

## A ZOOM INTERVIEW WITH US JOURNALIST MR. JORDAN CORNISH

### *The Ninth Door*

*The ninth door depicts the entry point of myself (James Jimmy Wangia) into the human rights fight in revenge for my brother namely (John Wangia) who lost his life in the hands of perpetrators while he was scavenging for Gold at the Anawe Dumpsite. Notably his death was listed on the death toll as number nine (9) from the previous eight (8) deaths who lost their life from brutal attack by the Barrick Security Guards. Before I give an account of my personal experience in the type of work I endured in the human rights fight and to further elaborate on the book “the shooting field”, let me make title to this document as the ninth (9th) door in order to pay respect to my late brother John Wangia because if it wasn't from his dead, I wouldn't be writing this document.*

*In other words, the key that opened the 9<sup>th</sup> door had created an unravelling journey for me going through twist and turns gaining full-bodied personal experiences. The ninth Door opens up a pathway through the wilderness filled with pain, struggles and ongoing suffering but the ending is yet to come. As the saying goes dangerous journey always leads to beautiful destinations BUT let's be patient as we journeyed to the end.*

*Evidently, we had a registry with PJV grievance Office under the Grievance # 3936 and this is the magic number we obtained as a permit to travelled the journey and contains all the genuine claims from the Porgera Valley, Enga and PNG for 16 solid years.*

### **HISTORICAL EXPERIENCES**

*After the burial of my brother in 2004, I unite myself with like-minded individuals who also had lost their man previously in the same nature of death as my brother. I realised there were eight (8) of them including myself which adds on to the list to make it nine (9). As we gather, we compromised to form an association now ATA to represent those eight (8) deaths to seek compensation from the PJV mine. We were nine (9) custodians representing the nine (9) deceased that took the long journey out of that so called 9th Door.*

*Soon after the birth of Akali Tange Association (ATA), we took the first step forward to hold a protest over the death of my late brother John Wangia where some of our participants were attacked by the Mine Police in the course of the event. The news of protest became widespread that many custodians of the*

*deceased joined us together with the other victims of injury, dynamo blast and rape. Our first step to protest under the ATA banner brought into our house all the like-minded individuals whom are both victims and custodians of death.*

*As a result of the protest, we were formally invited by PJV where we formed a death committee whom were representatives of the Akali Tange Association. The death committee were in conversation with the PJV Community Affairs Officer and submitted our compensation claim of thirty (30) million kina for the nine (9) deceased. On the contrary, we received the feed- back from PJV as you can see below (a paragraph from the letter);*

*“If you believe however that the PJV was negligent by failing to take steps to prevent the deceased from trespassing on land over which the PJV holds licence granted to it by the State, the appropriate course for you to take is to issue court proceedings against the PJV.” This was a feedback by Brad Gordon during his term as the Mine General Manager when we vied for the K30 Million Compensation Claim.*

*Afterwards, we were on our foot trying every avenue for legal help were we had engaged legal firms but our work with them were delayed due to the hefty legal fees they had charged us. We also discussed the matter with MP for Madang Peter Yama in that time where he willingly addressed it in the National Parliament of Papua New Guinea. Yet we didn't receive any favourable feedback from the Government about the matter. We strived and took another direction into research where we hired consultants to research and do a write-up or book for us about the pressing human rights issues currently happening on the ground in Porgera as a result of the PJV Mining activities. As a result, of our research done the book titled “The Shooting Field” was produced (find the book on internet). The Book was uploaded to the various human rights internet websites for viewing as we were also searching for help from partners abroad.*

*Hopefully, we caught someone on the internet and she was Catherine Couman, now our partner representative from the Mining Watch Canada – Most of us see her as our saviour, hero and champion in the human rights fight we carried in the Porgera Valley. In actual fact she is our cornerstone in our work and resembles the color of the Bird Of Paradise we see in our PNG Flag. After Catherine settled in, the other international counterparts also joined her in the likes of; Amnesty International where research been done and articles were produced like the “Gold Pot” a book by the Amnesty International.*

*Further, we had student researchers from Harvard and Columbia University visiting us for research through their organized human rights clinic set-up. The arrangement was on-going for more than two (2) years where foreign students (American) come to us for research purposes. All organized by our strong international partner Catherine*

*Couman. At a later date afterwards in 2013 Catherine introduced us to a legal US based firm known as Earth Rights International (ERI).*

*On the same note, ERI was purposely attached with us to categorize our claims under a legal strategy to file lawsuit against Barrick. At that time Barrick used Porgera Remedy Framework Association (PRFA) which resulted in an out of court settlement where raped victims were compensated through legal waiver arrangement. However, the legal waiver arrangement were discovered as flawed after the 119 women who got K50,000 each under PRFA complained that their other eleven (11) women counterparts were compensated K150,000 under a different arrangement from Earth Rights International (ERI). Those were the raped cases being compensated with one or two of death cases included as well but the situation closed the remedy program due to the conflict from the unequal distribution of compensation package.*

*Moving on to 2015, when we registered all our cases with the Barrick Grievance Office under our grievance number 3936 allocated by Barrick to Akali Tange Association (ATA). During those time, Barrick hired consultant ENODO Rights came in to closed the backlog issue of human rights violation claims through an investigative report. However, ENODO was unsuccessful in its investigations leaving the backlog of cases still pending. In addition, Barrick also hired another Consultant the Business Social Responsibility (BSR) to conduct research into the outstanding human rights issues and to provide recommendations on how best for us to deal with those issues. The BSR report eventually completed in 2018 together with its ten (10) recommendations for Barrick to follow (there has been a recommendation for an independent OGM). However, Barrick refused its own consultant (BSR) hired to do the job until the time of licence renewal in August 2019 where the mine was shut-down by PNG Government – an issue arising from legacy matters where Barrick failed it's Client Social Responsibility (CSR) which late last year was the new mine agreement signing and process been deferred and continue to this year 2022.*

*Up to this date (12th January 2022) we are focusing to battle in the US or Canadian Court of Justice against Barrick Gold Corporation. We are optimistic of our step in that direction because we felt this should end all the miserables we've been through in the course of finding justice for our poor marginalized victims.*

### ***SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS:***

***1:*** *When I asked Barrick for Compensation through the Death Committee, Barrick in a letter from its General Manager Brad Gordon advised me to take matter to Court if I felt that barrack was wrong. With Brad's remark I already knew from that time that the matter would only be solved by the court of justice.*

***2:*** *The Book "The shooting Field"Justice to Prevail emphasized on the purpose of the Akali Tange Association (ATA). We collectively wrote shooting field to provide*

evidence to legal suit against Barrick but it was delayed ever since it was first produced. The Book depicts our struggle to get justice for what we truly deserved.

**3:** Catherine Couman's from Mine Watch Canada catching up with us had open door for all our international allies to reach us and work with us and there as well came ERI involvement which ends up in the out of court settlement issues faced by the women raped victims(as stated above). The 119 women who received 50,000 kina must receive another additional 150,000 kina to balance their other eleven (11) women counterparts.

**4:** Barrick knowingly pretends that there are no more cases or claims to be held against her by hiring ENODO rights to close all claims against her through an investigative report. Barrick knew of the 940 backlog cases held in her Grievance Office yet denied by stating that all claims held against Barrick were settled. In addition, Barrick should be held accountable for all the claims held against her rather than focusing on rape cases and trying to escape death and injury related claims.

**5:** Lastly, ATA expenses in the running of human rights occasions, events and the ongoing of its office at Yanjkona, Porgera Station for the last sixteen (16) years needs to be compensated as number one (1) priority. It's through the continuous effort of ATA that bears fruit for everyone to access, ATA in parable tor simple reference is the owner of the Garden where every other human rights defender come to plant their seeds. When it's time to harvest respect has to be given where it is due first before harvesting.

### **CONCLUSION:**

To conclude let me say that ATA grievance number 3936 had to go to court because in the first place when I asked for compensation for my late brother, I was given an option through feedback correspondence by PJV General Manager to file lawsuit against PJV or Barrick. Thus, the last bit of my journey is to take the matter or legal issues to court fulfilling the first book titled "The Shooting Field Justice to Prevail". All in All a few more steps before the #3936 journey end .