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<http://www.rsf.org/colombia-ruling-on-journalist-s-abduction-25-09-2012,43448.html>

Americas - Colombia

Crime against humanity

Ruling on journalist's abduction and torture points way for courts

25 September 2012

Reporters Without Borders is cautiously pleased by attorney-general Eduardo Montealegre's 20 September statement finally recognizing that journalist **Jineth Bedoya Lima**'s torture by alleged paramilitaries in 2000 was a "crime against humanity."

The case was a classic example of the systematic persecution of journalists during Colombia's armed conflict.

"The attorney-general has had to reverse his original rejection of human rights prosecutor Bibiana Orozco's favourable ruling," Reporters Without Borders said. "We demand protection for Orozco and Bedoya that is proportional to the importance of these proceedings and the symbolic impact they are likely to have."

"We hope the Bedoya case will point the way for the judicial system and will benefit all the journalists who were victims of the armed conflict or the systematic human rights abuses that were committed with support from the state apparatus in the course of the armed conflict."

Bedoya was abducted on 25 May 2000 at the entrance to Bogotá's El Modelo prison, where she had gone for the daily *El Espectador* (she is now joint editor for *El Tiempo*'s crime and justice pages) because she was covering arms trafficking, disappearances and murders inside the prison.

Three members of the paramilitary United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (AUC) are charged with abducting, torturing and sexually assaulting Bedoya. They are Mario Jaimes Mejía, also known as "El Panadero," Jesús Emiro Pereira Rivera, also known as "Huevoespica," and Alejandro Cárdenas Orozco, also known as "JJ." Cárdenas has admitted his role.

Orozco ruled on 10 December that Bedoya's abduction and torture constituted a "crime against humanity" – and therefore not subject to any statute of limitations – because it was part of the "war tactics and strategies used by the outlawed armed organizations against the civilian population."

The ruling means that Bedoya's kidnappers can no longer benefit from the 2005 Justice and Peace Law that was adopted during the so-called paramilitary [demobilization](#). This much criticized law provides for limitation and even exemption from jail sentences in exchange for confessions and statements renouncing violence.

The communiqué that the attorney-general issued on 13 September questioning the soundness of Orozco's decision caused such an outcry that he was finally forced to change course and support Orozco.

In a separate development on 20 September, the government began a series of consultations with journalists who were victims of the armed conflict. This is being done under the Law on Victims and Restitution of Land, which was adopted in 2011.

Reporters Without Borders hopes that this will represent another major step along the road to justice and truth, and points out that the paramilitaries continue to be the leading [enemies](#) of freedom of information in Colombia.

