

# *Colombia found responsible for kidnap, attack and rape of journalist*

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**Bedoya, now 47, hailed the decision, saying she had faced two decades of 'persecution, intimidation and constant threats' [File: Adalberto Roque/AFP]**

Bogota, October 19 (RHC)-- The Inter-American Court of Human Rights has issued a ruling holding Colombia's government responsible for the kidnap, torture and rape of a journalist by paramilitary groups in 2000.

Jineth Bedoya, a reporter at the time for the El Espectador newspaper, was investigating a weapons smuggling ring when she was abducted and assaulted by far-right militia members.

The paramilitaries, some of whom have since been convicted, were among the forces that fought left-wing militias in Colombia until their official demobilisation in 2006. The ruling on Monday said the attacks against Bedoya "could not have been carried out without the consent and collaboration of the [Colombian] State, or at least with its tolerance."

The court, an autonomous body of the Organization of American States, added that the state's further failure to investigate threats against Bedoya in the wake of the attack violated her "rights to judicial guarantees, judicial protection and equality before the law."

While three paramilitary leaders were later convicted for their roles in the abduction and attack, the court also ordered Colombia to "punish those remaining responsible for the acts of violence" and called for other measures, including the creation of a training programme for public officials and security forces focused on violence against women.

Bedoya, now 47, hailed the decision, saying she had faced two decades of "persecution, intimidation and constant threats" while seeking justice for the attack, in which she was tortured and raped for 16 hours before being left naked on the side of the road.

"October 18, 2021 goes down in history as the day when a struggle that began with an individual crime has led to the vindication of the rights of thousands of women who have been victims of sexual violence and of women journalists who leave a part of their lives in their work," tweeted Bedoya, who was awarded the UNESCO World Press Freedom Prize last year.

President Ivan Duque tweeted that Colombia "fully accepts the decision." "I will always condemn any violent act against women and journalists," he said. "The sentence should serve as a guide to actions that can be implemented to prevent anything like this from happening again."

The Colombian state apologised to Bedoya before the same court in March this year when it also ordered the government to immediately ensure the safety of the journalist and her mother, who had both been victims of threats – including an attack in 1999 on both that the state failed to investigate.

Monday's ruling, however, made no reference to one of Bedoya's main requests – that the prison from which she was abducted, Bogota's notorious La Modelo, be closed down.

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