

Dear Friends of CEDIB:

It is public knowledge that, CEDIB – Center for Documentacion and Informacion of Bolivia is about to turn 50. Founded during the military dictatorship, its purpose was to document and preserve the historical memory as it was presented in the national press. To this end a unique periodical library was created.

In recent years, it has become clear that government policies with regard to the exploitation of natural resources have become more aggressive. This, in turn, has led to a growing incompatibility with democratically established human rights in general and with the protection of the environment in particular.

Given this situation, it is the obligation of civic organizations such as ours, along with the independent press and indigenous communities to question the increase in oil and mining concessions in protected areas and indigenous territories. But these questions have made us a target of systematic attacks such as public rebukes, tax and finance harassment and a variety of other threats.

Our organization, in particular has struggled to carry out its purpose in the face of continued actions aimed at making our economic and legal existence unviable. We list the most significant ones below and it is increasingly worrisome that these have become more and more aggressive over time:

- Administrative harassment from different instances.
- Public discrediting and threats from highly placed authorities in the executive branch of the government.
- Judicial insecurity given that the process to renew our legal entity has not been completed after 3 years.

We must emphasize that, despite the harassment on the part of the administration and the enormous effort required to review 20 years of documents and files, we have always been able to demonstrate that we have fulfilled all our Tax and Labor obligations.

It appears that when these tactics failed, the authorities sought new means to attack us. In early 2017 Mr. Juan Ríos, a well known ally of the government, used his position as Chancellor of The University of San Simón to evict us in the most destructive way possible. Although this was a terrible blow, the will and determination of our staff, along with the national and international solidarity we were shown, made it possible for us to carry on our activities smoothly.

Now at the end of 2017, we have been informed that our bank accounts have been frozen and a preventive annotation has been made on our assets. These measures mainly affect the rights of CEDIB workers since 83% of the funds that were frozen were destined to pay salaries and the legally required social benefits of the staff, most of which are female heads of households. This measure is abusive since there was no need to go so far. The amount demanded exceeds the value of our assets and exposes CEDIB to fines if we are unable to meet our fiscal obligation to the State.

In conclusion, we are convinced that these attacks are part of a concerted effort to harass any person or institution that defends Human and Environmental Rights in Bolivia. These

actions range from violence against indigenous territories, the division and takeover of indigenous organizations to the passage of a law restricting freedom of civil association for organizations that do not agree with government policies.

We ask all friends and defenders of Human and Environmental Rights for their support in this difficult time. We demand an end to the harassment of the CEDIB, legal guarantees for a fair hearing that respects our right to defend ourselves and the immediate release of our funds in order to protect the rights and survival of CEDIB workers. Most of all, we declare our determination to continue working and striving for our right to remain a center of research and debate since this is the greatest contribution we can make for our country. We refuse to bow down and accept a country where research and free thought are a crime. We will continue to struggle alongside those who defend their territory and their way of life.

Cochabamba - Bolivia, 8th December 2017