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**\*\*Press Release\*\***

NEW ALLEGATIONS OF GOVERNMENT PLANNING IN 2003 BOLIVIAN MASSACRE

*Months before the violence, defendants calculated it would take thousands of deaths to stop protests*

**Miami, FL** -- As the tenth anniversary of government-planned massacres in Bolivia approaches, family members of those killed filed an amended complaint in Florida today with extensive new allegations that the Defendants, former President Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada and former Defense Minister Carlos Sánchez Berzaín, had devised a plan to kill thousands of civilians months in advance of the violence. The complaint seeks damages against the Defendants for their involvement in extrajudicial killings and crimes against humanity. Since the case was originally filed in U.S. courts in 2007, seven former Bolivian officials, including high-ranking military leaders and members of the Cabinet, have been convicted for their participation in the violence of 2003. Sánchez de Lozada and Sánchez Berzaín, however, have found a safe harbor from justice in the United States for nearly a decade.

The new complaint alleges that the Defendants calculated it would take thousands of civilian deaths to stop anticipated protests over a controversial economic policy. They refused to consider dialogue, traditional police practices, or other less violent alternatives to massive lethal force against the protestors. The Defendants specifically relied on military forces, including special forces, to target innocent civilians as part of their campaign of oppression, plaintiffs say. New details also show how the Defendants were

intimately involved in carrying out the planned violence, including participating in the operations against the civilian population.

“The United States should not be a safe haven for perpetrators of violent attacks on unarmed civilians,” said Beth Stephens of the Center for Constitutional Rights, who represents the Plaintiffs. “That’s all the more true when the facts show that the Defendants had a direct involvement in the attacks.”

The government’s violent response to expressions of popular discontent left dozens dead and hundreds injured in September and October 2003. Among the Plaintiffs is Etelvina Ramos Mamani, who watched her eight-year old daughter Marlene die in her arms, after Marlene was targeted by a military sharpshooter as the child stood at a window in their home. Sánchez de Lozada and Sánchez Berzaín had given orders to treat Marlene's town and the civilians in it as a military target.

As national outrage and protests intensified over Marlene’s death and the many other deaths and injuries, President Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada resigned. He and Sánchez Berzaín then fled to the United States, where they currently reside. U.S. officials have refused extradition requests by Bolivian authorities for both men to face trial there and instead granted Sánchez Berzaín political asylum.

A recent Supreme Court decision in *Kiobel v. Royal Dutch Petroleum* dismissed claims against a foreign corporation for human rights abuses committed outside the United States. The case against Sánchez de Lozada and Sánchez Berzaín, however, shows why claims under the Alien Tort Statute, a federal law that provides for civil suits for human rights violations, should be allowed to proceed against individuals living in the United States.

“The case offers family members of those killed in the violence an opportunity to hold Sánchez de Lozada and Sánchez Berzaín to account for the massacres they ordered,” said Judith Chomsky of the Center for Constitutional Rights. “They not only developed a plan to kill civilians, but they oversaw the day-to-day military operations, which ties them to the killings and violence.”

Family members of the victims hope to find some measure of justice in the civil suit filed today. They now await an answer to the amended complaint from Sánchez de Lozada and Sánchez Berzaín. Depending on the schedule set by the court, they expect a response sometime this fall.

The family members are represented by a team of lawyers from the Center for Constitutional Rights, Harvard Law School’s International Human Rights Clinic, Stanford Law School’s International Human Rights and Conflict Resolution Clinic, and the law firm of Akin, Gump, Strauss, Hauer & Feld.