

He Wouldn't Hesitate to Kill

"I always keep a machete under the bag I use as a pillow. If they really want to kill me, I won't hesitate in killing them first."

Darkness, silence and anger made for a frightening night that night. The sound of the boat's engine suddenly stopped. The 18 people on board panicked.

It was silent, not a single word was said. Passengers from the Middle East looked at each other and worried quietly. Meanwhile, the two Indonesians on board, the captain and crew member, were busy working.

The tuna fishing boat oscillated in the Indian Ocean. It was October 12, 2010, and the boat left the southern part of Java Island three days earlier to reach its destination, Christmas Island, Australia.

Night had just begun, but the situation in the middle of the ocean quickly turned dark. The boat engine suddenly stopped. Andri, the crew member, walked down to the engine room.

There were two engines in front of him, the main and back-up engines. The back-up engine stopped after running for about 20 hours. The main engine had already stopped one day earlier. Andri's effort to turn on the engine was unsuccessful.

He was surprised when he returned to the deck; a group of passengers had gathered in front of the navigation room. One of them swung a wooden stick and threatened him with his limited English. "Where are we? We're going to kill you both!" he threatened while swinging his stick.

Andri was very scared – it could be end of his life, or he could end someone else's life instead. What crossed his mind was how to survive.

"I always keep a machete under the bag I use as a pillow. If they really want to kill me, I wouldn't hesitate to kill them first," Andri admitted.

In this moment of terror, spotlights suddenly pointed at their boat from every direction. Orders to remain silence and to put their hands in the air were called out.

It turned out that they were Australian border patrol boats. They seized Andri's boat that carried illegal immigrants from the Middle East. Andri was relieved but also scared.

Himself, the captain and 16 passengers from the Middle East were saved before the boat sank. However, they also got caught which meant that the Sukabumi born boy would still face major problems.

At that time, Andri was underage. Despite the serious charge of human smuggling, he was still a minor at 15 years old. He was born in 1995 and caught in October 2010.

The Australian government, however, didn't consider him a minor. By using hand x-rays, Andri was considered old enough to be arrested as an adult.

Indra (not his real name) experienced the same treatment as Andri. He was a crew member on a similar type of boat caught carrying eight illegal immigrants from the Middle East.

Indra was caught by the Australian border patrol on December 15th, 2010. His seven day journey was longer than Andri's. It was the end of the year, the peak of the western monsoon season, and there a lot of storms. Fortunately, Indra's boat survived the fierce storms when approaching Christmas Island.

At about 09:00 local time, two patrol boats approached them. They tried to flee but big waves made them unable to maneuver their medium sized tuna boat. The patrol boats were far more sophisticated.

"We were stuck, one (patrol) boat at the front was covered by big waves," stated Indra.

The stories about Andri and Indra are only a couple of the many unpleasant stories about children being abused to smuggle humans. Many other children have been caught by Australian authorities in similar cases. The Indonesian Foreign Ministry records 23 Indonesian children arrested in Australia. The government is trying to gain their release.

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