

URGENT ACTION

HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATION'S OFFICE ATTACKED

The office of human rights organization Pro-Búsqueda in San Salvador was raided on 14 November. Three staff members were held captive while important information was set on fire and computers containing sensitive information on legal cases were stolen.

At around 4:45 am, three armed men attacked **Pro-Búsqueda's** driver soon after he parked his car and walked towards the organization's office. The attackers threw the driver to the ground and pointed a gun at his neck, threatening to kill him. The three men then entered the building as they forced the driver to identify himself to the night watchman. Once inside, the attackers found two Pro-Búsqueda staff members: the watchman and the Chair of the organisation's board, and tied their hands behind their backs.

Two of the assailants went from room to room forcing open cabinets. They took away laptops and computers in what appeared to be a targeted effort to confiscate information related to the organization's work. Pro-Búsqueda told Amnesty International that the stolen computers contained legal information on three cases of enforced disappearances which are ongoing before the Supreme Court of Justice. In one of the cases, a hearing was scheduled on 11 November where military officials were expected to appear but failed to attend.

Before leaving the building approximately half an hour later, the attackers poured gasoline over three filing cabinets and then set them on fire. Pro-Búsqueda told Amnesty International that the information lost during the arson contained details of their work done since 1994 to establish the whereabouts of disappeared children and their families. There are no digital backups for this set of information and a substantial amount of work of the organization has been lost. A few hours later, at around 7:00 am, a female Pro-Búsqueda employee was reportedly followed by a car in San Salvador and two individuals on foot while she was on her way to work. Pro-Búsqueda staff members are concerned that the break-in was specifically aimed at damaging the work they been doing over the last two decades with relatives of the disappeared. Concerns for their safety remain.

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

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

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**AMNESTY
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Attorney General

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Twitter: @ComunicacionPNC
Salutation: Dear Sir / Estimado Sr

And copies to:

Pro-Búsqueda
Colonia Buenos Aires 4
Av. Santa Monica, Casa 10
San Salvador, El Salvador
Fax: +503 2235 1039
Email: info@probusqueda.org.sv

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.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Pro-Búsqueda is a respected Salvadoran NGO dedicated to locating children that were "disappeared" during the conflict years (1980-1992). The organization is formed by over 860 families searching for missing children, and a management committee on which relatives and former "disappeared" children sit, to guide the work of the organisation.

Since its inception in 1994, Pro-Búsqueda has successfully traced 384 missing children, of whom 235 were reunited with their birth families.

Pro-Búsqueda's 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 work. In recent years, Pro-Búsqueda has been instrumental in achieving sentences from the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in the cases of the Serrano Cruz sisters (2005), and the Contreras children and others (2011).

Name: Pro-Búsqueda staff members (names withheld)

Gender m/f: both

