

Noodkreet Nederlandse 'oliebaron' uit Colombiaans cachot



© Photo van Wikimedia

„HELP mij hier uit!”

Heak van Bilderbeek kan op schoneime beschuldiging nog jaren vastzitten



Heak van Bilderbeek wordt vastgehouden in een cel in de gevangenis van Bogota. Hij wordt beschuldigd van betrokkenheid bij de ontvoering van de Nederlandse ambassadeur in Colombia.

door JIMMY BRADY en HERMAN STASO

BOGOTA (Colombië), zaterdag

Zonder een officieel aanklacht (of bij) of meer dan twee jaar van in de gevangenis gevangenschap van Bilderbeek. De Nederlandse ambassadeur Heak van Bilderbeek zit nu in een witte cel in de gevangenis van Bogota. Hij wordt beschuldigd van betrokkenheid bij de ontvoering van de Nederlandse ambassadeur in Colombia. Heak van Bilderbeek is nu in de gevangenis van Bogota. Hij wordt beschuldigd van betrokkenheid bij de ontvoering van de Nederlandse ambassadeur in Colombia.



Heak van Bilderbeek (rechts) met een andere man in een cel in de gevangenis van Bogota.

Megaverstet

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Lezers sturen voor & CAMPAGNE prachtige voorbeelden van multiculturele samenwerking

Complete voorbeeld teams, losse collega's en gemeenschappelijke verhalen, zo realiseert het zich binnen de eenheid groepen van goede voorbeelden van multiculturele samenwerking in de Staten. Na een reeks discussies en workshops worden er nu verschillende teams gevormd die samenwerken aan projecten die de samenwerking tussen mensen uit verschillende landen en culturen bevordert.



De leden van de 'Complete' teams, die samenwerken aan projecten die de samenwerking tussen mensen uit verschillende landen en culturen bevordert.

Kleurrijke teams

De leden van de 'Complete' teams, die samenwerken aan projecten die de samenwerking tussen mensen uit verschillende landen en culturen bevordert. De teams worden gevormd op basis van hun achtergrond en cultuur, en ze werken samen aan projecten die de samenwerking tussen mensen uit verschillende landen en culturen bevordert.

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Advocaten

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Eenige school

De enige school in de regio van Bogota, die samenwerkt aan projecten die de samenwerking tussen mensen uit verschillende landen en culturen bevordert.

Wat is uw voorbeeld?

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Curagen

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„De broers zijn in de val gelokt”

Cry for help from Dutch 'oil baron' from Colombian lockup
Henk van Bilderbeek can be locked up for years on dim accusation.

“Help me out of here!”

“The brothers are lured into a trap”

By JURRY BRAND and HERMAN STAM

BOGOTÁ (Colombia), Saturday

Without any official accusation he has been locked up in the most notorious prison in Colombia for more than two years. The Dutch 'oil baron' Henk van Bilderbeek stumbled across a giant oil-well in the South American country after twenty years of investigation, but was thrown without mercy in lockup shortly after. From his cell he gives a cry of despair to the Dutch government. “For goodness sake, help me out of here, because I am a puppet in the political game of Colombian rulers.”

Van Bilderbeek reports himself to this newspaper via a squeaky telephone connection from Colombia. “I just have a few minutes, so we have to be fast.” After attempts for weeks on end we finally are in contact with the man who is being trapped – according to many followers of this case – by the Colombian government.

Nevertheless, he does not sound withered or embittered, but rather assertive. “Eventually, the truth will come out. I am convinced of that.” You can almost literally hear the gasping in his neck of his co-prisoners. The phone hours are popular and only one phone booth meets the need for the overpopulated cell block.

The Dutchman, who made a career at Shell and subsequently bought Llanos Oil with his brother Albert, has news to report. Finally, his case will be sent on to a judge. ”Well, you get all excited about nothing here. It can take another year before my case is brought up and the judge can then also take a year’s time for his judgment.”

Real discovery

Van Bilderbeek made a real discovery of at least a billion barrels oil together with his brother Albert in North West Colombia in 1998. They did not get down to drilling the oil. The Colombian government cancelled their contracts under ‘false pretences’ and gave them to the American coal company Drummond, which maintained strong ties with the government. Henk was arrested in September 2004, among which, on suspicion of laundering and support to paramilitaries. Lack of proof left nothing of those accusations. He is now locked up on the peculiar accusation of ‘illegal self-enrichment’. According to the brothers this is a façade, instigated to avoid further trouble from them.

When Henk is on the phone, it is still early in Colombia. “People in my section have the luxury that they can sleep late. The first count is not until eight o’clock”, he explains. So, the row at the phone cell might have been worse.

We are shocked when we found out that he is currently located in the La Modelo prison. A French TV documentary brought a general outcry over this around the world. 5,000 prisoners are imprisoned while only 2,400 places are available and only 150 guards are present. These guards have no voice. Prisoners carry their own weapons. The prisoners are divided in three groups; the extreme left guerilla fighters are situated in the Northern pavilion, the extreme right paramilitaries are located in the Southern part, and the cocaine dealers are in between; thus shows the documentary.

The part, in which Henk is located, has maximum security secured and is situated in a separate building. Thirty men share ten cells. "Political prisoners, amongst them many guerilla fighters. In theory we have something in common; aversion of the current rulers in Colombia", says Henk, who can easily make himself understood to his cell mates in fluent Spanish. "For a Third World country the conditions here still are quite reasonable", feels the 52-year-old Henk, who by his own account finds himself to be in good health. "The food is not good, but my wife brings pre-cooked food in plastic bags every week. I then heat those in a coffee machine."

Henk, who grew up in the Netherlands, but was born in Colombia because his father was working for Shell over there, is allowed to go outside one hour a day. "To the roof", he explains. "It is open from above, but closed at the sides. During the visit of Donner (former minister of Justice, editorial note) I was moved to a maximum security prison and I sat with right paramilitaries. It is interesting to hear stories from that side and to hear the side of the guerillas now."

Besides of the Sunday visits of his Colombian wife, Henk gets almost daily visits from his Colombian lawyers in his cell. The Dutch embassy visits weekly, which he can appreciate very much because it increases his safety. "Although I do not feel I run a risk, when I cross the line, I know what can happen here. Foremost, they would threaten my family."

When Henk gets out, he will not clear off in the direction of the Netherlands or the United States (where his brother lives). "This country is too fascinating, with a number of possibilities and a grand population. Provided, the power abuse and the corruption have to be firmly forced back." In the preceding weeks there seem to be a glimmer of hope for the eldest Van Bilderbeek. The crown witness Rafael Garcia, former officer of the Colombian security service DAS, told the Latin American Post what he knew about the situation. "The brothers were lured into a trap", tells journalist Stephen Flanagan Jackson this newspaper. "Garcia had to manipulate the DAS computer data about the arrest of Van Bilderbeek for his boss. He says that the allegations were false. I believe he tells the truth, as he has much to lose." In a maximum security prison Garcia fears for his life. Previously, other police officers gave resembling testimonies.

Brother Albert van Bilderbeek was in the Netherlands last week to ask attention for the case. "I cannot visit Henk, because I will probably sit next to him in no time." The Colombian member of congress Miguel Durán, who forms a coalition with the Colombian government Uribe with his conservative party, accompanied Albert. "Without

political pressure from the Netherlands nothing will change the critical situation of the Van Bilderbeeks”, is the message from Durán to the Dutch government.

Member of Parliament of the VVD (Liberal Party) Hans van Baalen suspects that Henk is imprisoned for political motives and he urges Minister Bot (Foreign Affairs) to a quick and decent trial. According to the ministry of Foreign Affairs (FA) the Dutch ambassador has brought the case several times under the attention of the authorities in Colombia. FA mostly worries about the long stay of the detention on remand of Henk and keeps insisting on a quick progress of the process.

Henk van Bilderbeek: “I know the Dutch government will not leave me to fend for myself, but I hope they can put more pressure on Colombia to do something about my situation.”

Marginal notes:

The life in a Colombian prison is hard. Prisoners carry weapons and guards have no voice.

PHOTO: AP

Henk van Bilderbeek made a real discovery of at least a billion barrels of oil together with his brother Albert in North West Colombia in 1998.

PRIVATE PHOTOS

Henk van Bilderbeek

Brother Albert van Bilderbeek (right) was in the Netherlands last week with the Colombian member of congress Miguel Durán to ask for attention for this case.

PHOTO: THEO TERWIEL