

“THE FILM’S INTERNATIONAL REACH IN FESTIVALS, SPECIAL EVENTS AND WITH CULTURAL AND POLITICAL PRESS AROUND THE GLOBE PRIOR TO BROADCAST HAS BEEN EXCEPTIONAL”

PEER REVIEW COMMITTEE

# THE ACT OF KILLING

In a country where killers are celebrated as heroes, the filmmakers challenge unrepentant death squad leader Anwar Congo and his friends to dramatise their role in the Indonesian genocide.

But their idea of being in a movie is not to provide testimony for a documentary: they want to be stars in their favourite film genres - gangster, western, musical. They write the scripts. They play themselves. And they play their victims.

The hallucinatory result is a cinematic fever dream, an unsettling journey deep into the imaginations of mass murderers and the shockingly banal regime of corruption and impunity they inhabit.

## WHAT THE CRITICS SAID

“audacious, horrifying, boldly experimental plunge into the mindset of murderers and the culture of impunity” *Washington Post*

“every frame is astonishing” *The Guardian*

“surreal, disturbing, timeless...could well change how you view the documentary form” *LA Times*



“I HAVE ALWAYS WONDERED WHY I WAS FORCED TO BE TERRIFIED DISCUSSING COMMUNISTS. WHEN I GREW UP THEN I LEARNED IT WAS ALL A POLITICAL COVER UP. THERE IS SO LITTLE INFORMATION ABOUT THOSE ERA (1965-1966), NOT ENOUGH FOR INDONESIANS TO STUDY.”

INDONESIAN VIEWER

## WHO SAW IT

100

### FESTIVALS

in 57 countries

Premiered at Toronto International Film Festival 2012

1000

### COMMUNITY SCREENINGS

in 118 cities

21

### CINEMA

Released in 21 countries in Europe, Asia, US and Latin America. 29 screens so far in the US.

1 Nov 2012, Indonesia premiere

10 Dec 2012, Indonesia release

21

### TELEVISION

Presold to 21 countries in Europe, Asia, US and Latin America

A documentary 'Indonesian Killing Fields' was produced by Al Jazeera Asia TV for the Indonesian market

### DVD

To be released Autumn 2013

29

### AWARDS AND PRIZES

including 5 Audience Awards, 4 Best Film Awards

1.3M

### ONLINE TRAILER

1,321,665 views

350K

### WEBSITE

[www.TheActofKilling.com](http://www.TheActofKilling.com)

352,418 unique visits

6.6K

### EMAIL LIST

6653 views

22K

### SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

8235 Facebook Likes

10,372 members signed up to Jagal's Facebook page (Indonesian version)

3935 Twitter followers @TheActofKilling



## **THE CAMPAIGNERS**

The outreach team in Indonesia is run by a group of seasoned human rights activists, journalists, freedom of expression advocates, and filmmakers working in collaboration with the Danish production company, Final Cut for Real, under the auspices of Partisipasi Indonesia.

## **CAMPAIGN AIMS**

The team hoped to catalyse a fundamental change in how the 1965-66 genocide is understood in Indonesia and internationally, exposing how the present day climate of impunity and corruption is built on the celebration of mass murder by victorious perpetrators. In Indonesia, the killers won and have, along with their protégés, been in power ever since. They built and maintain a regime of fear and corruption by celebrating genocide as something heroic. The film sought to expose this regime and help a reappraisal of the 1965-66 atrocities.

The campaign aimed to generate a nationwide critical discussion about how this terrifying past lives on in the present in order to energise Indonesian efforts to demand an official apology, a truth commission, a reconciliation process, and an end to impunity, corruption and the use of gangsters in business and in politics.

**THE TEAM HOPED TO CATALYSE A FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE IN HOW THE 1965-66 GENOCIDE IS UNDERSTOOD IN INDONESIA AND INTERNATIONALLY**

## **HOW THE CAMPAIGN WORKED**

### **IN INDONESIA**

Political censorship prevents the distribution of *The Act of Killing* in commercial cinemas in Indonesia; a film has to be submitted formally to the censors before it can be legally distributed in a cinema. If the film is banned, it becomes a crime even to own a copy of the film, as well as screen it. That, in turn, would be an excuse for the military or the paramilitary group to physically attack screenings.

To avoid this scenario, the team held invitation only screenings throughout Autumn 2012 at the National Human Rights Commission for the editors and publishers of Indonesia's main news outlets, leading filmmakers, historians, human rights advocates, survivors organizations, writers and educators. Without exception, viewers were profoundly moved by the film. Having convened this network, the team are encouraging screenings for its constituent organisations and networks, providing DVDs and guidance about how to screen the film safely in closed settings.

On International Human Rights Day, 10th December 2012, leaders of Indonesia's civil society held 50 screenings in 30 cities. Most screenings were by invitation, but ranged from 30 to 600 attendees. Some organisers decided to do this public in a gesture intended to signal that Indonesia is no longer a military dictatorship. Luckily, all screenings passed without incident,

# THE CAMPAIGN



although the police forced organisers to cancel one in Central Java and paramilitaries tried to stop another - but were persuaded by the organisers to allow it to go ahead.

## OUTSIDE INDONESIA

The film has screened to critical acclaim all across the world. While still relatively early in its distribution cycle the following is a small demonstration of how the film has sparked debate which is culturally specific to other locations outside Indonesia:

*After the festival in Istanbul, the festival organizers took the film on a tour of Turkish Kurdistan, Armenia and even Jenin and Ramallah and the West Bank. The film created much debate amongst the Turkish audience*

*regarding the genocide in Armenia.*

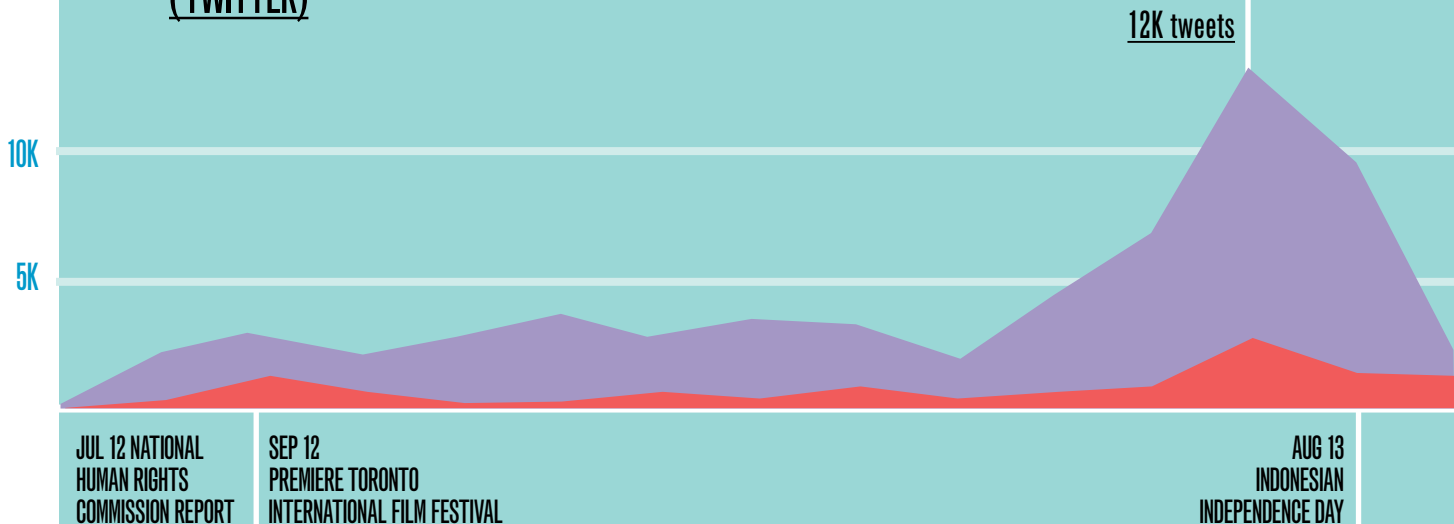
Yingde village near Guangzhou, in China, comprising Chinese-Indonesian refugees from 1965, will screen the film after its Beijing Film Festival premieres in Spring 2014. Beijing had initially rejected the film for political reasons but subsequently accepted it because of its international prominence.

In the US the "Say Sorry for 65" petition – intended to exert international pressure on a President who cares about his international reputation – has been launched in conjunction with the theatrical release.

**AT FIRST BEIJING REJECTED THE FILM FOR POLITICAL REASONS, BUT SUBSEQUENTLY CAME BACK AND ACCEPTED IT BECAUSE OF ITS INTERNATIONAL PROMINENCE**

## KEYWORD MENTIONS ONLINE

### (TWITTER)



**KEY** • “THE ACT OF KILLING” (TWITTER) • “INDONESIAN KILLING / INDONESIAN DEATH SQUAD” (TWITTER)



## THE FILM

## THE CAMPAIGN

## IMPACT & ACHIEVEMENTS

July 2012

NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS  
COMMISSION INDONESIA  
PUBLISHES ITS REPORT  
ON THE ATROCITIES

Sept 2012

WORLD PREMIERE  
TORONTO INTERNATIONAL  
FILM FESTIVAL

Oct 2012

CLOSED SCREENINGS FOR  
INDONESIAN MEDIA

TEMPO MAGAZINE SPECIAL  
EDITION PUBLISHED

Dec 2012

INTERNATIONAL HUMAN  
RIGHTS DAY  
50 screenings in 30  
Indonesian cities

Feb 2013

BERLINALE

600 NEW ARTICLES  
PUBLISHED ON THE  
ATROCITIES IN INDONESIA  
  
PARAMILITARIES  
ATTEND SCREENING IN  
A PEACEFUL MANNER

Aug 2013

INDONESIAN  
INDEPENDENCE DAY

Sept 2013

ANNIVERSARY OF THE START  
OF THE 1965 ATROCITIES  
Film geoblocked for free  
download in Indonesia

45 screenings  
announced publicly  
for the first time

Autumn  
2013

START OF DVD RELEASE  
& TV BROADCASTS

PRODUCTION BUDGET

€ 1,373,380

CAMPAIGN BUDGET

€ 53,841

## SCREENINGS

Not usually considered a measure of impact in and of itself, the political circumstances of Indonesia lend special relevance to the Indonesian screenings the team has managed to facilitate and support. The team's main contribution in building partners' capacity has been to support development of a distribution model generating maximum discussion, without physical violence, around issues previously considered too sensitive to discuss publicly. Venues have included:

- A remote jungle, where locals gathered around a tube television
- Jakarta's largest multiplex which was packed to capacity, despite the entire neighbourhood being flooded and without power (the cinema used a generator)
- University lecture halls so full that some of the 700 guests stood in the aisles
- The site of a mass grave, where children of victims and perpetrators gathered together to watch the film and where, as a result of the screening, survivors are now able to pray without fear of attack by the perpetrators' children

It is difficult to track the exact number of screenings in Indonesia. In the sample period from May to August 2013 alone, 1,096 DVDs were sent out to 118 cities in 29 of Indonesia's 33 provinces. People receiving DVDs have often held several screenings, however, and individuals and organisations hosting screenings between December 2012 and April 2013 are likely to have done the same.

Since August 2013 there has been a movement in Indonesia calling for public screenings of the film. There were 45 publicly announced screenings on 17 August (the anniversary of Indonesian Independence Day, 1945) in various cities in Indonesia. September 30th is the anniversary of the start of the 1965-66 atrocities in Indonesia and there is a campaign

## **THE TEAM'S MAIN CONTRIBUTION IN BUILDING PARTNERS' CAPACITY HAS BEEN TO SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF A DISTRIBUTION MODEL THAT GENERATES A MAXIMUM AMOUNT OF DISCUSSION, WITHOUT PHYSICAL VIOLENCE, AROUND ISSUES PREVIOUSLY CONSIDERED TOO SENSITIVE TO DISCUSS PUBLICLY**

to screen the film openly from that date - a significant step forward. The Indonesian rights to the film have been given formally to the people of Indonesia and on that date the film was geoblocked for free download

across the country.

The willingness to hold public screenings is a result of the high level of support for the film among tastemakers in Indonesia (filmmakers, celebrities, writers, educators, etc.), JRX, for example, the songwriter/drummer of the Bali punk band Superman Is Dead,

re-tweeted the news about the free download to his 250,000 followers: @JRX\_SID.

## CHANGE IN DISCOURSE

The most important indicator of change resulting from the film will be an analysis of how the 1965-66 genocide is reexamined via the discourse around these events.

A special edition of Indonesia's premier newsmagazine, Tempo, praising the film as "the most important work in any medium ever produced about our nation," exemplifies how this is being achieved.

When the film premiered at the Toronto Film Festival it became a major news story in Indonesia. The press started to report on the film despite neither having seen it or interviewed the director. The team realised the press needed to see the film as quickly as possible and, immediately after Toronto, held screenings at the National Human Rights Commission for Indonesia's leading journalists, including the editors of Tempo.

One of the editors then screened the film for the entire editorial team at the Tempo office. Tempo decided it would break its silence on the genocide and amass its own fresh evidence. The magazine sent a team of 47 journalists, 4 project managers, 12 editors, 3 researchers, 2 photo researchers, 3 translators around the country looking to find other perpetrators who would talk about their crimes. This resulted in 75 pages

of killers' testimony from around the country, published alongside coverage of the film itself, and is unprecedented in the history of Indonesian journalism. Until now, Indonesia's national media has tended either to not discuss the massacres or refer to them as something positive. As of February 2013 there were over 600 new Indonesian press articles reexamining the genocide.

Tempo won the Yap Thiam Hien human rights award for this investigation. In the award committee's decision, the judges praise Tempo Magazine's special edition about the 1965 killings and *The Act of Killing* film as a prime example of human rights struggle through journalism.

So far there are indications that inside Indonesia, the rise in awareness has been so extensive that perpetrators and

their collaborators can no longer can boast about what they've done. Stanley Prasetyo, Indonesian National Human Rights Commissioner, said at a workshop held at the Movies That Matter Festival in the Netherlands, "Because of *The Act of Killing*, killers in Indonesia no longer boast about what they did, because they know the society

will no longer accept it as heroic. This is a significant step in the fight against impunity, and means perpetrators themselves can no longer lie to themselves about what they've done in the same way. It also means survivors no longer must listen to the intimidating boasting of the perpetrators who live around them."

Franz Magnus Suseno, a leading Indonesian religious leader, philosopher and theologian has, historically, justified the genocide. After watching the film, he was moved to write an editorial in Indonesia's leading newspaper, Kompas, condemning the genocide as a crime against humanity and saying the film should be mandatory viewing for all Indonesians. This stance made news in Indonesia and went viral on Facebook and Twitter.

Amid this flurry of press coverage, *The Act of Killing* and Jagal Film (Indonesian version)

websites were mysteriously blocked inside Indonesia. This immediately made further headlines in Indonesian media. An online petition was started demanding an explanation from the Minister of Information but none was forthcoming.

For many years Indonesian children have been made to watch the 4 hour government propaganda film, *The Treachery of the Indonesian Communist Party*, every year in school. The film is an account of the gruesome torture and murder of seven generals by communists. While the story has never been completely discredited by historians, it remains the popular and official justification of the "extermination" of the communists from 1965-66 onwards. The story still being a key part of the history curriculum, there was a need to redress the balance and sample surveys showed 51% of

respondents felt that they had learnt something new about history, for example "the killings were organized and not spontaneous" and "we've been brainwashed since childhood by dishonest history lessons".

"From the lessons in school I only remember that they [the communists] killed and oppressed people, that's it," said 23 year-old graduate student Frederika Dapamanis after watching the movie. "I was sad and ashamed."

**"THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD LET THE PEOPLE WATCH THIS MOVIE OPENLY AND LET THE PEOPLE AND THE GOVERNMENT GROW UP... THERE SHOULD BE FREEDOM OF SPEECH, OPEN UP KNOWLEDGE, LEARN AND NOT LET THE TERRIBLE THINGS LIKE 1965-1966 HAPPENED AGAIN. "**

## POLITICAL CHANGE

The team collaborated especially closely with National Human Rights Commissioner Stanley Prasetyo, delivering rushes and transcripts and helping to arrange interviews with the film's subjects, characters or informants, so the Commission could gather further evidence building on the filmmakers' material.

The film's footage and the additional transcripts provided most of the evidence for the North Sumatra section of the report, including some of the most crucial evidence linking the military to civilian death squads. (The perpetrator-focused testimony proved definitive in this regard) The team also gave the Commissioner *Embun Berdarah/Dew of Blood*, a book written by a perpetrator which detailed who, when, where, and how their victims were they killed.

In July 2012, the commission published an 850

page report documenting and condemning the genocide as a crime against humanity and recommending a truth and reconciliation process. Unfortunately being independent of government it has no political power and the Attorney General rejected its report on grounds of insufficient evidence. Djoko Suyanto, Coordinating Minister for Legal, Political and Security Affairs said "The killings were justified because Indonesia would not be what it is today if the killings hadn't taken place."

A ground level intimidatory climate continues to be in evidence, with Pancasila, a paramilitary group featured in the film, beating up a newspaper editor in the presence of police for refusing to retract the headline "World Condemns Pancasila Youth", published in response to the film. 500 members of the group surrounded the newspaper office demanding that the editor print an apology and the police ordered the editor to come out to "negotiate". A general manager appeared and was immediately mobbed by Pancasila Youth members. He was punched repeatedly in the face, suffered bruises as a result. The police sheltered him from further attacks but did not arrest any of the perpetrators.

Three months later, however, after condemnation in the media, 50 members of Pancasila Youth attended a screening which they then discussed, leaving peacefully - a major step forward.

President Sukarno's daughter also saw the film at London's ICA and has since requested further copies of the film for her mother (Sukarno's wife, the Japanese celebrity Dewi Sukarno), and her sister, Megawati Soekarnoputri, the 5th president of Indonesia. Dewi is intending to support the significant Japanese premiere at Yamagata by attending.

Finally, we must not forget the impact on an individual level. Anwar – one of the boastful perpetrators – was very moved by the film, describing it as the film he knew he was making, and that he wanted to make. He said he would remain loyal to the film and he has been in the months since its release.

## CAMPAIGN PARTNERS

- Komnas HAM (Indonesian National Commission of Human Rights) has hosted screenings for high profile Indonesians, including the leading publishers, editors, and producers of Indonesia's news media.
- A professional teacher association
- KontraS (The Commission for The Disappeared and Victims of Violence), both its national headquarters and its many regional branches
- LBH (Legal Aid Foundation)
- AJI (Alliance of Independent Journalists), both in its headquarters and its regional branches in Jakarta, Bandung (West Java), Medan (North Sumatera), Padang (West Sumatera), and Gorontalo (North Sulawesi)
- Student associations and lecturers in Indonesian universities (Universitas Indonesia, Institut Teknologi Bandung, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Institut Seni Indonesia, Universitas Sanata Dharma, Universitas Katolik Atma Jaya Yogyakarta) and many more universities which have screened the film
- Serikat Tani Jambi (Farmers Union of Jambi) in Mekar Jaya village, Jambi
- Labor unions in Indonesia, Hong Kong and Malaysia (guest workers' unions), including Forum Buruh Lintas Pabrik (Inter-Factories Labor Union) and Serikat Buruh Transportasi Perjuangan Indonesia (Indonesian Transportation Labour Union) in Jakarta, Hong Kong Indonesian Migrant Workers' Association, Sekber Buruh (Labour Joint Secretariate) and the SEBUMI (Street Singers Union)
- Survivors Communities. All the major survivors organizations are partners, but one of them, YPKP 65 (headed by Bedjo Untung), has held screenings for survivor families in 84 different cities and towns across Indonesia
- Organisations of Indonesian exiles in Sweden, the Netherlands and Germany





*The Act of Killing* is a rare example of a film that both works to expose a political injustice and has also been lauded for its cinematic inventiveness. This critical acclaim has given the 1965 Indonesian genocide a new audience both inside and outside the country. The goals are ambitious and the team are

clear that the film itself can only hope to contribute to larger conversations that might make an apology, or truth and reconciliation commission possible. However it is already – in a few short months – changing Indonesians’ understanding of their recent history.

**“THE FACT THE PARTNERS IN INDONESIA WERE WILLING TO CONTRIBUTE  
IN SPITE OF THE POLITICAL RISK IS A CREDIT TO BOTH THE PARTNERS AND  
THE TEAM IN MAKING IT WORK”**

PEER REVIEW COMMITTEE

# TEAM BIOGRAPHY



## DIRECTOR AND CO-PRODUCER

Born 1974, Texas, USA. JOSHUA OPPENHEIMER has worked for over a decade with militias, death squads and their victims to explore the relationship between political violence and the public imagination. Educated at Harvard and Central St Martins, London, his award-winning films include *The Globalization Tapes* (2003, co-directed with Christine Cynn), *The Entire History Of The Louisiana Purchase* (1998, Gold Hugo, Chicago Film Festival, Telluride Film Festival), *These Places We've Learned To Call Home* (1996, Gold Spire, San Francisco Film Festival) and numerous shorts. For *The Act of Killing* Oppenheimer moved to Indonesia in 2004, learning the language and immersing himself in the culture.

## CO-DIRECTOR

"ANONYMOUS" is the collective name for the team of over 60 Indonesians who worked on the film, some of them continuously for eight years. They risked their lives and their families' safety knowing that they would not be able to put their names on the film unless there is some real political change in Indonesia. Currently they are not able to tour and present this film in Indonesia.



## PRODUCER

SIGNE BYRGE SØRENSEN has been a producer for 15 years. She began in SPOR Media in 1998, moved to Final Cut Productions ApS in 2004 and founded Final Cut for Real ApS in 2009 where she is CEO. Her focus is on documentaries, and she has, besides several productions in Denmark and Sweden, produced documentaries in South Africa, Zimbabwe, Senegal, Thailand, and Argentina. Signe holds a MA degree in International Development Studies and Communication Studies from Roskilde University, Denmark. Besides *The Act of Killing*, Signe Byrge Sorenson's most recent films include *The Human Scale* and the co-productions *The Pirate Bay - Away from the Keyboard*, *Gulabi Gang* and *Char - No Man's Island*.

## CO-DIRECTOR

CHRISTINE CYNN has been directing documentary and experimental films for the past 14 years. For the last decade, she has been developing new ways to document the human imagination. Educated at Harvard, and the recipient of a Fulbright Scholarship to Uganda, she co-directed *The Globalization Tapes* (2003) with Joshua Oppenheimer. She has written screenplays for FilmFour and was a founding member of the Vision Machine Film Project in London.

## AWARDS & PRIZES

- Winner, Panorama Audience Award, Berlin Film Festival 2013
- Winner, Prize of the Ecumenical Jury, Berlin Film Festival 2013
- Winner, Prize of the SIYAD jury, !F Istanbul 2013 (Turkish Film Critics' Association)
- Winner, Best Feature Documentary, Danish Film Academy 2013
- Winner, Audience Award, FICUNAM, Mexico 2013
- Winner, Movies that Matter Award, ZagrebDox, 2013
- Winner, Best Film, One World, Prague 2013
- Winner, Gilda Vieira de Mello Prize, Geneva International Human Rights Film Festival 2013
- Winner, Special Prize 2013 (Sær-Bodil), Danish Film Critics Association
- Winner, Grand Prize, Festival de Cinéma Valenciennes 2013
- Winner, Special Mention, Critic's Jury, Festival de Cinéma Valenciennes 2013
- Winner, Amnesty International Award, IndieLisboa 2013
- Winner, Grand Prix for Best Film, BelDocs 2013
- Winner, First Prize of the Jury, DocumentaMadrid 2013
- Winner, Audience Award, DocumentaMadrid 2013
- Winner, Audience Award, Planete + Doc Warsaw 2013
- Winner, Grand Prix of Lower Silesia, Planete + Doc 2013
- Winner, Best Film Award (Grand Prize), DocsBarcelona 2013
- Winner, Grand Prize, Sheffield Doc/Fest 2013
- Winner, Grand Prize, Biografilm Festival Italy 2013
- Winner, Grand Prize, Grimstad Short and Documentary Film Festival 2013
- Winner, Basil Wright Prize, Royal Anthropological Institute Film Festival 2013
- Winner, Aung San Suu Kyi Award for Best Documentary, Human Rights, Human Dignity Int. Film Festival Myanmar
- Winner, Audience Award, Sheffield Doc/Fest 2013
- Winner, The Stanley Kubrick Award for Bold and Innovative Filmmaking, Traverse City Film Festival 2013
- Winner, Documentary Grand Prix, Batumi International Art Film Festival 2013
- Winner, Best Nordic Documentary Award, Nordisk Panorama 2013
- Winner, Critic's Prize, St Petersburg Message to Man Film Festival 2013

SPECIAL REPORT

# TEMPO

E N G L I S H



**REQUIEM  
FOR A  
MASSACRE**

OCTOBER 1-7, 2010  
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## 'The Act of Killing' Reopens Old, Long-Buried Wounds in Indonesia

By webadmin on 10:30 pm February 27, 2013  
Category Archive

Andjarsari Paramaditha

Bejo Untung was a 17-year-old Indonesian schoolboy when armed soldiers came to his village in 1965, forcing him on the run for years until he was caught, tortured and jailed.

A communist-led coup attempt had just failed, triggering a wave of arrests and killings that ushered in more than three decades of rigid anticommunist education and propaganda. The subject is still so sensitive it is rarely broached in public.

But now a documentary, "The Act of Killing," made by Texan-born director Joshua Oppenheimer, shines a light on that dark era, focusing on the death squads and torture that seem like a myth to the majority of the Indonesian population.

Oppenheimer came up with the idea for the film while working on a different project in North Sumatra and found many relatives of the Indonesians he was talking to had been killed or imprisoned between 1965 and 1966 for trying to form a union.

Most were too afraid to appear on camera to speak with him and suggested he talk to the killers. He took their advice and was horrified by his findings.

"I ... encountered the boastful and shocking way that the killers were talking about what they did," said Oppenheimer in a telephone interview from Denmark.

"That was for me the beginning of the journey. I realized, my goodness, how is it possible that the perpetrators of mass murder should talk loudly and boastfully and with smiles and laughter."

The film, which runs for nearly two hours and won two prizes at this month's Berlin International Film Festival, re-enacts several murders and features a member of a death squad.

### Death squads

These death squads were operating systematically across Indonesia mostly in the late 1960s. Estimates put as many as one million people dead in a wave of violence after the aborted coup and purge of communists and alleged sympathizers.

The main character in the film, Anwar Congo, was the one of the most feared death squad leaders in the area around the city of Medan in Sumatra.

"I choke them to death, with steel wire around the neck," Congo says in the film, demonstrating in front of the camera how it was done. "And then pull it, sometimes with a pole. It's easier that way and less blood to clean."

Premiered at the Toronto Film Festival in October 2012, "The Act of Killing" took the Panorama Audience Award and the Ecumenical Jury Prize at the recent 2013 Berlin International Film Festival but there have been no official screenings in the country where it took place.

It has been shown in about 265 underground screenings, with secret invitations sent to small groups, but there is the fear that police might try to block the screenings. Still, some 10,000 have been to see it.

The National Police spokesman did not respond to questions asking whether the officers would have tried to stop showings of the film.

Young Indonesians had long been taught that communism was sadistic and evil and given no alternative view to that era.

Until 1998 and the end of the iron rule of Suharto, the leader who took power shortly after the coup, viewing of a violent movie about how six generals and an officer were killed in the coup attempt was compulsory for schoolchildren.

Even last year an attempt by Indonesia's human rights commission to look into the events surrounding the slaughter were effectively blocked by the government.

### "Baby rat was my favorite"

Bejo Untung said the movie reflected accurately what happened to him and many others.

Caught and imprisoned in 1970, Untung survived a year of torture – beating and electrocution – in prison and then a camp of several hundred men located in Central Jakarta. Three killed themselves while he was there, while others disappeared and were feared to have been killed. He spent eight years in jail without trial, including a stint of brutal forced farm labor.

"Ten of us were forced to stay in a room which can only fit two," he said of his time in one prison. "We slept like layered cake, my head facing another inmate's toes so we could breathe while we slept."

Most of the protein in his diet came from "anything that moved" in the fields, including frogs, rats, snakes and crabs.

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September Edition

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PR Newswire  
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# 'The Act of Killing' helps Indonesia confront its dark past

By Dean Irvine, CNN

September 30, 2013 — Updated 0817 GMT (1817 HKT)



"The Act of Killing" follows unrepentant death squad leader Anwar Congo, center, as he and others reenact their violent acts from 48 years ago. It has had a big impact in Indonesia as the country struggles to address the anti-communist purges that led to an estimated 1 million deaths.

## Living in fear and confronting the past

HIDE CAPTION

### STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- Anti-communist purges across Indonesia sparked by failed coup on September 30, 1965.
- Many victims' families still unable to talk openly about the period when up to 1 million believed killed.
- Documentary that shows events from perpetrators' view having impact on changing attitudes.
- Filmmaker says film will be free for all in Indonesia to watch online from September 30, the coup's anniversary.

**Denpasar, Bali (CNN)** — On a traffic-choked street in Bali's capital, Denpasar, Edo walks through his family's shop to an empty back room.

Only there does he feel safe enough to explain why he's afraid.

"Well, it's because probably the killers are still out there," he says.

The killers he refers to are those who Edo believes are responsible for the murder of his grandfather, one of between 500,000 and 1 million people estimated by human rights groups to have been killed by military death squads during anti-communist purges across Indonesia in 1965 and 1966.

The mass killings were sparked by a failed coup on September 30, 1965 and the murder of a number of generals in the military. A major general in the army at the time, Suharto blamed the coup on communists, ousted President Sukarno — the country's first post-independence leader — and sanctioned the hunt for those responsible. After assuming the presidency in 1967, Suharto ruled Indonesia for 31 years until 1998.

Many contend those targeted during the purges were not communists but ethnic Chinese, or anyone with left-wing views.

Some asked, "Why are you opening up old wounds?" But the wounds are still open wide.

Edo describes how his grandfather had been kidnapped from his home late one night, targeted he believes because of his work with a government organization set up to integrate ethnic Chinese and local Balinese.

"Everything broke down after that. The family business and their home was burned down, they lost everything and had to start from scratch," says Edo.

"I am pretty sure one uncle of mine knows who did it. (The murderers) are still alive and around and I still have my fear."

For thousands like Edo in Bali and across the rest of Indonesia, confronting that fear and addressing this brutal period in the country's history is something most have been unwilling or unable to do openly.

Many worry that publicly dissenting from official versions of the events and coup — ingrained through Suharto-era propaganda, like the 1984 film "Treachery of G30S/PKI" — could lead to retribution from those connected to the killings. More often than not, killers and victims' families still live in the same communities.

"It's like the Nazis winning and then they are still in the government," says Edo. "People live with fear, they are afraid to get involved."



However things are slowly changing. That Edo is now facing his fears in part comes from the impact of "The Act of Killing," a new documentary by American director Joshua Oppenheimer.

While books and other films have told some of the survivors' stories, Oppenheimer's film recounts for the first time the violence from

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