



In 2003 Mark Henderson, a British TV and documentary producer, was kidnapped and held hostage in the Colombian jungle for 101 days. After being contacted by one of his kidnappers one year after his release, he returned to the site of his kidnapping with three of his fellow hostages to confront his kidnapper.

The documentary *My Kidnapper* will be screened at UNRIC's Ciné-ONU on 15 November 2011 at the Goethe Institute, Rue Belliardstraat 58, Brussels. Mark Henderson will be present at the screening and will lead the discussion after the film.

UNRIC contacted Mark Henderson to ask him some questions about his experiences in Colombia.

How has your experience as a hostage in Sierra Nevada changed your view about the situation in Colombia?

Before travelling to Colombia all I knew about the country was coffee, cocaine and kidnapping. My four months there completely changed my perception of the country and it has done the same for my family and friends and hopefully for people who've seen the film. It is a beautiful country with a people with an incredible spirit. We only hear about it in headlines and hyperbole - drug traffickers, guerillas, paramilitaries, cocaine. Like many issues around the world, there are millions of human voices that remain unheard. I now feel inextricably linked to Colombia and on my release and return to the UK I made a conscious effort to learn as much as I could

about the situation I'd been caught up in. It's such a complicated history, I don't know if I'll ever truly understand it, but every time I hear the country mentioned, I'll always listen in.

In the film you go to a village of about 9,000 IDPs. They tell you they understand what you went through because they feel like hostages every day. What are your thoughts on that?

I realized after meeting those women, and it was mostly women as the men had been killed, that our story was just a tiny footnote in the larger narrative of Colombia. It's true what they said, that we got out of it and were released, but that they're still trapped there. I can't even imagine what that must feel like. Just as we knew nothing about our future, so they are living in constant ignorance, never sure if they'll ever go back to their villages, if their lives will ever return to normality. And sadly they feel that no one is listening to them. That was all they asked us, to get their story out.

How has this experience impacted on you as a person?

I don't think you can go through an experience like this and not change. It has brought me closer to my family and friends who supported each other back home. It has made me a calmer more rational person. The kidnapping made me come face to face with my own mortality and that is a powerful lesson. It has opened my eyes to a corner of the world I knew nothing about and made me realize we have a responsibility to other people, not just in our own community, but in the wider international community, at least to learn and educate ourselves about what is going on around the world.