

URGENT ACTION

BOLIVIAN NGO AND STAFF UNDER FINANCIAL THREAT

The Bolivian Documentation and Information Centre (CEDIB) reported new threats to their human rights work and its staff members' financial security caused by the freezing of their bank accounts. This is the latest in a series of attempts to obstruct CEDIB's legitimate work and a worrying sign of shrinking civic space in the country.

On 3 November, Juan Rios, Dean of Universidad Mayor de San Simon (UMSS), a public university in Cochabamba, initiated an administrative proceeding against the **Bolivian Documentation and Information Centre (Centro de Documentación e Información Bolivia, CEDIB)**, in what seems to be an ongoing attempt to obstruct the organization's human rights work. According to CEDIB, on 6 November Cochabamba's Departmental Court of Justice decided to preemptively register CEDIB's property and freeze their bank accounts. On 28 November, without notifying CEDIB, its bank accounts were frozen by a judicial order, putting the NGO's human rights work and its employees and their families' salaries and financial security at risk, since a large part of the frozen financial assets correspond to staff salaries and benefits.

CEDIB learned unofficially that the Financial System Supervision Authority (ASFI) ordered these measures on 21 November, based on a judicial administrative proceeding filed by Dean Juan Rios. The failure to notify CEDIB of the grounds and effects of the complaint and order to freeze their accounts constitutes a violation of the right to due process.

In March 2017, the Dean of UMSS threatened CEDIB with eviction from its offices located inside the UMSS premises, which they had occupied since 1993. Following threats of immediate eviction with the "help of the security forces" if premises were not vacated within 48 hours and fearing violence against the staff and archives, CEDIB started moving their archives to a safe location and ultimately left their offices inside UMSS.

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- Calling on the Ombudsman to safeguard the integrity of CEDIB's staff and financial assets and ensure that civil society organizations enjoy a safe and enabling environment to develop their activities;
- Calling on the Vice Minister of Autonomies to publicly recognize the legitimate human rights work of CEDIB and to ensure that the Dean of the UMSS refrains from any actions that place CEDIB's staff and work at risk;
- Calling on the President of the Magistracy Council to promptly and thoroughly investigate claims of irregularities and violations of the right to due process in the judicial administrative proceeding against CEDIB.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 18 JANUARY 2018 TO:

Vice Minister of Autonomies

Hugo Siles
Av. 20 de octubre N° 2230 esq.
Fernando Guachalla, edificio Ex Conavi
La Paz, Bolivia
Fax: +591 2211 3613
Email: despachoaautonomias@gmail.com
Twitter: @HugoSilesNdelP,
@ViceAutonomias
Salutation: Dear Sir/ Estimado Señor

Ombudsman

David Tezanos
Calle Colombia N° 440
La Paz, Bolivia
Fax: +591 2211 3538
Email: defensorlpz@defensoria.gob.bo
ecuenca@defensoria.gob.bo
Twitter: @DPBolivia,
@TezanosDefensor
Salutation: Dear Sir/ Estimado Señor

President of the Magistracy Council

Dr. Wilber Choque
Luis Paz Arce N° 290
Sucre, Bolivia
Email: morgan_rivera1388@hotmail.com
Salutation: Dear Sir/ Estimado Señor

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 99/17. Further information:

www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr18/6139/2017/en/

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

CEDIB has been a vocal voice in Bolivia denouncing human rights violations against Indigenous Peoples related to extractive industries in the Bolivian Amazon. In 2016, CEDIB submitted a request for precautionary measures to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), along with the Centre for Legal Studies and Social Research (Centro de Estudios Jurídicos e Investigación Social, CEJIS), on behalf of Indigenous Peoples in voluntary isolation whose survival, they allege, will be affected by oil exploration in their territory. A resolution on the request is still pending.

On 6 February 2017, during a press conference at the Human Rights Assembly in La Paz where CEDIB participated alongside CEJIS and leaders of the *Community Territory of Origin Tacana II Indigenous Territory* to announce that the IACHR had requested the Bolivian government provide information on their request for precautionary measures, the presentation was interrupted by leaders of the Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS) political party, who threatened to take over the Human Rights Assembly headquarters.

In 2015, Bolivian Vice President Álvaro García threatened CEDIB (along with three other organizations) with expulsion from Bolivia, after CEDIB questioned a group of legislative decrees related to the oil industry which placed protected areas and the Indigenous Peoples who live in them at risk.

In 2016, CEDIB reported ongoing harassment as a result of their investigation into mining rights being issued on Bolivian glaciers. The harassment included personal information and photographs of CEDIB's investigating team being shared publicly.

Name: Members of the Bolivian Documentation and Information Centre (Centro de Documentación e Información Bolivia, CEDIB)
Gender m/f: all

Further information on UA: 99/17 Index: AMR 18/7572/2017 Issue Date: 7 December 2017