



## Statement to the General Public

The National Association of Displaced Afro-Colombians (AFRODES) is an organization that defends the human rights of the Afro-Colombian population, provides guidance, support, assistance, and advice in support of the rights and cultural identity of the displaced Afro-Colombian population and victims of Colombia's internal armed conflict. Through its programming, AFRODES seeks to provide more dignified lives for its members by raising awareness in Colombian society about the displacement of black communities and proposing government policies to address continued displacement.

Because AFRODES is an organization that defends the rights of Afro-Colombians who are victims of the armed conflict, we have received multiple death threats and attacks on our members and their families from the Black Eagles (*Águilas Negras*), paramilitaries, and other unidentified people. The latest incident occurred on September 11, 2013, in Cali, Colombia, when three men on motorcycles approached DIEGO LUIS BALANTA in the neighborhood Las Orquideas and beat him to the ground and fractured two of his fingers. Also, he received death threats, telling him that this happened because he is a "sapo" (snitch). The place where the incident occurred has two security cameras installed by the National Police, but until this moment no suspects have been identified. Diego Luis Balanta's personal safety is in danger and he cannot exercise his rights to defend victims in Cali. Mr. Balanta had already requested protection from the National Protection Unit (*Unidad Nacional de Protección*, UNP) but his risk level was found ordinary, and so no protective measures were assigned. The National Police indicated that he should go to the place where the incident took place, because it has security cameras and greater protection. Currently Balanta is displaced internally in the city, because of the risk of returning home is great—a risk that has been extended to his family.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> of September, 2013 in the AFRODES offices around 4:35pm, we received a call in which a threat against AFRODES members was made, stating that they were going to KILL all of them. A series of similar events happened in Buenaventura, Quibdó, Malambo, Bogotá, Soacha, Tumaco y Cartagena, without any real collective measures to protect the life of AFRODES. On Wednesday at 10:30 am two people stole ADAM SCHAFFER's backpack at the Hotel Bogota City, a member of WOLA and a strategic ally with AFRODES in the United States. The security video shows that they went directly to SCHAFFER's bag, stealing a computer, a USB memory, a camera, meeting notes, among other things, we do not know the motives behind the attack. The camera had photos of AFRODES, other organizations, human rights defenders and political representatives from Colombia. The computer contains phone numbers of member of AFRODES. These circumstances of theft to human rights defenders are among the strategies designed by the perpetrators to attack the same organizations or make farces, accusations and intimidation.

As an organization we reject these human rights violations and we demand that the Colombian government provide collective protective measures to AFRODES. We urge the international community to support and monitor these events and as an organization as we need the international support to shed light on this problem of intimidation and threats.

**AFRODES BOARD OF DIRECTORS**