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<http://www.rsf.org/colombia-journalist-missing-25-07-2012,43106.html>

Americas - Colombia

Free

Guerrillas release journalist after holding her for three weeks

14 August 2012

Elida Parra Alfonso, a journalist working in community relations for a company that is building a major oil pipeline in eastern Colombia, has been released after 20 days as a captive of the National Liberation Army (ELN).

Parra and fellow captive Gina Paola Uribe, who also works on the Bicentennial Pipeline project, were handed over by ELN guerrillas to representatives of the Arauca department Catholic Church, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Ombudsman yesterday morning after an overnight march through the jungle.

See the video of their release (shot by **Reinaldo Talero** of *Telesarare*)

"These past 20 days seemed like an eternity," Parra told Reporters Without Borders. "It was terrible when it rained because we felt even more cold and alone, and we knew we were going to sink up to our knees in the mud. Our fingernails, clothes and feet turned completely yellow. We were allowed to listen to the radio but only a few times."

Parra, who also hosts a programme on *Sarare Estéreo*, a radio station based in Saravena, in Arauca department, said the ELN intended her abduction to be a "warning" to the multinationals operating in Colombia.

She added: "At first, they wanted to chain our feet together but we begged them not to, saying it would be unfair. They regarded me more as a journalist than as someone working in community affairs with the company."

A grenade explosion badly damaged *Sarare Estéreo* and injured one of its presenters on 10 August but the grenade's apparent target was a police station in the same street.

Photo: AFP

02.08.2012 - Guerrillas release video showing kidnapped journalist

A video broadcast yesterday by national *Canal Caracol*, showing journalist and community relations worker **Elida Parra** being guarded by guerrillas of the National Liberation Army (ELN), is the first evidence that Parra is still alive after her abduction in Saravena, in the eastern department of Arauca, by the ELN's "Eastern War Front" on 24 July.

Reinaldo Talero, a journalist working for local *Sarare TV*, community radio station *Sarare Estéreo* and various national media, told Reporters Without Borders that an unidentified man handed him an envelope with a USB flash drive inside that contained the video.

It shows Parra and Gina Paola Uribe, an oil pipeline engineer who was kidnapped the same day as Parra, in the jungle with armed and masked ELN guerrillas. In the video, Parra says they have been treated well, greets her family, thanks the media "for not forgetting them," and appeals to national and international organizations to help obtain their release. Watch the video:

30.07.2012 - Guerrillas say they are holding journalist kidnapped six days ago

The guerrillas of the National Liberation Army (ELN) have announced that they are holding **Elida Parra Alfonso**, the community radio journalist who was kidnapped from her home in Saravena, in the eastern department of Arauca, on 24 July.

The announcement was made in the form of a written communiqué with today's date that was sent to her home. It did not mention any conditions for her release. It was the first news of Parra since her abduction.

25.07.2012 - Community radio host abducted in dangerous region for journalists

There has been no word of community radio journalist **Elida Parra Alfonso** since her abduction yesterday afternoon from her home in Saravena, in the eastern department of Arauca, by two men who took her away in a car.



Parra hosts a programme on children's rights called "Mimos" for Saravena-based radio *Sarare Estéreo* after previously producing its news programme. Since last year, she has had a second job working in community relations for the company overseeing the construction of a major pipeline known as the Bicentennial Pipeline.

"We urge the authorities not to rule out the possibility that Parra's abduction was linked to her journalistic work," Reporters Without Borders said. "The presence of armed groups – the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the National Liberation Army (ELN) and paramilitaries – in Arauca department makes it a dangerous region for all journalists. The authorities must do everything possible to locate her."

Parra's family said she was at home yesterday with her husband, who went out to do some shopping and found the front door open and Parra missing on his return. The staff of *Sarare Estéreo* told the police in May that armed men had been seen near the station.

Bicentennial Pipeline employees have also been threatened by armed groups and construction of the pipeline has been halted for the past 12 days because of threats from ELN guerrillas. Another pipeline employee also reportedly went missing yesterday in Saravena in similar circumstances as Parra.

In 2008, Parra reported getting threats from [paramilitaries](#), who are one of the main [sources of danger for journalists](#) in Colombia.
