

DECEPTION AND HARASSMENT OF EAST TIMORESE WORKERS

In early September 1991, the Indonesian military forced the country's leading newsweekly, *Tempo*, to kill a story scheduled for the September 7 issue about the plight of young East Timorese workers who had been promised training and high-paying jobs by President Suharto's eldest daughter, Siti Hardijanti Hastuti, better known as Mbak Tutut. Instead of being trained and sent to an industrial development on Batam Island between Sumatra and Singapore, as they expected, they found themselves working as unskilled labor for far less than the minimum wage in factories in Semarang, Central Java; Bogor, West Java; Surabaya, East Java; and Jakarta. When some tried to protest, they were interrogated and in at least one case, detained and beaten, by military officers who accused them of being political activists. When they were unable to persuade the president's daughter to address their grievances, the young workers, many of them teenagers, tried to bring their case to the attention of members of the national parliament. It was when *Tempo* tried to cover the story of that appeal that two officers from the armed forces' Information Center stepped in and warned the editor.

Asia Watch has recently obtained documents, some of them written by the workers themselves, which set out their experience in detail. The documents are important because they reflect several factors which have fuelled the nationalist movement in East Timor. These factors include the lack of jobs and other opportunities for young East Timorese in East Timor (which made the initial offer of Mbak Tutut attractive); the tendency of many businesses in Jakarta and elsewhere in Indonesia to regard East Timorese as cheap labor that can be easily exploited, an attitude that may have racist overtones; and the way in which almost any East Timorese, inside or outside East Timor, is regarded as a potential political threat by the military, to be put under constant surveillance accordingly.

The Offer

The documents obtained by Asia Watch describe what happened to the young people after they arrived in Jakarta. But the problem began in Dili, in December 1990 when Mbak Tutut visited East Timor on behalf of her private foundation called Yayasan Tiara. Over the radio, in public meetings, and in door-to-door recruiting, Yayasan Tiara offered to send East Timorese youth to the industrial development site of Batam Island at salaries of between Rp.250,000 and Rp.300,000 or US\$125 and US\$150 a month. In addition, they would be given three months training in Jakarta before heading out to Batam. With a high unemployment rate and few prospects in Dili, over 600 East Timorese youth signed up. There were reports, which Asia Watch has not been able to verify, of Tiara officials together with the local military working from lists of young people who had been arrested in the course of political demonstrations from late 1989 on, and making a particular effort to recruit them as a way of getting "troublemakers" out of East Timor.

The First Wave

When the first group of 132 left Dili on March 27, they were given a formal send-off with Governor Mario Carrascalao, Bishop Carlos Ximenes Belo and senior local officials in attendance. The Yayasan Tiara

pledge of jobs in Batam was repeated in front of the youths and their parents.

When they arrived in Jakarta on March 29, they were housed in a complex on the grounds of a tourist site called Taman Mini Indah Indonesia, what in the United States would be called a "theme park." Officials from the central office of Yayasan Tiara came to meet them and explained that the Batam plans were cancelled because the youths lacked the necessary skills. Instead, they could go to a site in the North Moluccas called Simanggole. The East Timorese refused; one said they felt "cheated and sick" at the deception.

The next day, Mbak Tutut came out to Taman Mini and met with the group. This time, she offered to send them to a textile factory in which the first family has an interest, PT Kanindotex in Bawan, outside Semarang, Central Java. Two East Timorese who have long collaborated with the Indonesian government, Francisco Lopes da Cruz and Clementino dos Reis Amaral¹ came to Taman Mini as well to take part in a kind of welcoming ceremony, and the young people, thinking they might get a sympathetic ear from fellow East Timorese, poured out their grievances. Lopes da Cruz responded by telling them he did not want to get mixed up in their difficulties and had no authority to deal with the problem.

The group decided to make the best of a bad situation, and some agreed to go to Semarang while others went to a poultry farm near Bogor, West Java, where they were made to clean chicken cages. Five of the Bogor group returned to East Timor rather than stay on. Those who went to the textile factory were also given jobs as menial laborers, hauling things to place on trucks. Their salary was Rp.10,500 (US\$5.25) a month, for a nine-hour workday, 8 am to 5 pm. It was supplemented for the first three months by a subsidy from Yayasan Tiara of Rp.22,500 a month. The young people had been told that the total, Rp.33,000 (\$16.50), would include food and lodging provided by the factory, but as it turned out, the company deducted the expenses from their pay. Moreover, the lodging was some distance from the factory, so that each worker had to pay an estimated Rp.600 (30 cents) a day in transportation.

By May, there had been several "clashes" in the factory between the East Timorese and other workers and guards, the result, one worker said, of their "deep disappointment and frustration." Sometime that month, an official of Yayasan Tiara came to the factory with a prepared statement that he wanted the East Timorese to sign. The gist of the statement was that everything had proceeded according to plan, everyone was satisfied and there were no significant problems. The official told the workers that their only chance of having their grievances addressed was to sign to statement, so most did. Later that month, however, 18 of the original group in Kanindotex resigned and went to Jakarta to seek redress. Later, another 65 signed a letter to Governor Carrascalao, protesting what had happened (see Appendices).

The Second Wave

The second wave consisted of 283 young men and women ranging in age from 15 to 25. Their transportation and employment was arranged not by Yayasan Tiara but by the Ministry of Manpower, although they were given the same promise of jobs in Batam and salaries of Rp.200,000 and more. They arrived by boat in Surabaya, East Java, on June 6, 1991. About half stayed in Surabaya, 40 were assigned to Bali and 100 were sent to Jakarta.

¹ The former sits on the Indonesian National Security Council, an advisory (and powerless) body. The latter is a member of the parliament and was a member of the government-appointed National Commission of Inquiry which investigated the Dili massacre.

The Jakarta group was placed in the Balai Latihan Kerja, or Training Center, in Cijantung, West Java near a complex run by the army Special Forces (Kopassus). The Training Center itself was run by one Col. Sutrisno. For two weeks, the youths were given training, not vocational training, but what amounted to military drills: exercises, marching in formation, saluting and so on. They were then placed in factories without having received any preparation whatsoever. They received the Jakarta area minimum wage (Rp.2100 or \$1.05 a day) and the Ministry provided lodging for the first year in what the youths describe as a "pitiful" place.

Like the first group, the second felt cheated but were afraid to voice their complaints. Eventually, on August 3, two young men, Luis Maria Lopes, 22, and Nuno V. Pereira Saldanha, 19, confronted Col. Sutrisno with their grievances. Sutrisno said he would study the problem and told them he would meet with them again on August 9. But the day before the scheduled meeting, Luis and Nuno were picked up from their workplace and taken to the Training Center, together with a third youth, Armindo Goncalves. They were interrogated by two Kopassus officers, identified by the youths as Corporal Suyatman and Sergeant Iatkan. The next day, ten other Timorese were taken to Cijantung, and after seeing them depart, three others left of their own accord to go to Cijantung in a gesture of solidarity.

There were then 16 youths at the Training Center. Thirteen of them were lined up in the area used for flag-raising ceremonies and were beaten and kicked by three soldiers in front of many witnesses. (For some reason, Nuno and Luis were two of those who were spared the beating, despite the fact that they had brought the original complaint.) The soldiers included Sergeant Iatkan and Sergeant Marjoko from Kopassus as well as a Marine officer, Sergeant Nursansi. Then they were interrogated by Colonel Sutrisno, accused of being political activists, and threatened with electric shocks if they did not answer properly.

After the interrogation, according to the workers, Colonel Sutrisno decided that five of the group who had reported sick since August 1 would be sent back to East Timor: Armindo Goncalves, Latif Daeng, Erhan, Charles Batelo and Jelaso. They were ordered to remain at the Kopassus complex in Cijantung, but escaped and made it back to their lodging in North Jakarta on August 13. The same day, however, they were apprehended by Kopassus and taken back to Cijantung where they were put in a single room, but not, apparently under heavy guard. Luis and Nuno went into hiding after hearing there was a search on for them.

On August 18, Armindo and Latif made a quick trip up to Jakarta from Cijantung to tell their friends they would be sent back to East Timor on August 20. When August 20 arrived, the departure was again postponed, and four of the five requested permission to visit their friends in North Jakarta again. The fifth, Erhan, had been released after relatives of an army officer took responsibility for him.

On August 30, 29 youths representing 355 of the East Timorese who had been lured from Dili by false promises of good work and high wages appealed to the national parliament for the promises to be met. Nine months later, some were still living, unemployed, in Jakarta.

Conclusions

Economic conditions in East Timor ensure that there will be continue to be many volunteers for jobs in Indonesia. But when young East Timorese are lured away by false promises to work at menial jobs with substandard wages, it becomes tantamount to forced labor. Not a single worker freely chose to work cleaning chicken cages or hauling crates or any of the other unskilled jobs assigned them. All were deceived by a private foundation working in conjunction with a government ministry, and they faced

intimidation, detention or destitution if they protested or walked out.

This group managed to get attention, in part because of Mbak Tutut's involvement in the deception, in part because of the courage of those willing to protest their treatment, and in part because many of the workers had access to Jakarta. Many other East Timorese are working in Kalimantan, Sulawesi and elsewhere; who knows what they were promised or what conditions they find themselves in.

When any workers are hired, in East Timor or anywhere in Indonesia, they should be given a contract containing all the relevant information about the work involved so they can make an informed decision about whether or not to take the job. The contract should specify the rate of pay, hours of work, benefits and the name of the factory to which the worker will be assigned. The workers should be guaranteed the minimum wage with additional compensation for work beyond eight hours. And if they are either unable or unwilling to continue the work, they should be allowed to return to East Timor at any time, without being penalized.

APPENDIX I: STATEMENT OF EAST TIMORESE

We, the undersigned, are the youths brought from East Timor, and we hereby state that we wish to be returned immediately to our homes in East Timor if the following demands are not met:

1. Our salaries should be raised in accordance with a humane standard of living.
2. We should be moved to another workplace in accordance with our aspirations.
3. Force should not be used as a method of guidance.
4. We should not be accused of being political activists.
5. We should be in the hands of training professionals and not the military.

With this we list our names as follows without being forced to do so by any outside party and the list can be used as necessary.

Jakarta, August 21, 1991

NAME	PLACE AND DATE OF BIRTH
1. Luis Maria	Maubisse, 15.9.67
2. Nuno V.Pereira Saldanha	Dili, 25.11.71
3. Joao de Araujo	Aileu, 4.7.74
4. Agostinho D.A.	Ainaro, 15.8.69
5. Mario da Costa	Ermera, 6.1.70
6. Afonso D. Marafal	Lospalos, 13.2.67
7. Hermangildo Agapito	Balibo, 3.3.66
8. Jose da Costa	Same, 17.7.69
9. Marcos F.S.	Aileu, 20.3.69
10. Santana da Costa	Ainaro, 10.4.74
11. Adelino Saca	Aileu, 18.8.69
12. Zacarias Lau	Suai, 3.6.70
13. Joao Alves	Aileu, 15.6.70
14. Germano F.	Dili, 1.7.72
15. Aleixo Monteiro	Lospalos, 15.6.69
16. Marculin O	Aileu, 30.2.75
17. Daniela P.	Ainaro, 1.10.73
18. Amelia B.S.	Baucau, 10.10.69
19. Victor A. Pereira R.	Dili, 17.12.72
20. Fernando H. Barada	Dili, 3.5.72
21. Aniceto Bras	Oekusi [sic], 14.10.69
22. Aderito Mendonca dos Reis	Ainaro, 25.11.77
23. Marculino Augusto	Bazartete, 17.2.72
24. Duarte Freitas	Lospalos, 4.7.73
25. Alberto Bere	Laclubar, 20.4.73
26. Custodio Doutel Soares	Bazartete, 24.4.70

Drafters of this statement:

Head of the group
Luis Maria Lopes

Deputy Head
Nuno V.Pereira Saldanha

APPENDIX II: LETTER TO GOVERNOR CARRASCALAO

Bawen, August 23, 1991

To: The Governor of East Timor in Dili

We, the undersigned, young men and women who were given jobs by the central Jakarta office of Yayasan Tiara at the textile company, PT Kanindotex on Jl. Bawen, Kilometer 32 in the village of Harjosari, Semarang, Central Java, wish to convey the following.

a) that we in Dili, East Timor were offered and promised by Yayasan Tiara through a selection process that we would be given jobs on Batam Island with a salary of between Rp.250,000 to Rp.300,000 together with education and training in technical skills so we could develop our expertise and careers. We were also promised other benefits.

b) that the explanation given us by Yayasan Tiara was clear and the promises explicit; they were witnessed by us, our families and the people of Dili on several occasions including in a program convened on December 27 in the Radio Republik Indonesia auditorium in Dili and in the farewell ceremony given when we left Dili on March 27 in the Rising Sun (Matahari Terbit) building in Dili and in announcements that were made by village officials and by KNPI (Indonesian National Youth Committee) of East Timor.

c) that after we came to Jakarta for "further processing", imagine our disappointment when Yayasan Tiara very openly refused, in fact renegged on all its promises, said we were not going to Batam Island, and gave contradictory reasons and explanations for why we had come.

d) that after several days in Jakarta full of frustration and controversy between participants and the Yayasan and deep feelings of apprehension, we were forcibly assigned to several areas in West Java and Central Java without one definite plan or one program that could upgrade the quality of our education as had been promised before: that is, appropriate work and useful technical training.

e) that after five months, we were sent to work in the Kanindotex factory as **menial labor** with a salary of Rp.10,500 a month which has just been raised to between Rp.10,000 and Rp.20,000 depending on achievement and work experience, but this does not even meet basic needs, there has been no training, with working hours that are far too long, and without any meaningful health insurance.

f) we acknowledge that we have been given a temporary subsidy by Yayasan Tiara of Rp.22,500 a month, which still does not meet daily needs, let alone allows us to pay for education or courses that could be useful to us.

g) that the incidents of "clashes" and emotional outbreaks that have occurred in the factory where we work are the result of our deep disappointment and frustration over our fate and the unfulfilled promises of Yayasan Tiara.

h) that around the month of May, we were pressed by a staff member of Yayasan Tiara (East Timor branch) into signing a statement they had drafted. The contents of the statement were to the effect that our predicament had not happened, that everything was fine and there were no significant problems. It was as if to give the impression that everything was going according to plan. Because the statement was basically forced on us and accompanied by threats, that if we refused to sign, none of our complaints would be

addressed, some of us felt forced to sign.

i) that realizing this situation, we hereby would like to retract our admission in that forced statement brought by the Tiara staff and at the same time convey our regret at the fake promises and the treatment that we have received.

With the above explanation and more that we cannot go into in detail that has happened during the five mnths we have been in Java, we request with great concern to the Governor that he attend to and resolve our situation, in particular:

1. The promises made by Yayasan Tiara in Dili, East Timor, as the one responsible for our coming here, should be fulfilled and we should not be left stranded without definite jobs or training.
2. We request jobs and training that are both appropriate and will meet our needs, including salaries or honoraria that will raise our physical and mental well-being as well as our professional skills, especially in the field of mid-level technology and industry that is badly needed for the development of East Timor.
3. If this request cannot be met, we ask the Governor to help us find the funding to continue our education in teacher training schools, academies or other vocational skills, remembering that we are still young and have the potential for achievement that will serve the region and the people (Nusa dan Bangasa) well.

We thank the Governor for his consideration.

Signed (65 signatures)

cc: Yayasan Tiara (Central Jakarta)
Bishop of the Diocese of Dili

1. Gilberto Soares
2. Elisio Rosario
3. Domingos Pereira
4. Natalino Do Carmo
5. Carlos Pereira da Silva
6. Cosme Freitas
7. Julio Pereira Boboasaro
8. Manuel Napoleon M.
9. Geraldo Guterres
10. Celestino dos Santos
11. Jejuina da Silva
12. Ana Maria de Orleans
13. Filomena da Silva
14. Maria Goreti Gonjaga
15. Marieta da Silva
16. Leonito Jose Cristovao
17. Joakim Ribeiro
18. Lourenso dias Marques
19. Antonio da Silva
20. Carlos de Deus
21. Mateus D. De Deus

22. Marcus da Costa Araujo
23. Joaquim Alves
24. Humberto dos Santos
25. Sebastiao M. Varela
26. Afonso de Almeida
27. Silvester M.O.
28. Fernando C.
29. Luis da Costa
30. Mariano Suriano
31. Carlos Joaquim Alves
32. Pedro Manuel Sarmento
33. Gaspar Pinheiro Alves
34. Vicente Caldeira
35. Paul Silvestre
36. Eusebio dos Anjos Marques
37. Carlito Martins Varella
38. Tito Madeirino
39. Osorio Florindo
40. Antonio Pereira
41. Valeri J.T.
42. Artur Sarminto M. Freitas
43. Jose Soares
44. Henrique Gonsalves
45. Domingos Guterres
46. Joaquim Vicente
47. Salustiano M.
48. Justino Henriques
49. Manuel Nascimento
50. Diamantino Tade Mau
51. Justino do Carmo
52. Antonio de Sousa
53. Sebastiao Tanese
54. Arlindo Rodriguis Pereira
55. Celestino N. Boerek
56. Elias Rebelo
57. Domingos Soares
58. Armindo M. Lobo
59. Tomas de Oliveira Soares
60. Henriques dos Santos
61. Armando Magno
62. Justino da Silva
63. Mateus Ribeiro A.
64. Daniel Dus Reis
65. Fortonato X.H.

APPENDIX III: APPEAL TO INDONESIAN HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS

Letter sent on May 20, 1991 to the Institute for the Defense of Human Rights:

Yayasan Tiara sponsored the sending of the first wave of 132 East Timorese workers. We were supposed to go to Batam Island, but when we got to Jakarta, that plan was cancelled without any clear explanation. People in the central office of the Yayasan said we lacked the necessary skills so they offered to send us to work in Simanggole (North Moluccas) but we refused, because of the offer from Ibu Tutut herself. The matter was postponed to the next day, March 30, when we met with Ibu Tutut. She offered to send us to a textile factory in Semarang, Kanindotex, in Central Java. That evening, Francisco Lopes of the National Security Council came to see us in Taman Mini Indonesia Indah together with Clementino dos Reis Amaral, a member of the national parliament. In this meeting, Francisco Lopes talked at length about many problems including the problem of East Timor in the international arena, because he had just returned from a human rights conference in Geneva. After his talk, one of our friends asked in front of the directors of the Yayasan about being sent to Batam.

At the moment we left East Timor, the Bishop, the Governor and all the officials of East Timor as well as our parents knew that as soon as we arrived in Jakarta, we would have three months of training in Jakarta and then go to work in Batam Island. But nothing happened as Ibu Tutut had promised, and they offered again to send us to Semarang. But we felt cheated and sick that not only had they lied to us, they had lied to all the officials in East Timor. We told this to Francisco Lopes and look at his response!

He only answered that he did not want to interfere in our problem because he was a member of the National Security Council and had not been sent from East Timor, so he did not have the power to resolve our problem. Because Francisco Lopes was an East Timorese, we had had no objection to telling him about our problem, but his answer was not in line with our desires or aspirations and we did not accept it. But we agreed to work in the Kanindotex factory.

Why did the 18 of us resign and return to Jakarta? Because of the conflict between ourselves and Yayasan Tiara over the promises that we would be sent to school at the same time that we were working, but this did not happen. Moreover, our working hours were 8 to 5 and we worked as menial labor, carrying things to put on top of trucks, and our salaries were only Rp.10,500 a month, with the added subsidy from Yayasan Tiara of Rp.22,500 so that we go Rp.33,500 a month. But the subsidy was only for the first three months. Even with the subsidy, this was not enough to pay for our education or help our parents. They then lied to us again. First, the president of Kanindotex, Robi Jayadi, and Ibu Tutut promised that the funds for room and board would be taken care of by the factory, but it turned out our salary was cut to pay for room and board.

So what they had promised in Taman Mini on March 30, 1991 was not fulfilled.

So with our salary of only Rp.33,000, not including transportation of Rp.600 a day because of the distance between our lodging and the factory, the 18 of us decided to protest, and we were sent back to Jakarta to settle the problem.

The crux of this problem is our education and helping our parents and younger siblings because we wish to become useful after we return to East Timor to develop East Timor.

All the above problems we turn over to your organization which we deeply respect.
Signed,

1. Timoteo Miranda F. Soares
2. Enas Jose Dias C. Monteiro
3. Manual Faria
4. Aventino Ximenes
5. Abel Fatima
6. Manual Pinto Soares
7. Helio Freitas da Silva
8. Abel Soares Pinto
9. Venancio Pinto
10. Laurente Soares Freitas
11. Macario da Conceicao
12. Cipriano Brites
13. Francisco da Cunha
14. Mario Canelas
15. Joana Lopes (f)
16. Albertina Neves (f)
17. Regina de Jesus R. (f)
18. Palmeira de C. Martins (f)

Represented by: Timoteo Miranda F. Soares

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For More Information

Sidney Jones (212) 972-8400

Asia Watch was founded in 1985 to monitor and promote internationally recognized human rights in Asia. The Chair is Jack Greenberg and the Vice Chairs are Harriet Rabb and Orville Schell. The Executive Director is Sidney Jones and the Washington Director is Mike Jendrzejczyk.

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