

French Leader Urges Guerrilla to Free Woman

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PARIS, Dec. 6 — It was an unusual message from a president to a guerrilla. But the televised appeal by President [Nicolas Sarkozy](#) of France to the Colombian rebel leader Manuel Marulanda to release a woman who has been held hostage for nearly six years was only the latest episode in a tale of human endurance.

“Monsieur Marulanda, you know I don’t share your ideas and I condemn your methods,” Mr. Sarkozy said in a video recorded from his ornate office and broadcast on Latin American channels late Wednesday and in France early Thursday. “But I solemnly ask you to release [Ingrid Betancourt](#).”

“I have a dream: to see Ingrid with her family at Christmas,” the president added. “Monsieur Manuel Marulanda, you can make this dream come true. You can save this woman. You can show the world that the FARC understand humanitarian imperatives.”

Christmas Day will be Ms. Betancourt’s 46th birthday. The fate of Ms. Betancourt, a French-Colombian, who was kidnapped by the [Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia](#), or FARC, while campaigning for the Colombian presidency in 2002, has made headlines sporadically over the years.

But the release last week of a letter to her children and her mother, along with a videotape showing her in chains and looking gaunt and pale, shook France and gave a new sense of urgency to the battle for her liberation.

In the 12-page letter, Ms. Betancourt described how she was losing her appetite and her will to live. Her only joy, she said, is the personal messages her family transmits to her over the radio.

Mr. Sarkozy had his own message for Ms. Betancourt, this one broadcast on Colombian radio: “Ingrid, we will never leave you. I beg you to have confidence. We will get there. You have to hang in there, because your family is waiting for you.”