



DATELINE:
Wednesday, November 3 at 8.30pm

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PNG: JUNGLE JUSTICE

“We bashed them up, we hit them with huge irons...I apologise for what I have done but I followed orders because I wanted bread and butter like any other employee.”

Whistleblower Emmanuel Bani

On SBS *DATELINE* on Wednesday, November 3 at 8.30pm reporter Bronwyn Adcock confronts Papua New Guinea’s biggest logging company with allegations that there is a culture of violence and cover-up at the heart of logging operations in the Western Province.

In this report –

Adcock speaks to Constable Emmanuel Bani, a member of an elite police unit, the Southern Command Task Force, who is putting himself at great personal risk by speaking out. Bani says that there is a police understanding that he and his fellow officers were expected to use violence on workers and landowners. He also says he sometimes took orders to that effect directly from RH’s local management on the ground.

Bani says he now regrets his actions but did not want to disobey orders and was also financially motivated. He says the company paid him a daily allowance and on top of this the local manager gave him lump sum payments.

Covering up the police brutality in the logging camps was also part of his job, Bani claims. He describes escorting two landowners who had major injuries. He says he told the victims to say they had been involved in an accident and adds, “So we told them that (if) you say anything you’ll be killed.”

These allegations are similar to those made by landowners John Danaiye and Menale Kulu who also say police violence intimidates people who oppose RH’s logging policy. Danaiye comments, “The police aren’t following government policy. Are they working for the company or for the government?”

Sister Maimiyato Kasel who previously worked at a clinic in a logging camp in the Western Province says that victims of police violence were not transferred to towns, where their injuries would attract attention. “They don’t allow doctors to make a report or a referral letter to send them out to bigger hospitals in Port Moresby and Daru.”

Rimbunan Hijau denies that it condones or encourages police brutality. It says that if individual policemen or commanders use violence they should be disciplined. The company says that it pays police an official allowance to cover incidentals but does not pay them lump sums. It also says that it has a good relationship with landowners and that the Task Force is only flown into an area when there is a genuine law and order issue.

For more information please contact SBS publicist Verity Leatherdale on (02) 9430 3784.

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