

Jineth Bedoya Lima

(COLOMBIA)

IS THE WINNER OF THE 2016 RAW in WAR ANNA POLITKOVSKAYA AWARD

for women human rights defenders from war and conflict

AND

Valentina Cherevatenko

(RUSSIAN FEDERATION)

IS PRESENTED A SPECIAL RAW in WAR ANNA POLITKOVSKAYA AWARD TO MARK THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE MURDER OF ANNA

Today, Thursday 6th October, **RAW in WAR (Reach All Women in WAR)** celebrates the courage of **Jineth Bedoya Lima**, a brave Colombian journalist and human rights campaigner, and **Valentina Cherevatenko**, a courageous Russian human rights and peace activist.

Ahead of the **10th anniversary of Anna Politkovskaya's murder on Friday 7th October**, **RAW in WAR** honours Jineth Bedoya Lima with the 2016 Anna Politkovskaya Award for her courage to speak out and to give a voice to the more than 13,000 women in Colombia who, like Jineth herself, have been subjected to sexual violence at the hands of armed groups during the armed conflict.

The **RAW in WAR** Nominations Committee for the **2016 Anna Politkovskaya Award** is deeply humbled by Jineth Bedoya Lima's courage to become the voice of the women survivors of the war in Colombia and by Valentina Cherevatenko's tireless work and determination to build bridges for peace and reconciliation between people and communities in war-torn North Caucasus, Armenia, Georgia and Ukraine – despite the danger they are both facing.

On Jineth Bedoya Lima and Valentina Cherevatenko receiving the **2016 Anna Politkovskaya Award**, **Baron Judd of Portsea**, a member of the 2016 Award Nominations Committee, said:

"Anna must never be forgotten. She was a beacon of integrity and of total commitment to truth whatever the consequences for her. Her courage was all the greater because I am certain she knew very well what was likely to happen to her. Valentina and Jineth follow in that tradition. They are both fine and challenging examples to us all. Like many others they deserve our full and unswerving loyalty and support. Freedom and democracy can only be as good as the information and analysis which is provided by the media. Today's generation of journalists need constantly to measure themselves against the lives and standards of Anna, Valentina, Jineth and their like.

We celebrate Jineth Bedoya and her fearless reporting of the atrocities against civilians during the armed conflict and the corruption, which has resulted from the 52 years of conflict in Colombia. In 2000, whilst attending an interview in a prison for a report on the involvement of the military in arming paramilitaries, Jineth was kidnapped by men, claiming to work for a paramilitary leader. She was taken to a warehouse where she was beaten and gang-raped for days, and was later dumped naked, on a roadside. Despite the constant threat on her life, Jineth has continued to report and to seek the truth.

In 2009 Jineth broke her silence and initiated the campaign *“Now is Not the Time to Remain Silent”* (*“No Es Hora De Callar”*) which calls for justice for the thousands of Colombian women subjected to rape and sexual violence during the conflict. Jineth courageously began the campaign as she herself has been fighting for justice since 2000, knowing the risks that women face, especially when speaking out against armed men who raped and sexually abused them. In February and March 2016, two paramilitary fighters were sentenced for the kidnapping, torture and rape of Jineth Bedoya in 2000 – a long-awaited step forward towards getting justice done for the brutality she suffered.

On accepting the award, **Jineth Bedoya Lima** said:

“To defend the Truth is one of the most difficult missions anyone could undertake, and its price can even be that person’s life, as it was for Anna Politkovskaya. For her, and for thousands and thousands of women who gave their last breath for their work, we cannot fail. We cannot falter. For me, as a Colombian, a journalist and a survivor of war in my country, there could be no greater honour than to reclaim the fight – both professional and personal – that Anna fought, for Truth in her country and for those who believed in her work. The award that carries her name inspires my belief that so much pain and so much anguish have been worth it.

Just as I receive the news of the Anna Politkovskaya award, 52 years of war are coming to an end in my country. The bullets that took her life are the same that ended the life of over 200 000 Colombians: the business of war has not only contaminated the souls of those who profit from it, but it has also made our society hardened and intolerant. The legacy of women like Anna is not to allow this to be happening again and again. It is the one good thing we can leave behind during our brief passage through this world.”

On 26 September 2016 a historic peace agreement was signed in Colombia marking an official end to the 52-year long conflict, which has been scarred by large scale abuses of human rights. This included unlawful killings, forced displacement, enforced disappearances, hostage-taking, torture and crimes of sexual violence, committed by all the parties, including the security forces and paramilitaries, either acting alone or in collusion with each other, and guerrilla groups.

As reported in August 2016, Colombia has 6.9 million internally displaced people – more than any country except Syria. Nearly half of the country's 7.8 million officially registered "war victims" are women – the majority of whom have been forced out of their homes by armed groups. **More than 13,600 women have been raped by armed groups since 1985.**

According to Jineth Bedoya:

"In Colombia, the levels of impunity for crimes of sexual violence have reached 98%. Of the 150,000 rapes of women that had been recognized by the paramilitary groups, only 2% have resulted in guilty verdicts."

Today, RAW in WAR also honours Valentina Cherevatenko, a brave Russian human rights activist dedicated to supporting civilians whose lives continue to be affected by violence in the North Caucasus, Armenia, Georgia and Ukraine. Through her organization, Valentina works with those, who suffer the psychological damage induced by conflict and violence in the region, despite the risk to herself and her organization.

On accepting the **Special Anna Politkovskaya Award**, Valentina Cherevatenko said:

"Everything to do with Anna Politkovskaya, her name and her work, is terribly important for me. Being awarded the Anna Politkovskaya prize is a great honour, too. It puts many years of my peace building work and "Women of the Don"'s work, as a whole, on the par with what Anna did, what she fought for and what she died for. There is nothing more important than preserving peace. It doesn't really matter where on the planet, in what country, be it Chechnya, Syria or Ukraine, bombs go off and old men, women and children die. Young people die, the country's future, called to arms by unscrupulous politicians. Where the ruling elite cannot find an agreement, ordinary people can and should get involved. They need to look into each other's eyes and agree to resolve all problems, all differences without wars or violence. They have to be taught this. This task falls to people engaged in peace building and to human rights activists. We must never stop! We must believe in ourselves, in the future, in getting results."

Valentina is currently facing criminal charges for failing to register her organization as a "foreign agent" and she is accused of knowingly receiving foreign funding. It is the first time that criminal charges have been brought under the law on "foreign agents" against an NGO in Russia and there is a serious concern from human rights groups that these charges are simply to silence Valentina for the peace building and reconciliation work she does on behalf of the survivors of armed conflict. If convicted, Valentina is facing up to two-year imprisonment.

On announcing the winners of the 2016 **Anna Politkovskaya Award**, **Elena Kudimova**, sister of Anna Politkovskaya and a member of the 2016 Award Nominations Committee, said:

“It is 10 years this year since my sister was murdered. Seeing the awards given this year makes me both sad and proud at the same time. Sad because a decade later the award remains necessary to honour women who suffered in the cause of the continuing fight for truth and human rights, but proud that there are such wonderful women as Jineth and Valentina who uphold this tradition so courageously.”

The awards will be presented to the winners in March 2017 in London at **RAW in WAR’s ‘Refusing to be Silenced’** event, part of the **2017 Women of the World (WOW) Festival** at the London’s Southbank Centre. **RAW in WAR** marks the anniversary of Anna Politkovskaya’s murder 10 years ago **by giving the award in her name annually to a woman, who, like Anna, speaks truth to power.**

By presenting Jineth Bedoya Lima with this year’s **Anna Politkovskaya Award**, **RAW in WAR** honors all Colombian women who have been killed, disappeared, tortured and raped in the 52 years of conflict. Today **RAW in WAR** calls on the international community to do all in its power to ensure that the peace process in Columbia brings the long awaited justice for the victims of the conflict and to the many thousands of women survivors of sexual violence; and to secure stability and peace in the country. On the anniversary of Anna’s killing, **RAW in WAR** also calls on the Russian authorities to protect human rights defenders from attacks and violence and bring all those responsible for Anna Politkovskaya’s murder to justice.

On receiving the Anna Politkovskaya Award, Jineth Bedoya Lima and Valentina Cherevatenko will join a group of remarkable women human rights defenders who received the Anna Politkovskaya Award in the past, including Kholoud Waleed (2015), Vian Dakhil (2014), Malala Yousafzai (2013), Marie Colvin (2012), Razan Zaitouneh (2011), Dr. Halima Bashir (2010), Leila Alikarami on behalf of the One Million Signatures Campaign for Equality in Iran (2009), Malalai Joya (2008) and Natalia Estemirova (2007).

On the Anna Politkovskaya Awards, Azar Nafisi, author, “Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books”, said:

“It’s quite extraordinary, as well as natural, that we should celebrate the work of Anna through celebrating other courageous women who come from such different nations, backgrounds, and speak different languages but all share a common language in their desire for freedom. Not just for themselves but for all victims of oppression.”

More information available at: www.rawinwar.org

FOR INTERVIEWS, PICTURES, PRESS ADVISORY OR FURTHER INFORMATION ON RAW IN WAR

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