sup>nd</sup>, after the Morning Star flag had been flying for 22 days, Yosepha and three others were detained by police who opened

fire on protesters, injuring fifty-five people ('Police shoot at tribal protesters – 55 hospitalised, 3 critical', 1999, n.p. ; Imran, 2000, n.p.).

In December 1999, two months after the election of Abdurrahman Wahid as Indonesia's President, Yosepha Alomang was one of two women to receive the Yap Thiam Hien Human Rights Award. However, she declined to visit Jakarta to accept the award saying:

I refuse to accept the award in Jakarta because I am fighting for the rights of the Irianese. I believe it is natural that I receive it here so that the people in Irian Jaya know how important this award is ('Rights award winner remains true to homeland', 1999, n.p.).

She rejected suggestions that this was a political ploy, stating that in her long struggle she had been 'aided by her fellow Irianese who also deserved recognition' ('Rights award winner remains true to homeland', 1999, n.p.).

In June 2000, following the Congress in Jayapura at which overwhelming support was expressed for the goal of independence, Yosepha stated: 'It seems there is no other way to get back our rights except through independence' (cited in 'Papuan housewife tells sufferings of her people', 2000, n.p.). This appears to be the conclusion drawn by many West Papuans, who have suffered at the hands of a military regime.

## **Conclusion**

Yosepha Alomang has been targeted by the Indonesian military because she is outspoken, and because of her family connection to the OPM leader Kelly Kwalik. However, detention and torture at the hands of the military has not succeeded in silencing her. Yosepha has been able to mobilise women over various issues, and articulate the Amungme peoples' struggle in ways which have gained publicity both nationally and internationally. Her efforts were recognised by the Indonesian NGO community when she received the Yap Thiam Hien Human Rights Award, thus giving further exposure to her peoples' plight. Her refusal to be intimidated by officials and military personnel, has provided a source of strength and inspiration to both her community, West Papuan nationalists, and the wider communities of environmentalists and human rights activists.