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Foreign Correspondent: Accused

A two-part special airing Tuesday June 14 & 21 at 9.30pm on ABC & iview

A puff of rumour grew into a tempest of accusations that led to the jailing of seven people for alleged child abuse at an elite international school in Jakarta. Was justice served - or was it a case of moral panic?

Canadian couple Neil and Tracy Bantleman came to Indonesia as idealistic young teachers in search of adventure. They scored dream jobs at the prestigious Jakarta International School, teaching the scions of wealthy Indonesians and expats.

Now Neil Bantleman is serving 11 years in a Jakarta jail after being convicted of sexually assaulting three little boys.

It's like, is this a movie? Is this a nightmare? – Neil Bantleman

A westerner accused of preying on the children of the nation's elite... The case triggered a media frenzy, transfixed the Indonesian public and galvanised prosecutors. But Bantleman is not alone: teaching assistant Ferdi Tjong was jailed for alleged child abuse. So too were five school cleaners, including a woman. A sixth cleaner died, suspiciously, in police custody.

My eyes were burned with cigarettes. They stapled my ear. They hit me with a metal chair and a hose – one of the male cleaners who say they were beaten into making confessions

Critics call this case a serious miscarriage of justice, citing the alleged torture and a general absence of credible evidence. Now Bantleman, his fellow accused and their supporters are fighting to clear their names.

Foreign Correspondent goes behind the scenes of that fight and traces the scandal from its beginnings, when a mother first alleged an assault on her five-year-old son...

So the man grabbed him and locked him in the toilet and undressed him – mother at school parents' meeting

... to the same boy's identification of the cleaners - who were promptly arrested and paraded before a media pack - and the subsequent allegation that put Bantleman and Tjong in jail.

They had been abusing our children and threatening all of them with "I'm going to kill your mum or dad if you tell them what happened here" – mother of schoolboy

This two part investigation by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and Foreign Correspondent asks hard questions about an extraordinary case that has seen seven people jailed and another die in police hands.

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