

## The Aéropostale-3000 campaign

The « Aeropostale-3000 campaign was launched on July 20th, 2003 by the « Ingrid Betancourt Support Committees » It aims at creating an international solidarity movement towards the 3,000 hostages currently detained in Colombia and towards their families, as well as supporting actions for their release.

The network was initially created in Belgium, France and Canada, as soon as the news about Ingrid Betancourt's kidnapping were announced. It now consists of **280** committees in **35** countries. The members are all simple citizens, without any link to a particular political party or to a philosophical / religious group. They communicate mainly via the Internet, through websites such as [www.Betancourt.info](http://www.Betancourt.info) and [www.Aeropostale-3000.org](http://www.Aeropostale-3000.org)

in a few words...

1. Every hostage in Columbia receives a postal address in France:

Mr. (Ms.) xxxxx, hostage in Colombia  
Place Ingrid Betancourt  
Eygalayes F-26560 FRANCE

2. In Columbia, we establish contact with the radio stations, which enable the families of the hostages to send them a message, with the local press and with the non-political organizations supporting them.
3. On Betancourt.info, we publish in a more visible way the names of these hostages, with more information about them if possible, transmitted by these organizations in Columbia
4. Around the world, thousands of people contacted by the support committees for Ingrid Betancourt, send them a letter of solidarity.
5. In Eygalayes, the Mayor Jacques Laurent informs on a regular basis, via the Internet, the radio stations in Columbia of the mail that has arrived. These radio stations transmit the information to the families and to the hostages via radio wave.
6. The more than **890** cities which have voted the support motion for Ingrid, contacted by our committees, promote the campaign locally and, for example, allow their citizens to bring their non-stamped letter to the town hall which forwards it to Eygalayes.
7. In order for "the mail to get through", the town hall of Eygalayes tries to get the mail to its addressees, via the Columbian Embassy and the International Red Cross, with the help of our committees and the widest mediatization possible.

## The Hostages

According to the statistics of the organization "Pais Libre", more than 3,000 kidnappings take place in Columbia every year, the majority of them carried out by illegal groups claiming to have political reasons.

### **80% of worldwide kidnappings occur in Columbia!**

The guerilla (Farc, Eln) is believed to be responsible for little over half of these kidnappings; the rest is assigned to Far-Right paramilitary groups and to the common delinquance. There is a minority of "political kidnappings" such as Ingrid Betancourt's. The majority of the kidnappings is "simply" an extortion of funds: a "business" believed to generate 30 billion pesos per year, nearly 15 million \$, for the kidnappers.

### **More than eight a day, one person every three hours...**

At the very moment you are reading this page, someone in Columbia is torn by the kidnapping of a loved-one. If you take away the hostages that are either liberated, saved or deceased, there are, daily, approximatively 750 men, women and children locked up in caves, lost in city labyrinths, or walking in the forest with a gun pointed at them and leashed up like dogs.

## Why in Eygalayes

As soon as the news about Ingrid Betancourt's kidnapping broke out, an incredible support movement was spontaneously created throughout the world.

Initially focused on Ingrid – because barely anyone was aware of the magnitude of the problem then – this movement rapidly spread its action to the liberation of all the hostages in Columbia.

Originating from Belgium, Canada and France, this movement has now spread to numerous European countries as well as to North and South America. There are presently over **280** support committees in **35** countries.

Under the impulsion of the committees, many cities, parishes and regions have also been willing to show their solidarity to the 3000 hostages and their families, and have decided to vote an official support motion. The vast majority decided to symbolically name Ingrid Honorary Citizen. To this day, more than **890** parishes, towns, departments, regions... around the world have made this gesture.

Some have gone even further. In France, in the Drôme region, the small village of Eygalayes has renamed its town square "Ingrid Betancourt Square".

The Mayor, Jacques Laurent, also decided to give a postal address, on this very town square, to EVERY single one of the hostages of Columbia, and therefore to serve as a starting point to our campaign and to get the mail that you will write to its addressees.

### The actions of the « Ingrid Betancourt Support Committees »

From the beginning the movement clearly defined its objectives : to obtain the liberation of ALL hostages in Colombia. Ingrid Betancourt has thus given a name and a face to 3,000 people sequestered in this country. She enabled thousands of people around the world to become aware of the humanitarian problem in Colombia.

In agreement with Ingrid's family, the committees support several international campaigns :

- An information campaign about the humanitarian situation in Colombia. A major element of this campaign is the website [www.Betancourt.info](http://www.Betancourt.info) where news and related press releases are published daily. Between **20,000** and **40,000** people visit the site every month.
- A petition campaign which enables individuals to express their support towards the movement. The campaign was stopped when **100,000** signatures were obtained.
- A campaign aiming at having Ingrid nominated Honorary Citizen in as many cities and villages as possible throughout the world, representing the 3,000 Colombian hostages. At this moment we have received **890** official notice of nomination.
- A school project for educators and their students aged 12 to 18.
- The "Aeropostale-3000" campaign, lunched in July 2003, which replaces the petition campaign.

*(situation at the beginning of October, 2003)*

Send a letter



To the attention of :

**(one of the 3000 hostages in Columbia)**  
**Place Ingrid Betancourt**  
**Eygalayes F-26560 FRANCE**

Hello

Hola

This little message is to tell you that all over the world, people know about your situation and are thinking about you.

Esta pequeña carta para decirle que en todo el mundo hay gente que conoce su situación y piensa en usted.

Joined together around the "Ingrid Betancourt Committees", we are leading a fight for your liberation as well as for all of the other hostages.

Reunidos en los comités « Ingrid Betancourt », luchamos por su liberación y por la de los demás rehenes.

Do not lose hope!

¡No se desanime !

Your family, your friends are waiting for you, as well as your new friends all around the world. We will not abandon you.

Su familia, sus amigos le esperan, así como sus nuevos amigos por todo el mundo. No le abandonamos.

Our deepest thoughts are with you.

Pensamos mucho en usted.

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**From :**

*For more information on this campaign  
and on the Ingrid betancourt  
Committees, please see:*

First name : \_\_\_\_\_

Name : \_\_\_\_\_

[www.Betancourt.info](http://www.Betancourt.info)

(address) \_\_\_\_\_

[www.Aeropostale-3000.org](http://www.Aeropostale-3000.org)

City : \_\_\_\_\_

Country : \_\_\_\_\_

(e-mail) \_\_\_\_\_

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