

via fax: 011 502 2239 0090 <b>Otto Fernando Pérez Molina</b> President of Guatemala	via fax: 011 502 2251 2218/2411 9124/2411/9326 <b>Claudia Paz y Paz</b> Attorney General of Guatemala
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January 26, 2013

Dear Sir and Madam:

We are deeply concerned for the safety and well-being of the employees of the **Association for the Advance of Social Sciences (AVANCSO)** in Guatemala City.

When **Clara Arenas**, the director, arrived at the office at 7:20am on January 18, she found **Manuel Cruz Vásquez**, the caretaker, unconscious. The offices had been broken into between 8pm and 12am the previous day. Unknown individuals stole computers, mobile phones, cameras and a number of archives and photographs relating to an investigation about the history of the police for a forthcoming publication of a report done in the Historic Archive of the National Police. A black vehicle was seen parked in front of the office around 11pm that night. Motorcycles had also been seen in the vicinity for several days prior to the incident. Although an immediate complaint was submitted to the police, the Human Rights Ombudsman did not arrive at the scene until 10:15am. The Unit for Crimes against Human Rights Activists of the Human Rights Section of the General Prosecutor's Office has initiated an investigation into the incident.

AVANCSO was established in 1986 as a social science research center with a particular focus on field work, the extractive industry and historic memory. It is a member of Plataforma Agraria (Agrarian Platform), a collective of organizations supporting the proposed Integrated Rural Development Law #4084. The Chamber of Agriculture and the business sector have strongly criticized this law. AVANCSO and other organizations that support Draft Law #4084 have been the subject of a public campaign to discredit them, including accusations of being terrorists and communists.

Based on the facts presented above, we **strongly urge** that you

- carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the break-in at the offices of AVANCSO, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- take all necessary measures to guarantee the safety of the staff of AVANCSO, in accordance with their wishes; and
- guarantee that all human rights defenders in Guatemala are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities free of all restrictions and without fear of reprisals.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai  
Coordinator

Copies: Francisco Villagran de Leon, Guatemalan Ambassador to the US ~ via fax: 202 745 1908  
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Christopher Johnson, Diplomacy Officer for Central America, US State Dept. ~ via email  
US Senators Brown & Portman ~ via email  
US Representatives Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Renacci, Ryan ~ via email

Frontline\_Guatemala

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