

PWI PERSATUAN WARTAWAN INDONESIA

INDONESIAN JOURNALISTS' ASSOCIATION

PENGURUS PUSAT

CENTRAL EXECUTIVE BOARD

545

Sekretariat : Jalan Veteran 7 C (atas) Telp. 46769 - Jakarta

*Mr. [unclear]
[unclear]*

Statement by the Indonesian Journalists' Association (PWI) on the statement of the Australian Journalists' Association (AJA), of Victoria.

1. The Indonesian Journalists' Association states its profound regret and offers its heartfelt sympathy to the Australian Journalists' Association over the death of the five journalists of the Australian Television Channel 7 and 9 of Victoria.
This statement is based on professional solidarity towards the Australian colleagues and on humanity which is the founding principle of the PWI, in accordance with the Indonesian philosophy of life incorporated in the State Ideology of Pancasila.
2. However, the PWI considers as unrealistic if the loss of the AJA's members was made a reason for the Association to launch an accusation and file suit for damage redemption against the Indonesian government. The allegation has wrongly been addressed, and constituted an outright offend to the dignity of the Indonesian people in general, the PWI and all Indonesian journalists.
3. The Australian Journalists Association has drawn prejudicial and unfounded conclusion out of information and testimony whose credibility is still questionable.
The irresponsible allegations launched by the Australian Journalists' Association stated that:
 - A. The five ill-fated young Australian journalists were not aware of the situation in Balibo, East Timor, which was then ravaged by war.
 - B. The five journalists were killed in "cold-blooded" murder by "Indonesian troops", and were not by other means such as mortar bombardment in a war.
 - C. And for that reason, the AJA has filed suit for damage redemption against the Indonesian government.
4. Concerning the question of redemption, the Indonesian Journalists' Association considers that the redemption suit should be addressed to the management of the Australian TV Channel 7 and 9 who assigned its journalists to the war-torn district, resulting in a dangerous exposure to possible death without necessary preparation.

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- 2 -

The absence of proper preparation by the Australian TV management such as a pre-notification of the five Australian journalists to the Parties involved in the East Timor conflict. Had the Joint Forces of the Apodeti, UDT, KOTA and Trabalhista parties been informed prior to their assignment to the scene, the Joint Forces would have saved them from any mishap as had been done towards the Australian couple, Mr. Rex Syddell and Mrs Jane Syddell, and other foreigners in Timor, such as Bishop, pastors, and nurses.

5. The Indonesian Journalists' Association (PWI) suggests that a research be conducted into the diary of the late Mr. Greg Shackleton, one of the five ill-fated Australian journalists who died in East Timor. The diary is now in the hands of his family in Australia. The diary, which contains authentic reports on the real situation, states the following testimonies:

A. Threats of war, mortar bombardment, and fear overwhelmed them.

On the other hand, the diary showed their carelessness.

The five journalists stayed there despite the Fretilin troops taking position for a war.

B. The diary also clearly indicates their taking side with them as suggested in the following notes:

"11.30 left Balibo,

12.35 arrived Maliana"

"At Maliana gave message to Commandant to send 2 cars back to defend Balibo".

In other section, the diary indicates:

"our troops and", referring to Fretilin troops.

All this indicates their unawareness of the real situation and their consciousness to involve themselves and take side with a certain group of the conflicting parties in East Timor.

6. It was evident that they were aware of the risks and danger. This was clearly indicated in the diary as stated in the following transcription:

"Several

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- 3 -

"Several kilometres back we had signed a letter absolving Pretelin of any responsibility for our safety and well-being. That was additional to the same kind of letter we signed for the Portuguese Government to get into Dilli".

7. They should have known of their possible involvement with one of the warring parties, as had been clearly indicated by Mr. Francisco Lopez da Cruz, the President of UDT and the leader of the Joint Forces in his statement dated October 27, 1975.

8. With all this clarification, the Indonesian Journalists' Association suggested that the Australian Journalists' Association of Victoria should have understood the real situation and should have refrained from displaying unfounded attitudes.

Resorting to a filing ^{of} redemption suit against the Indonesian government could be construed as a confrontation against the entire Indonesian nation, and in particular, a confrontation against journalists who are members of the Indonesian Journalists' Association.

Jakarta, 25th May 1976



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Harmoko
Executive Chairman

[Signature]

Sumardi D.M.
Secretary General