



## Cyanide traces in coffee mystery of wayan mirna salihin's death

**Raimun M. Yunus Diu**

Faculty of Law, Universitas Negeri Gorontalo, Gorontalo, Indonesia. E-mail  
raimunyusdiu@gmail.com

### ARTICLE INFO

#### Keywords:

Cyanide;  
Evidence;  
Law.

#### Article history:

Received Nov 25, 2024;  
Revised Nov 30, 2024;  
Accepted Feb 21, 2025;  
Online Apr 30, 2025.

### ABSTRACT

The legal evidence procedure in the Wayan Mirna Salihin murder case, involving Jessica Kumala Wongso, is examined in this paper. Cyanide content is the key evidence. The research evaluates the validity and robustness of scientific evidence, specifically toxicological analysis, and how it is incorporated into the Indonesian criminal justice system using normative legal methodologies with descriptive-analytical and juridical-empirical approaches. The study data comprises legislation, court papers, and secondary legal information from scientific publications and journals. Results of the research show that cyanide levels in coffee is important to confirming murder. CCTV video, toxicological expert testimony, and motivation analysis convinced the court that Jessica mixed cyanide. The defense team questioned the laboratory test procedure and the absence of direct witnesses, casting doubt on this evidence. The Indonesian court system uses scientific and circumstantial evidence, yet popular opinion and controversy still affect justice views. Jessica was sentenced to 20 years in jail. This research concludes that Indonesia's legal evidence system needs improvement, particularly in scientific evidence management and proof criteria. Improvements to judicial openness and forensic competence are suggested to achieve substantive justice in difficult instances.

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#### Corresponding Author:

Raimun M. Yunus Diu,  
Faculty of Law,  
Universitas Negeri Gorontalo,  
Jl. Jendral Sudirman, No. Gorontalo, Gorontalo, 96128, Indonesia  
Email: raimunyusdiu@gmail.com

### 1. Introduction

Indonesia's criminal justice system protects society, upholds justice, and deters criminals (Imran et al., 2024). Existentialism and environmental destruction: Should polluters incur criminal charges or existential crisis? (Imran et al., 2024). This system requires a fair and objective proving procedure for every crime before punishment. Due to the assumption of innocence, law enforcement must prove a person's guilt. The murder of Wayan Mirna Salihin on January 6, 2016, shows how the Indonesian criminal justice system struggles to handle complicated and public-interest cases (Astuti, 2020). This case challenged law enforcement's scientific evidence analysis and raised questions about the legal process's impartiality and integrity (Pandiangan, 2017).

Young lady Wayan Mirna Salihin died after drinking cyanide-laced coffee at Olivier Cafe, Grand Indonesia, Central Jakarta. Mirna was with her pals Jessica Kumala Wongso and Hani Juwita Boon when this tragedy happened. Jessica bought Mirna coffee early at the café (Lyshady et al., 2024). After drinking the coffee, Mirna convulsed and died. Because Jessica was the victim's close friend and the crime included cyanide poison, this tragedy garnered widespread attention. After many investigations and crime scene examinations, authorities revealed that Mirna's coffee contained fatal cyanide (Gunawan & Harahap, 2020). This revelation prompted tremendous curiosity, particularly since Jessica was designated the main suspect.

The prosecution and the general public paid close attention to the significance of scientific evidence in criminal trials after Wayan Mirna Salihin's death, which was supposedly caused by coffee laced with cyanide. The trial's reliance on forensic science, and the chemical analysis of the coffee in particular, was crucial. A foundation of contemporary judicial systems is scientific evidence, which is often seen as impartial and dependable. This focus, however, runs the risk of obscuring other forms of contextual evidence, such as analyses of motivation, circumstantial evidence, or witness testimony.

Here, one wonders whether the case's larger context was adequately considered due to the emphasis on cyanide residues and forensic results. The justice system's ability to maintain objectivity and balance in its rulings is at jeopardy if it becomes too preoccupied with scientific evidence to the exclusion of other types of evidence. This study aims to investigate the relationship between scientific evidence and contextual evidence in court cases, specifically evaluating how scientific evidence may either support or overshadow other important factors in the quest for justice.

To maintain justice in Indonesia's criminal system, evidence is essential (Arief et al., 2023). This case is complicated since cyanide was used as a murder weapon, requiring extensive scientific examination. Police and a forensic lab determined the coffee's toxic composition. Laboratory testing showed that Mirna's coffee's cyanide might kill quickly (Anbiyaa & Purnomo, 2024). This is crucial proof. However, linking the poison to Jessica as the offender is difficult. In court, the prosecution presented circumstantial evidence showing Jessica had the chance and desire to perform the conduct. CCTV video showed Jessica coming early to the café and placing something in a coffee cup (Prabowo & Purnomo, 2024). Additionally, Jessica and Mirna's tense relationship suggests a motivation (Mahyudin, 2024).

However, this instance is controversial. Some critics said Jessica's case depended too heavily on circumstantial evidence and motivation analysis without firsthand witnesses who observed her add cyanide into coffee (Yanti & Yusuf, 2024). The critique raises serious doubts about Indonesia's criminal justice system's ability to provide justice in forensic evidence and technology situations. Jessica Kumala Wongso's trial lasted months as her lawyers denied all allegations and questioned the evidence. They claimed that Jessica was not directly responsible for Mirna's coffee's cyanide and that the allegations were weak (Cahyawati, 2017).

The case garnered media and public attention, putting pressure on the criminal justice system. Public opinion may impact a trial in numerous ways, including prejudice against the accused or high expectations for the judge's ruling (Purnomo & W, 2024). The court found Jessica guilty and sentenced her to 20 years in jail. The court found enough evidence to convict Jessica of murdering Mirna. This ruling has been contentious, with some supporting the legal action and others believing justice was not properly served (Putri et al., 2024).

The court established a link between Jessica Kumala Wongso and the cyanide poisoning of Wayan Mirna Salihin primarily through circumstantial evidence, as no direct evidence was available. This included CCTV footage showing Jessica handling the coffee before Mirna's arrival, expert testimony regarding the effects and timing of cyanide poisoning, and Jessica's behavior, which the court interpreted as suspicious. Although toxicological evidence confirmed cyanide poisoning, the lack of direct proof that Jessica introduced the cyanide into the coffee

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posed significant challenges, leaving the case reliant on inferences drawn from the available evidence. Furthermore, public pressure heavily influenced the trial process, with intense media scrutiny and widespread public interest shaping the investigation and prosecution strategies. The heightened societal demand for a definitive outcome likely impacted the court's reliance on circumstantial and scientific evidence, raising concerns about the balance between legal objectivity and the influence of public opinion in such high-profile cases.

The Indonesian criminal justice system deals with complex cases like Wayan Mirna Salihin's cyanide coffee murder. This case also underscores the importance of scientific evidence in poisoning cases. This case also shows that the criminal justice system must change to provide official and substantive justice. To address future issues, Indonesia must enhance law enforcement, increase evidentiary process transparency, and ensure that every judgment is fair, regardless of public pressure or case complexity. Based on explanation, Problem formulation (1) How is Jessica Kumala Wongso's murder case proven? Dan (2) What is the major evidence in this instance, coffee cyanide?

## 2. Method

This paper uses a normative legal research technique to assess the legal evidence process in the Jessica Kumala Wongso murder case, focusing on cyanide content as the key evidence. This research discusses Indonesia's Criminal Procedure Code, which governs criminal law and evidentiary law, and universal criminal justice principles that prioritize fairness, legal certainty, and defendant human rights. This research uses laws, regulations, jurisprudence, and trial documents, as well as criminal law literature, scientific journals, and comparative analysis of other relevant nations' legal systems. This study seeks to determine the validity and strength of cyanide content evidence in determining the defendant's guilt and identify legal and technical challenges in the criminal justice system's scientific evidence process (Ishaq, 2017).

The descriptive-analytical inquiry addresses how to prove Jessica Kumala Wongso's murder. This approach outlines Indonesia's criminal law evidence process, including witness testimony, experts, letters, hints, and defendant admissions under Article 184 of the Criminal process Code. This study examines how Jessica Kumala Wongso's trial judge used all the evidence to convict her. This study investigates how CCTV footage, toxicological expert testimony, and public prosecutor incentives incriminate Jessica. Given the strong public attention that may affect the trial, this technique also examines how the presumption of innocence is applied.

This study addresses the second problem formulation—how coffee cyanide content is the proof—using scientific and legal analysis. This approach checks coffee's cyanide levels for scientific and legal legality. This study examines forensic lab evidence collection, testing, analysis, and court presentation. Scientific evidence may be the basis for forensic processes without witnesses, hence this study examines its reliability and accuracy. This study also investigates the trial argument over laboratory results and their importance to the defendant, specifically how CCTV footage and expert testimony linked Jessica's behavior to cyanide.

This research also addresses the worldwide standard of evidence beyond a reasonable doubt in criminal proceedings (Weinstein & Dewsbury, 2006). This research examines whether the prosecutor's evidence, including cyanide content, proves the defendant's guilt. This research also reveals technical and non-technical biases in scientific evidence interpretation, including public opinion pressures that might impact decision-making. The research uses a juridical-empirical method to analyze the legal, technological, and ethical obstacles of establishing complicated crimes like murder by cyanide poisoning.

This study may enhance Indonesian criminal legislation, notably scientific evidence handling in court. This research should also include practical suggestions to strengthen law enforcement's capacity to handle cases needing in-depth forensic investigation so the criminal justice system may ensure substantive justice in line with national legal principles and international norms. This study compares comparable instances in various countries and legal principles to

understand how high-profile trials analyze evidence. The research compares Indonesian processes to best practices in other countries, such as the use of circumstantial and scientific evidence in the US or Singapore. The study also examines legislative frameworks and judicial interpretations in these nations to improve the Indonesian system. The research uses media content analysis, public polls, and legal expert interviews to assess public opinion's impact on trial results. This technique examines how media narratives and social pressures impact justice perceptions and judicial decision-making, revealing how popular opinion affects legal procedures.

### **3. Analysis and Results**

#### **3.1. Legal Proof Process Against Alleged Murder Involving Jessica Kumala Wongso**

The Wayan Mirna Salihin murder case involving Jessica Kumala Wongso commenced on January 6, 2016 in Olivier Cafe, Grand Indonesia, Central Jakarta. Mirna, Jessica, and Hani Juwita Boon met in the café that day. Jessica came early and ordered numerous drinks, including Mirna-specific Vietnamese iced coffee. They spoke comfortably until Mirna began sipping her coffee. Mirna suffered spasms, vomited, and lost consciousness shortly after drinking the coffee (Handayanti, 2019). The café and her friends rushed Mirna to the closest hospital in an emergency. Unfortunately, Mirna died en route. This stunned many, including Mirna's family, who promptly pressed the authorities for an explanation for her death.

This case started with a crime scene investigation (TKP) at Olivier Cafe. A forensic lab evaluated Mirna's coffee sample. The lab testing confirmed that the coffee had a fatal cyanide dosage. The inquiry suspected Mirna's death was a murder. After additional examination, Mirna's close friend Jessica Kumala Wongso was found to have been at the location before Mirna arrived and ordered the coffee (Gunawan & Harahap, 2020). Jessica was spotted on café CCTV adding something to the coffee before Mirna arrived. This suggests Jessica was involved.

Police deemed Jessica the main suspect after reviewing witness testimony, CCTV video, and toxicological test findings. The circumstantial evidence demonstrated Jessica's motivation, opportunity, and causal tie to Mirna's death. In February 2016, Jessica was arrested and examined extensively. Jessica rejected all charges throughout. She said there was no clear proof linking her to adding cyanide into Mirna's coffee.

Jessica Kumala Wongso's Central Jakarta District Court trial started in June 2016. The trial was one of the most closely observed in Indonesia due to the unique crime, the use of cyanide as a murder weapon, and the victim-suspect link, which aroused community conjecture. At trial, the prosecution called forensic, toxicological, and psychological experts to establish Jessica had the motivation and opportunity to kill. The prosecution showed CCTV video of Jessica's behavior before Mirna arrived and lab test findings confirming cyanide in the coffee. However, Jessica's legal team vigorously disputed the evidence, particularly the laboratory analytical process and evidentiary gaps.

Law enforcement must link Jessica Kumala Wongso's conduct to Wayan Mirna Salihin's death to prove her guilt. Indonesian criminal justice is tested by this method, particularly in situations that use circumstantial evidence and scientific analysis. Article 184 of the Criminal Procedure Code requires proof from witness accounts, experts, letters, hints, and the defendant's confession (Kasidin, 2021). There were no witnesses to Jessica mixing cyanide into Mirna's coffee, therefore hints and forensic analysis were used. The public prosecutor had to use circumstantial evidence to establish a solid legal narrative about Mirna's death and its aftermath.

The prosecution uses CCTV video to establish Jessica had access and the chance to add cyanide into the coffee. Jessica arrives early to Olivier Cafe and orders coffee for Mirna. The prosecution said Jessica may have poisoned the coffee before Mirna arrived. The trial toxicology expert determined that Mirna's coffee contained a fatal quantity of cyanide. This laboratory test

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supports the coffee poisoning theory. Since there is no evidence of Jessica doing the crime, it is difficult to link cyanide to her acts. The prosecution also used Jessica and Mirna's tight relationship before the murder to suggest a motive. Witness accounts indicate that their relationship was strained, which may have led Jessica to do the deed.

Jessica's lawyers opposed this evidential procedure. CCTV video and toxicological test findings were repeatedly disputed by the defense (Wahyuni & Safira, 2024). They claimed that the CCTV film did not show Jessica adding cyanide into the coffee, hence she was not guilty of the murder. The defense team also questioned Mirna's coffee's laboratory tests for contamination or inadequate processes. They noted that no witnesses witnessed Jessica carrying or using cyanide, making the claims against their client hypothetical. Jessica's counsel sought to prove that the prosecutor's evidence was lacking, which should have generated reasonable doubt about the defendant's guilt (Sagala & Rahmi, 2024).

The trial contrasted circumstantial and scientific evidence with criminal legislation. The court had to evaluate each piece of evidence and decide whether it met the "beyond a reasonable doubt." level. This approach was complicated since the case's major evidence was toxicological tests and CCTV video that needed interpretation. The judge had to stay neutral and use only legal evidence under intense public and media pressure. The court found Jessica Kumala Wongso guilty based on the prosecutor's circumstantial evidence. Jessica received a 20-year sentence for premeditated murder of Wayan Mirna Salihin (Lilis et al., 2023).

Despite the ruling, the public and legal professionals discuss the matter. Some argue that the evidence has been extensively evaluated and supports Jessica's conviction. Others say the evidence is too insufficient to prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt, hence the judgment does not completely represent substantive justice (Hermawan & Purnomo, 2023). This case shows how difficult it is for Indonesia's criminal evidence system to handle complicated cases that need law enforcement, forensic specialists, and technology. This case also shows that public opinion and societal expectations may affect trials, even if judges and law enforcement must follow the law and justice.

### **3.2. The Role of Cyanide Content in Coffee as Primary Evidence**

The cyanide concentration in Wayan Mirna Salihin's coffee was crucial to demonstrating her intentional murder. A forensic toxicology lab confirmed that the coffee's cyanide dosage was enough to kill quickly (Gunawan & Harahap, 2020). This discovery supports the theory that Mirna's death was caused by poison in the drink. Cyanide is tangible proof of a crime (*actus reus*), indicating murder. This evidence helps the public prosecutor charge Jessica Kumala Wongso as the primary suspect in a criminal case (Hapsari, 2018).

Coffee's cyanide concentration is the major proof and must be validated scientifically and legally. The trial included toxicology specialists who explained the nature, dose, and effects of cyanide on the body and confirmed that Mirna's coffee had a lethal concentration. This explanation gives the prosecutor scientific evidence that the coffee was poisoned. This evidence is evaluated scientifically and procedurally. To guarantee the evidence is faultless and acceptable in court, the prosecution must establish that the coffee sample and laboratory tests were done legally.

The chain of custody must be properly maintained to prevent contamination or manipulation of this evidence (Lone & Mir, 2019). The prosecutor's preservation of the cyanide evidence helped their case. Cyanide content was also crucial in linking Jessica's conduct to Mirna's death. The prosecution claimed that the coffee's cyanide was human-made. Prosecutor used CCTV video and witness accounts to prove Jessica was the last to have direct coffee access before Mirna arrived. This clip proved Jessica may have mixed the poison into the coffee. The prosecution also attempted to relate the cyanide evidence to Jessica's motivation, notably her and Mirna's personal quarrel. Although motivation is not required to prove a crime, it may assist establish a narrative supporting the defendant's participation (Suciati, 2018).

However, the trial's key evidence—cyanide—presents many obstacles. Jessica's lawyers have questioned this evidence, especially the cyanide detection lab procedure (Nuzan et al., 2023). They contended that contamination or laboratory testing flaws might invalidate the evidence. They also noted that the cyanide evidence did not clearly connect Jessica to adding poison into the coffee, therefore it needed more proof. This led to a lengthy trial dispute about whether the cyanide evidence, although not directly relating to Jessica's acts, was enough to establish a premeditated murder allegation.

This case's judge also considered coffee's cyanide content. The court believed the cyanide evidence, CCTV video, witness accounts, and prosecutor intentions proved Jessica guilty. Citing the cyanide concentration as incontrovertible scientific evidence, the court ruled that Mirna's killing was deliberate (Putri et al., 2024). Those who believe that cyanide evidence without direct witnesses or the defendant's confession is not enough to prove "beyond a reasonable doubt" still disagree with this ruling. This case illustrates the importance of scientific evidence in criminal justice, particularly in circumstances that need in-depth investigation to expose legal realities.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Scientific evidence, including toxicological testing, as well as contextual evidence, like CCTV video, and expert testimony, play an essential part in Indonesian judicial proceedings, as seen in the Wayan Mirna Salihin cyanide coffee case. Its use exposed procedural and interpretive hurdles in court, even though the quantity of cyanide in the coffee was crucial scientific evidence. Adhering to the principles of presumption of innocence and proof beyond a reasonable doubt, judges, prosecutors, and defense counsel must thoroughly evaluate the relevance, reliability, and weight of evidence to achieve justice.

Improving the handling of scientific evidence and increasing trial openness were highlighted in arguments around the quality of evidence and public views after Jessica Kumala Wongso's conviction and incarceration. Implementing a real-time digital recording and live broadcasting of trials, making court papers accessible to the public via an integrated internet system, and enhancing judge training to guarantee impartial evidence appraisal are all practical initiatives that may be taken to promote openness. To further improve accountability, the public may be educated about the judicial process and work together with independent oversight organizations. This case highlights the need of evolving Indonesia's criminal justice system to accomplish substantive justice in complicated instances via the integration of procedural changes and transparent procedures.

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