

via FAX: 011 503 2246 4950  
**Sr. Luis Martínez**  
 Attorney General of El Salvador

via FAX: 011 503 2527 1145  
**Ing. Rigoberto Trinidad Pleités Sandoval**  
 Chief of Police of El Salvador

November 24, 2013

Dear Sirs:

We are outraged at the raid on the office of the human rights organization **Pro-Búsqueda** in San Salvador on November 14. At around 4:45 am, three armed men attacked **Pro-Búsqueda's driver** as he walked towards the organization's office after parking his car, threw him to the ground and pointed a gun at his neck, threatening to kill him. When the three men entered the building they tied the hands of the **night watchman**, **two Pro-Búsqueda staff members** and the **chair of the organization's board** behind their backs.

Two of the assailants forced open cabinets and took away laptops and computers. Before leaving the building a half-hour later, the attackers poured gasoline over three filing cabinets and set them on fire. The stolen computers contained legal information on three cases of enforced disappearances that are ongoing before the Supreme Court of Justice. On November 11, military officials who were expected to attend a hearing scheduled in one of the cases, failed to appear. Since there are no digital backups for this set of information, a substantial amount of the work of the organization has been lost.

A few hours after the raid, a woman on her way to work at Pro-Búsqueda was followed by a car in San Salvador and two individuals on foot.

Pro-Búsqueda is a non-governmental organization dedicated to locating children who were "disappeared" during the conflict years from 1980 to 1992. Since its beginning in 1994, Pro-Búsqueda has successfully traced 384 missing children, of whom 235 were reunited with their birth families. Its work includes the investigation of individual cases, presenting cases to the Inter-American system, psychosocial support to relatives and former "disappeared" children, and political lobbying. In recent years, Pro-Búsqueda has been instrumental in achieving sentences from the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in several cases of disappearances.

Because we believe the break-in was specifically aimed at damaging the work Pro-Búsqueda has been doing over the last two decades with relatives of the disappeared, we **strongly urge** that you

- conduct an independent, thorough and impartial investigation into the attack against Pro-Búsqueda staff members and the break-in into their office, make the results public and bring those responsible to justice; and
- take immediate steps to fully provide appropriate protection to all Pro-Búsqueda staff members, in strict accordance with their wishes.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai  
 Co-Coordinator

copies: Pro-Búsqueda ~ via fax: 011 503 2235 1041  
 Mari Carmen Aponte, US Ambassador to El Salvador ~ via fax: 011-503-2501-2775  
 Francisco Altshul, El Salvador Ambassador to the US ~ via fax: 1-202-234-3834  
 Jonathan Nellis, El Salvador Desk at US State Dept. ~ via email  
 Christopher Johnson, Diplomacy Officer for Central America, US State Dept. ~ via email  
 Rosa Maria Ortiz, Rapporteur for El Salvador, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202.458.3992  
 US Senators Brown & Portman and US Representatives Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Renacci, Ryan ~ via email

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