

via fax: 011 57 1 596 0631

President Juan Manuel Santos

President of the Republic of Colombia

January 24, 2013

Your Excellency:

We are extremely concerned for the safety of the **directors and members of the Social Corporation for Community Advisory and Training Services (COSPACC)**. COSPACC has worked since 2002 for the defense and promotion of human rights of local communities in the Departments of Casanare, Boyaca, Tolima, Arauca, and Cundinamarca.

When the directors arrived at the Bogotá headquarters on January 23, they found two doors ajar and damaged. They immediately notified the police who entered the building with them to find filing cabinets and drawers forcefully opened and damaged; a video camera, digital camera and voice recorder had been stolen. The intruders also stole two external storage hard drives containing digital archives, project reports (including complaints of human rights violations committed in the region) and documents related to investigations. The front door of the building was left undamaged; computers and other valuable items were not taken.

COSPACC has been subjected to previous acts of intimidation and surveillance, including the cutting of the television and Internet connections to the offices on several occasions, as well as the tapping of the mobile phones of numerous directors of the organization.

We believe the break-in and thefts are directly related to COSPACC's human rights work and that the lives of COSPACC directors and members can be in danger. We **strongly urge** that you

- carry out an immediate, thorough, and impartial investigation of the break-in and theft at COSPACC offices;
- take urgent measures to guarantee the safety of COSPACC's directors and staff, in accordance with their wishes; and
- guarantee that human rights defenders are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai,
Coordinator

Copies: Gabriel Silva Luján, Colombian Ambassador to the US ~ via fax: 202.232.8643
P. Michael McKinley, US Ambassador to Colombia ~ via fax: 011.571.275.4600
Mary Brett Rogers-Springs, Senior Desk Officer for Colombia, US State Department ~ via fax: 202.647.2628
José de Jesús Orozco Henríquez, Rapporteur for Colombia, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202.458.3992
US Senators Brown & Portman ~ via email
US Representatives Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Renacci, Ryan ~ via email

Frontline_Colombia

The following people hereby urge you to take action on this matter as indicated in this letter: