

via fax: 011 57 1 596 0631

Excmo Sr. Juan Manuel Santos
President of the Republic of Colombia

via fax: 011 57 1 570 2000 ext. 2023

Estimado Sr. Eduardo Montealegre
Attorney General of Colombia

January 22, 2014

Dear Sirs:

We are deeply concerned about a recent break-in at the Valle del Cauca offices of the **Permanent Committee for the Defense of Human Rights (CPDH)** and of the **National Association of Assistance and Solidarity (ANDAS)**. On January 6 four computer monitors, one laptop computer, a central processing unit and two bags containing sensitive information were taken. Files and drawers were searched, the office doors damaged and filing cabinets destroyed. Nothing of economic value was taken. This is the second break-in of their offices in three months.

The CPDH works for the protection of civilians' rights in the context of the armed conflict. ANDAS defends the rights of victims of forced displacement. The recent break-in comes in the context of a series of intimidating acts against the members of these organizations. The CPDH del Valle suffered the enforced disappearance of its ex-director, Walter Alvarez Ossa, on August 16, 2006; the detention and theft of belongings of its sub-director, Rodrigo Vargas, on August 19, 2013; and repeated threats to the life of its director, Athemay Sterling. The CPDH has filed formal complaints, but reports that investigators simply came and took photos without any follow-up action. We are concerned that the break-in at the offices of CPDH and ANDAS is linked with their peaceful and legitimate work in defense of human rights for victims of the armed conflict in Colombia.

We **strongly urge** that you

- initiate an immediate, exhaustive and impartial investigation into the breaks-ins described above, the intimidation and threats against CPDH and ANDAS and their members, and bring those responsible to justice;
- reassess and reinforce protection measures for members of CPDH del Valle and other CPDH offices;
- guarantee that all human rights defenders in Colombia are able to carry out their human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Co-Coordinator

copies: Daniel Pedraza, First Secretary for Human Rights and Minorities, Embassy of Colombia to the US ~ via fax: 202.232.8643
Andrew Bowen, Interim Deputy Chief of Mission, US Embassy in Colombia ~ via fax: 011.571.275.4600
Olivia Franken, Desk Officer for Colombia, US State Department ~ via fax: 202.647.2628
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, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Renacci, Ryan ~ via email

Frontline 1/10/14_Colombia

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