

# GLOBAL INFORMATION SOCIETY WATCH 2011

INTERNET RIGHTS AND DEMOCRATISATION

*Focus on freedom of expression and association online*



*This edition of Global Information Society Watch is dedicated to the people of the Arab revolutions whose courage in the face of violence and repression reminded the world that people working together for change have the power to claim the rights they are entitled to.*

**Steering committee**

Anriette Esterhuysen (APC)  
Loe Schout (Hivos)

**Coordinating committee**

Karen Banks (APC)  
Monique Doppert (Hivos)  
Karen Higgs (APC)  
Marjan Besuijen (Hivos)  
Joy Liddicoat (APC)  
Pablo Accuosto (APC)  
Valeria Betancourt (APC)

**Project coordinator**

Karen Banks

**Editor**

Alan Finlay

**Assistant editor**

Lori Nordstrom

**Publication production**

Karen Higgs, Analía Lavin and Flavia Fascendini

**Graphic design**

MONOCROMO  
info@monocromo.com.uy  
Phone: +598 2 400 1685

**Cover illustration**

Matías Bervejillo

**Proofreading**

Stephanie Biscomb, Valerie Dee and Lori Nordstrom

**Financial partners**

Humanist Institute for Cooperation with Developing Countries (Hivos)  
Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida)

The views expressed in this publication are those of the individual authors and not necessarily those of APC or Hivos

Printed in Goa, India  
by Dog Ears Books & Printing

*Global Information Society Watch*  
Published by APC and Hivos  
South Africa  
2011

Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Licence  
<creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/>  
Some rights reserved.

ISSN: 2225-4625  
APC-201111-CIPP-R-EN-PDF-0105  
ISBN: 978-92-95096-14-1

APC and Hivos would like to thank the Swedish International Cooperation Agency (Sida) for its support for Global Information Society Watch 2011.



## INDONESIA

### DOCUMENTING TORTURE: THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF ACTIVISTS



**EngageMedia Collective Inc.**  
Alexandra Crosby  
[www.engagemedia.org](http://www.engagemedia.org)

The ways that human rights activists have employed new technologies have shaped the political upheavals that have punctuated Indonesia's recent history. Probably the best-known example is the footage of human rights abuses in East Timor during the late 1990s, which was televised globally and became one of the key factors in garnering international support for Timor-Leste's independence.<sup>1</sup>

The experience of the 1998 political uprising that overthrew the Suharto regime also showed the power of digital video in generating extensive socio-political changes by mobilising people in support of a new government. In the build-up to the end of the regime, footage of the shootings of Trisakti University students in Jakarta, much of which was "amateur" footage, was broadcast on television inside and outside Indonesia. These images sparked sentiments of national solidarity, leading to mass student protests in several cities across Indonesia, denouncing the New Order regime.

However, today, without the same momentum of mass direct action on the streets that characterised the end of the 20th century in Indonesia, the ways that video can be used to affect change are more ambiguous. Realising that they cannot rely on the foreign press to expose humiliating human rights violation cases, campaigners push their videos through other avenues – such as EngageMedia, YouTube and Facebook – where, instead of relying on news corporation producers, activists can become the producers and distributors themselves. But in becoming more independent, their responsibilities also shift, particularly when it comes to contextualising video information.

This report is concerned with what activists can do with video to improve the situation in West Papua and Indonesia more broadly: to stop human

rights abuses, to bring perpetrators to justice, to prevent torture, and to end violence. Our approach is to compare the production and distribution of videos documenting incidents of abuse in order to deepen activist understanding of the mechanics of online distribution of video that has the purpose of social change. This focuses on the work of EngageMedia as one organisation investing in making this distribution not only more effective, but more mindful and secure.

#### Human rights abuses in West Papua and elsewhere

Indonesia ratified the UN Convention Against Torture in 1998, the same year the brutality of the New Order regime was meant to end. However, the Asian Human Rights Commission says, today "torture is in fact encouraged as a mean[s] of interrogation and intimidation by the police and the military."<sup>2</sup> Because military personnel enjoy special immunity from being tried in civilian courts, acts of torture continue to go unpunished.

Amnesty International reports that in recent years there have been a number of cases of intimidation and attacks against human rights defenders and journalists in Indonesia. Many of these cases have occurred in the province of West Papua, given "special" autonomy by the Megawati government in 2001. West Papua is one of the least accessible places in Indonesia and one of the richest in natural resources.

This report does not have the scope to cover the struggle for self-determination in West Papua. Suffice to say that allegations of torture in the region are hardly new. Since it became part of Indonesia in the 1960s, there has been both a resilient separatist movement and a strong military presence.<sup>3</sup> Amnesty International has documented how victims and witnesses in Papua have few available legal remedies

<sup>1</sup> KUNCI Cultural Studies Center and EngageMedia (2009) Video Activism and Video Distribution in Indonesia. [www.engagemedia.org/videochronic](http://www.engagemedia.org/videochronic)

<sup>2</sup> Asian Human Rights Commission (2010) Indonesia: Video of the military torturing indigenous Papuans surfaced, press release, 17 October. [www.humanrights.asia/news/press-releases/AHRC-PRL-021-2010](http://www.humanrights.asia/news/press-releases/AHRC-PRL-021-2010)

<sup>3</sup> For background on the issues in West Papua, see Drooglever, P. (2009) *An Act of Free Choice: Decolonisation and the Right to Self-Determination in West Papua*, Oneworld Publications, Oxford.

to make complaints.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps more than anywhere else in Indonesia, human rights violations in West Papua have gone unchecked for decades.

As recently as July 2010, Tama Satrya Langkun, a Jakarta-based anti-corruption activist, was severely beaten by unknown persons in an apparent move to silence him. That same month, Ardiansyah Matra, a journalist covering corruption and illegal logging in Papua, was found dead in the province. Despite police investigations, no one has yet been held accountable for these attacks.

### Documenting torture

On 30 May 2010, Indonesian military personnel tortured Tunalior Kiwo, a Papuan farmer, and his neighbour, using a number of methods, including clamping their genitals, burning them with an iron rod, trying to suffocate them with plastic bags and pulling out their fingernails with pliers. The incident was recorded on a soldier's mobile phone. The ten-minute torture video was released to the public on 18 October 2010, after being leaked to activists. The video was distributed on several websites including the Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) site from October and received international attention. Since then, the AHRC has reported attacks on their website along with the sites of several other groups who featured the torture video, including Survival International, West Papua Media Alerts, the Free West Papua Campaign, Friends of People Close To Nature and West Papua Unite. The video also appeared on YouTube.

Many questions arise from this incident, including whether or not this is part of a military culture in which such actions are not considered criminal. Why would a perpetrator want to take pictures of their crime? It is hard to believe that with the ease of upload/download technologies, a soldier would not understand how quickly a video such as this could be disseminated and circulated. Wondering the same about the documentations of abuses at Abu Ghraib, the great United States (US) philosopher Susan Sontag wrote that, rather than being trophies, these images are “inspired by the vast repertory of pornographic imagery available on the internet” and are evidence of the “increasing acceptance of brutality in American life.”<sup>5</sup> Perhaps the

same could be said of the mainstreaming of violence in Indonesian life – perhaps this acceptance is, sadly, universal. The mutilation of genitals in the cases of both Abu Ghraib and Kiwo's torture represents a violence that seems intertwined with the sexualisation of victims' bodies.<sup>6</sup> Clearly, video evidence of torture presents ethical dilemmas, not only around how it is made and released, but how it is watched and how those who watch are implicated in the processes of social change.

Responding to the public attention around the torture video, video testimony was produced by human rights activists in Jayawijaya. The video testimony was an effort to provide more direct evidence for the case and also to respond to some of the dilemmas mentioned above by contextualising the event. It was passed along to the Papuan Customary Council – Dewan Adat Papua – and handed to Human Rights Watch. The interview was conducted in Lani (the language of the Jayawijaya region – Papua has over 200 languages), which was later translated into Indonesian by a Lani activist, and subtitled in both Indonesian and English. In November, EngageMedia released both videos of the testimony, one with English subtitles,<sup>7</sup> one with Indonesian subtitles.<sup>8</sup>

Video testimony, as opposed to documentary, allows the victim to create his or her own narrative. But in order to be effective, to be able to circulate in the wider world, these narratives require a great deal of context. Translation and subtitling take on renewed importance because they are part of the process of getting as close as possible to the victim's expression of events and making that expression the core of social change campaigns. For such cases, EngageMedia is currently teaming up with Universal Subtitles, an open source, online system that enables collaborative translation and subtitling of video. The system can be accessed on the Universal Subtitles website itself, and can also be used in concert with other video sites such as EngageMedia.org, tapping into already existing networks and communities.<sup>9</sup>

4 See the following reports: Amnesty International Papua Digest, January 2011. [www.amnesty.org.uk/uploads/documents/doc\\_21212.pdf](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/uploads/documents/doc_21212.pdf); Open letter on unchecked police abuse in Nabire district, Papua (Index ASA 21/024/2009), 30 November 2009. [www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA21/024/2009/en](http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA21/024/2009/en); Unfinished business: Police accountability in Indonesia (Index ASA 21/013/2009), 24 June 2009. [www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA21/013/2009/en](http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA21/013/2009/en); Amnesty International's briefing to the UN Committee Against Torture (Index ASA 21/003/2008), 15 April 2008. [www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA21/003/2008/en](http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA21/003/2008/en)

5 Sontag, S. (2004) Regarding The Torture Of Others, *New York Times Magazine*, 23 May.

6 Carby, H. (2004) A strange and bitter crop: the spectacle of torture, *OpenDemocracy*, 10 October. [www.opendemocracy.net/media-abu\\_ghraib/article\\_2149.jsp](http://www.opendemocracy.net/media-abu_ghraib/article_2149.jsp)

7 [www.engagemedia.org/Members/dewanadatpapua/videos/kiwotestimony\\_rev\\_en.mp4/view](http://www.engagemedia.org/Members/dewanadatpapua/videos/kiwotestimony_rev_en.mp4/view)

8 [www.engagemedia.org/Members/dewanadatpapua/videos/kiwotestimony\\_id/view](http://www.engagemedia.org/Members/dewanadatpapua/videos/kiwotestimony_id/view)

9 The aims for this collaboration are to broaden access to critical human rights and environmental stories from within Southeast Asia, increasing regional and international exposure; develop a Southeast Asia network of volunteer translators and subtitlers of citizen media, human rights and environmental video content; enhance the communication between video advocates, campaigners and citizens in the region to develop shared understandings of the common issues they face; and provide easy access to television stations and other websites to pick up and run non-native language content.

Being sensitive to local languages is just one of the practical challenges of using video in torture cases. “Given the previous cyber attacks,” says Enrico Aditjondro, EngageMedia’s Indonesia editor, “the decision to publish the testimony was a calculated risk that required careful preparation to ensure the safety of all organisations and individuals involved.” As well as Universal Subtitles, EngageMedia teamed up with Human Rights Watch and others to urge the Indonesian government to mount a thorough, impartial and transparent investigation into the episode. This collaboration is important in tracing the way video can be used in concert with human rights campaigns in raising public awareness and bringing about social change.

The Indonesian government responded with a rapid trial of the soldiers involved. The AHRC says the trial only came about after heavy national and international pressure, and the result does not provide an adequate remedy for the gravity of the human rights violations. The perpetrators have not been charged with their actual crime and AHRC rejects this trial as a conclusion of the case. This is not surprising, considering the track record of the Indonesian government in coming to terms with human rights abuses, evident in other cases such as the poisoning of human rights activist Munir Said bin Thalib in September 2004, and the failure to convict any of the generals accused of war crimes in East Timor or Aceh.

Aditjondro says EngageMedia learns from each of these experiences, and continues to face similar dilemmas, most recently concerning the publication of what is known as the “Ahmadiyyah Video”. In February 2011, hundreds of villagers in Banten province, west of Jakarta, were filmed marching to a house where twenty Ahmadis<sup>10</sup> had met. The video shows three bloody bodies of Ahmadi men who had been stripped, beaten and dragged from the house to the ground outside. Police officers appear in the video, making no attempt to stop the killing, and scores of young men looked on, recording it with their mobile phones.<sup>11</sup>

EngageMedia and other independent media channels were immediately sent the footage by some of those who recorded the incident. While

EngageMedia decided against posting the video on its site, journalist and human rights campaigner Andreas Harsono from Human Rights Watch used his own YouTube account to publish the video. Within minutes, he received numerous death threats. After receiving over 100,000 hits, the video was flagged and blocked. An anonymous uploader then re-posted the complete video on YouTube where it was still available at the time of writing, but viewers need to sign in to see it, due to the graphic nature.<sup>12</sup> Aditjondro says:

For credibility and integrity, taking responsibility for videos like this is important when they go out in public. But such actions can also endanger advocacy work and made people associated to him [Harsono] vulnerable as well. The story of Andreas Harsono helped activists realise the security implications of doing digital campaigning, particularly those activists working in more repressive environments such as West Papua.

Aditjondro also says that EngageMedia, knowing that the videos would be on YouTube, was more concerned with contextualising the event, and posted a news story with links to the footage.<sup>13</sup> “Watching violence for the sake of it doesn’t achieve anything,” he says.

This incident, and the extrapolation of the torture video into Kiwo’s testimony, also point out some of the responsibilities video makers and distributors have to their subjects and how people watch and interpret disturbing footage. While all activists have the same aim of exposing violations of human rights, not all campaigns take the same measures to make sure victims and their supporters have a voice and still remain secure.

In the case of the video of the torture itself, we cannot know how this video got into activist hands, whether it was intentionally or accidentally leaked. But, having the infrastructure in place for distribution, what we do with these opportunities in a way that is responsible and clear is a great challenge. This requires partnerships between technologists and human rights agencies. More than ever before, these networks must operate with an unprecedented level of security, speed and collaboration.

<sup>10</sup> Ahmadis, who practice the Ahmadiyya form of Islam, have been subject to various forms of persecution since the movement’s inception in 1889. Ahmadiyya is a controversial religious minority in Indonesia that rose sharply in the 2000s with a rise of Islamic fundamentalism. As of 2011, the sect faces widespread calls for a total “ban” in Indonesia.

<sup>11</sup> Dewan, A. (2011) Why We Should Support Indonesian Schools, *New Matilda*, 16 February. [newmatilda.com/2011/02/16/why-we-should-support-indonesian-schools](http://newmatilda.com/2011/02/16/why-we-should-support-indonesian-schools)

<sup>12</sup> [www.youtube.com/verify\\_age?next\\_url=http%3A//www.youtube.com/watch%3Fv%3DDWHzc8ZxRuQ%26feature%3Dplayer\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/verify_age?next_url=http%3A//www.youtube.com/watch%3Fv%3DDWHzc8ZxRuQ%26feature%3Dplayer_embedded)

<sup>13</sup> EngageMedia (2011) Ahmadiyah bloodied video leads to calls for revoke of decree against religious minority, 14 February. [www.engagemedia.org/Members/cikeusik/news/ahmadiyah-bloodied-video-leads-to-calls-for-revoke-of-decree-against-religious-minority](http://www.engagemedia.org/Members/cikeusik/news/ahmadiyah-bloodied-video-leads-to-calls-for-revoke-of-decree-against-religious-minority)

## Concluding notes

Kiwo's story and the ways video has been generated from it tell us a great deal about the potential of information and communications technologies (ICTs) for human rights and social resistance. But they also relay the limitations of online video activism. Without an approach that also supports victims of human rights abuses in their day-to-day lives, in their own languages, what good is such evidence?

This report has focused on particular incidents because of the repercussions on activist security and because of the clear pressure they put on authorities. But this report concerned the impact of video in specific incidents. The story of human rights in Papua and other places is far more complex. Infant mortality, sexual health, land rights, access to basic human needs all indicate a grim situation for many indigenous people all over the world. Yet these stories are unlikely to receive many hits on YouTube. How can these issues also be integrated into a different type of activism, one that can move beyond the shock of violence shaming us into a real world response?

Perhaps more than any other medium, video has the power to reframe stories. Kiwo's story is much more than a file viewed in browsers and copied over servers. Taking responsibility for how videos effect change is about making them more than nameless images of violence.

## Action steps

The immediate action to be taken around this incident is demanding the retrial of the soldiers who perpetrated the torture of Kiwo and his neighbour. This requires ongoing support for local activists in West Papua from regional and global networks.

More broadly, activists need to:

- Be informed. Listen, watch and read stories from West Papua at [www.engagemedia.org/taxonomy/countries/WP](http://www.engagemedia.org/taxonomy/countries/WP)
- Follow the AHRC campaign to end violence in West Papua at [www.humanrights.asia/countries/indonesia/end-violence-in-west-papua](http://www.humanrights.asia/countries/indonesia/end-violence-in-west-papua)
- Sign the petition opposing US cooperation with Kopassus (the Indonesian Special Forces Command) at [www.gopetition.com/petitions/dont-train-indonesias-deadly-kopassus.html](http://www.gopetition.com/petitions/dont-train-indonesias-deadly-kopassus.html)
- Consider security implications to filmmakers and witnesses when conducting video documentation of human rights violations
- Download *Video for Change: A How-To Guide on Using Video in Advocacy and Activism* from [www.witness.org](http://www.witness.org)
- Visit Tactical Tech Security-in-a-Box at [www.tacticaltech.org/securityinabox](http://www.tacticaltech.org/securityinabox) ■

In the year of the Arab uprisings **GLOBAL INFORMATION SOCIETY WATCH 2011** investigates how governments and internet and mobile phone companies are trying to restrict freedom online – and how citizens are responding to this using the very same technologies.

Everyone is familiar with the stories of Egypt and Tunisia. **GISWATCH** authors tell these and other lesser-known stories from more than 60 countries. Stories about:

**PRISON CONDITIONS IN ARGENTINA** Prisoners are using the internet to protest living conditions and demand respect for their rights.

**TORTURE IN INDONESIA** The torture of two West Papuan farmers was recorded on a mobile phone and leaked to the internet. The video spread to well-known human rights sites sparking public outrage and a formal investigation by the authorities.

**THE TSUNAMI IN JAPAN** Citizens used social media to share actionable information during the devastating tsunami, and in the aftermath online discussions contradicted misleading reports coming from state authorities.

**GISWATCH** also includes thematic reports and an introduction from Frank La Rue, UN special rapporteur.

**GISWATCH 2011** is the fifth in a series of yearly reports that critically cover the state of the information society from the perspectives of civil society organisations across the world.

**GISWATCH** is a joint initiative of the Association for Progressive Communications (APC) and the Humanist Institute for Cooperation with Developing Countries (Hivos).

**GLOBAL INFORMATION SOCIETY WATCH**

2011 Report

[www.GISWatch.org](http://www.GISWatch.org)

