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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
EXECUTIVE OFFICE FOR IMMIGRATION REVIEW
IMMIGRATION COURT
1855 Gateway Blvd., Suite 850
Concord, CA 94520

In the Matter of	)	
Denis Enrique Tapia Maltez	)	**File No. A. 240-744-477**
In Removal Proceedings	)	

Immigration Judge: Arrache, Stephanie **Next Hearing Date:** May 4, 2027 at 8:30 a.m.

RESPONDENT'S COUNTRY CONDITIONS IN SUPPORT OF ASYLUM AND WITHHOLDING OF REMOVAL

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Exhibit 1

BRIEF EXPLANATION OF COUNTRY CONDITIONS REGARDING POLITICAL PERSECUTION AND SOCIAL CONTROL BY THE NICARAGUAN GOVERNMENT

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1. GENERAL CONTEXT OF POLITICAL PERSECUTION AND SOCIAL CONTROL IN NICARAGUA

Nicaragua has undergone profound political and institutional changes over the past two decades. Since President Daniel Ortega returned to power in 2007, the country has experienced a gradual concentration of authority within the executive branch, accompanied by significant changes to its political and legal institutions (CC3) (CC14).

Constitutional reforms, increasing control over public bodies, and growing restrictions on civic participation have transformed Nicaragua's institutional landscape and attracted sustained scrutiny from the international community. The United States Department of State has documented significant human rights concerns in the country, including credible reports of arbitrary killings, enforced disappearances, torture, arbitrary detention, and severe restrictions on fundamental freedoms, noting that the government has not taken credible steps to identify and punish officials or parapolice units that commit abuses (CC1).

Reports from Freedom House and Amnesty International indicate a governance environment characterized by widespread impunity, limited judicial independence, and the growing use of state institutions and neighborhood surveillance structures to reinforce executive control (CC5) (CC7).

The result is a climate of systematic political repression and pervasive social control that permeates the daily lives of Nicaraguans, in which refusal to participate in government activities or maintaining political neutrality is treated as active dissent and punished accordingly (CC6) (CC18) (CC19).

2. THE ORTEGA REGIME AND SYSTEMATIC HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

Ortega's government began in 2007, and its gradual consolidation of power removed the institutional limits that could have contained it. In 2014, a constitutional amendment approved by the National Assembly abolished presidential term limits, allowing him to remain in office to this day. In 2018, an outbreak of protests was met with an increasingly harsh crackdown that resulted in at least 355 deaths and more than 2,000 injured, as well as the arbitrary detention of more than 1,600 people between April and October 2018 alone. The consolidation continued in the years that followed (CC3) (CC5).

According to Human Rights Watch, since 2018 the Nicaraguan government has kept a tight leash on the population and targets all forms of protest against the President. As of 2024, 452 Nicaraguans had been arbitrarily deprived of their nationality and more than 3,500 civil society organizations had been shut down, including humanitarian organizations such as the Red Cross (CC3) (CC4).

This consistent pattern of human rights violations has extended beyond political activists to include lawyers, religious leaders, human rights defenders and, in recent times, individuals with no apparent political affiliation. Reports from Freedom House and Amnesty International indicate that this concentration of power has undermined judicial independence and significantly reduced institutional accountability, allowing the government to exercise authority with limited oversight (CC6) (CC9).

Since then, the repression methods have evolved not limiting itself to physical aggressions but also economic and administrative. In addition to stripping hundreds of Nicaraguans of their nationality, the government confiscated their assets, and the mass dissolution of associations eliminated much of the country's independent organizational life (CC8) (CC9).

Alongside the regular police force, the government relies on armed parapolice groups and on partisan neighborhood structures such as the Citizen Power Councils (CPCs) or Family Cabinets. These neighborhood units act as political espionage networks, monitoring residents, conducting "preventive visits," enforcing political compliance, threatening local family businesses, and punishing those who refuse to participate in regime rallies or electoral events (CC10) (CC18) (CC19).

As a result, the violations documented in Nicaragua are not isolated incidents but part of a sustained and coordinated pattern of state repression. International reports describe an environment in which state institutions and government-aligned actors operate in concert to suppress dissent, while the absence of accountability allows these practices to continue with impunity (CC12) (CC13).

3. STATE INABILITY TO PROVIDE PROTECTION AND INSTITUTIONAL FAILURE

The Nicaraguan State has progressively lost its capacity to provide effective protection against abuses committed by actors aligned with Daniel Ortega's government. The institutions responsible for upholding the rule of law—including the judiciary, the Public Prosecutor's Office, and law enforcement agencies—lack the independence necessary to investigate allegations involving politically sensitive matters or abuses by state-backed groups (CC16).

Political prisoners have been denied counsel of their own choosing, while hearings have been conducted by video call from detention facilities, outside public courtrooms and away from their families (CC15).

This institutional failure extends directly to basic social and emergency services. Following state directives, public hospitals and health clinics under the Ministry of Health have systematically denied medical treatment to individuals injured in political confrontations or attacked by pro-government groups, instructing medical personnel to treat only government loyalists and firing doctors who fulfill their duty to provide indiscriminate care (CC2) (CC5).

Because oversight bodies are subordinate to the executive, victims are left without impartial domestic remedies against the Ortega government or groups acting on its behalf. Furthermore, the government has systematically isolated itself from international oversight by barring international rights monitoring bodies from entering the country since 2018 and formally disengaging from multilateral entities such as the UN Human Rights Council (CC3).

Furthermore, this system of control is operationalized at the grass-roots level through ubiquitous political surveillance directly linked to state entities. Organizations such as the

Citizen Power Councils (CPCs) act as political espionage apparatuses that spy on citizens' everyday movements and report any perceived anti-regime sentiment. These partisan structures operate as "a spy on every corner," monitoring residents through neighbors who document activities, visitors, and routines. The regime has continually reinforced this mechanism; in July 2025, President Ortega explicitly ordered the redoubling of "revolutionary vigilance" to capture and prosecute those deemed "traitors". (CC10) (CC13) (CC17)

4. TERRITORIAL CONTROL AND IMPOSSIBILITY TO RELOCATE WITHIN NICARAGUA

The possibility of safely relocating within Nicaragua is nonexistent due to the extensive reach of the State and the highly centralized political control exercised throughout the country. Government authority is not confined to major metropolitan areas but extends into every municipality and rural community through local administrative structures, police stations, and CPC neighborhood surveillance committees (CC10).

This pervasive institutional presence allows authorities and local party operatives to monitor, identify, and track individuals perceived as opposing or challenging the government, regardless of where they relocate within the country. Because these actors operate nationwide under a unified command structure and share common political objectives, relocation to another city or neighborhood does not reduce the likelihood of being identified, surveilled, or subjected to further government persecution (CC10) (CC17) (CC18)

Moreover, Nicaragua’s relatively small geographic size and integrated administrative system reduce the practical effectiveness of internal movement as a means of avoiding state attention. Therefore, individuals who experience harassment or abuse cannot reasonably expect local authorities in another part of the country to act independently from the broader governmental structure or to provide meaningful protection (CC16).

Rather than offering protection, state institutions systematically integrate these partisan surveillance networks into their repressive apparatus. The National Police directly coordinate with local CPC coordinators to enforce social control and conduct targeted intimidation campaigns. Reports from CPC informants are routinely used by police and

intelligence agencies to conduct illegal, warrantless home raids under pretextual grounds and to execute arbitrary detentions. (CC10)

Because the law enforcement apparatus and judicial bodies operate in direct collusion with these government-aligned neighborhood spies, victims of harassment, physical assaults, or property confiscation have no legal recourse or protection available anywhere in Nicaragua, demonstrating a complete institutional failure to safeguard basic constitutional rights (CC8) (CC10) (CC18).

5. CONCLUSION

Over recent years, Daniel Ortega's government has transformed Nicaragua into a totalitarian police state where any form of dissent or political neutrality is met with severe repression. Since 2007, the regime has steadily consolidated its power, abolishing presidential term limits, violently suppressing protests, and eliminating civic space. That consolidation has been sustained through thousands of human rights violations, including arbitrary detentions, torture, extrajudicial physical attacks, and property confiscations (CC8) (CC14) (CC7).

The concentration of power under the Ortega administration has hollowed out the institutions that would ordinarily constrain it. Courts and oversight bodies answer to the executive, leaving investigation nominal and accountability effectively unavailable (CC6) (CC15).

The result is a legal framework in which protections that exist in principle are, in practice, out of reach for those who need them most and in which victims are left with no recourse (CC11) (CC12).

Exhibit 2

Denis Enrique Tapia Maltez A#240-744-477

EXCERPTS FROM COUNTRY CONDITIONS REPORTS

CC 1

NICARAGUA 2024 HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT - U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

The human rights situation in Nicaragua worsened during the year.

Significant human rights issues included credible reports of: arbitrary or unlawful killings; disappearances; torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment; arbitrary arrest and detention; transnational repression against individuals in another country; serious restrictions on freedom of expression and media freedom, including violence or threats of violence against journalists, unjustified arrests or prosecution of journalists, censorship, and serious restrictions on internet freedom; restrictions on religious freedom; trafficking in persons, including forced labor; significant restrictions on workers' freedom of association; and worst forms of child labor.

The government did not take credible steps to identify and punish officials who committed human rights abuses.

Parapolice – nonuniformed, armed, and masked units with marginal tactical training and loose hierarchy that acted in coordination with government security forces and reported directly to the Nicaraguan National Police and individuals linked to the government of President Daniel Ortega Saavedra – carried out a campaign of harassment, intimidation, and violence toward perceived enemies of the regime, such as former political prisoners and their families, farmworker activists, prodemocracy opposition groups, human rights defenders, private-sector leaders, clergy, other religious actors, and church-affiliated civil society groups, as well as members of the ruling party who expressed dissent or the will to defect. Authorities did not investigate or prosecute these actions.

Section 1.
Life

a. Extrajudicial Killings

There were several reports the government or its agents committed arbitrary or unlawful killings during the year. Ruling party and parapolice harassment and persecution hindered human rights groups from obtaining information. Nonetheless, **human rights organizations and independent media alleged some killings were politically motivated, an allegation difficult to confirm because the government refused to conduct official inquiries.**

c. Disappearance and Abduction

Disappearance

There were reports of enforced disappearances by or on behalf of government authorities. Various human rights organizations reported the NNP and prison authorities forcibly disappeared political opposition members. These organizations cited many cases in which authorities detained political opponents without informing family members or legal counsel, without providing information regarding where they were held, without presenting the prisoners in a public court of law and denying all access to legal recourses such as habeas corpus. In at least nine cases, security forces kept political prisoners incommunicado for up to three months, occasionally transferring them to different prisons and to and from hospitals and medical clinics without securing an order from civilian authorities or informing the prisoners' legal counsel or families. Authorities did not publish many of the cases against political prisoners in the judiciary's online information system.

Section 3.
Security of the Person

a. Torture and Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

Although the law prohibited such practices, government officials carried out acts that resulted in severe physical or mental suffering for the purposes of securing information, inflicting punishment, and psychologically deterring other citizens from reporting on the government's actions or participating in civic actions against the government. Torture and mistreatment against prisoners bore similarities to treatment against prisoners released in 2023 that the UN Group of Human Rights Experts on Nicaragua concluded "reached the threshold of torture."

CC 2

NICARAGUA 2018 HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT - U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

There were credible reports the government directed the Ministry of Health to deprive protesters of medical attention and instructed public hospitals and clinicsunder the control of the Social Security Institute not to provide medical care to wounded protesters. On April 20, a 15-year-old who was shot in the face while bringing water to protesters was denied medical care and became the first minor to die in the protests.

CC3

WORLD REPORT 2026: NICARAGUA - HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

The government of Daniel Ortega and Rosario Murillo tightened its authoritarian hold over Nicaragua. A sweeping constitutional overhaul further concentrated power in the executive, while authorities continued systematically repressing dissent through arbitrary arrest and prosecution, enforced disappearance, forced exile, revocation of citizenship and confiscation of assets.

Concentration of Power

In January, the ruling-party-controlled National Assembly passed a sweeping constitutional change. The amendment named Murillo, Ortega's wife and then vice-president, as "co-president," and empowered their presidency to "coordinate" the judiciary and legislative branches of government. Ortega has been in power since 2007. A constitutional amendment approved by the Assembly in 2014 abolished presidential term limits.

Persecution of Critics

The government continues to target all forms of dissent and in 2025 expanded the repression to include some government supporters. As of October, a human rights organization reported that at least 77 remained behind bars as political prisoners. Security forces sustain a climate of fear through surveillance, harassment, and arbitrary detention.

In August, lawyer Carlos Cárdenas and opposition figure Mauricio Alonso died in custody following weeks of enforced disappearance, according to the media outlet Confidencial. At least six political prisoners have died in custody since 2019.

The new Constitution allows authorities to revoke the Nicaraguan nationality of people deemed responsible for "treason," a provision that provides domestic legal cover for a practice that began in 2023. At least 452 Nicaraguans have reportedly been arbitrarily deprived of their nationality, leaving many stateless; authorities have also seized their assets.

Justice and Accountability

In April, the UN Human Rights Council extended the mandate of the GHREN for two years. The group has found reasonable grounds to believe that authorities have committed crimes against humanity, including murder, imprisonment, torture, sexual violence, forced deportation, and persecution on political grounds. It has called on states to bring a case against Nicaragua at the International Court of Justice for violations of the UN Conventions on Statelessness.

No international rights monitoring bodies have been allowed to enter Nicaragua since 2018.

CC4

NICARAGUA'S PEOPLE NEED A ROBUST INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE - HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

For over five years, Nicaragua has been facing one of the worst human rights crises in Latin America. However, the response of the international community has been ineffective in addressing the crisis. To protect the rights of Nicaraguans, democratic governments, especially in the Americas and the European Union (EU), should strengthen and coordinate their actions effectively.

Daniel Ortega's government has targeted all segments of society in a bid to remain in power indefinitely. **Since 2018, the Nicaraguan government has shut down more than 3,500 civil society organizations, including humanitarian organizations such as the Red Cross. Abusive laws severely restrict the work of independent journalism and civil society, and the authorities have arbitrarily detained and prosecuted journalists, human rights defenders, and community leaders.**

CC 5

NICARAGUA: DOCTORS, HEALTH WORKERS ARBITRARILY FIRED - HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

In recent weeks, the Nicaraguan Health Ministry authorities have fired at least 135 doctors, nurses and other health workers from several public hospitals across Nicaragua, according to the Nicaraguan Medical Association.

A doctor from Carazo, in southwestern Nicaragua, told Human Rights Watch his superior from the Health Ministry told him the health center he directed should only attend "our people," apparently referring to pro-government gangs. On July 8, about 20 armed members of those gangs arrived at the center and did not allow anyone else in, the doctor said. Eight wounded members of the gangs received medical attention, he said, but no protesters. The gang members left the hospital later that day.

CC6

NICARAGUA: ORTEGA'S REPRESSIVE MACHINERY CONTINUES TO STIFLE ANY DISSENT - AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

"The repression in Nicaragua means that no one is safe," said Ana Piquer, Americas director at Amnesty International. "From indigenous leaders, journalists, human rights defenders and anyone seen as a risk to the government's policies, the authorities continue to consolidate a climate of fear in which dissent is punishable by imprisonment, exile or disappearance."

Moreover, the organization notes in its statement that, in a context of repression and closure of civic space in Nicaragua, the authorities have continued to implement and streamline a strategy of repression that has escalated from the use of lethal force against demonstrators in 2018, to the current arbitrary deprivation of nationality of persons perceived as dissidents. Despite releases from prison in 2023 and 2024, many people continue to be deprived of their liberty for political reasons or simply for expressing anti-government views. **The harassment, intimidation and misuse of criminal law that initially targeted protesters, activists,**

political opponents, journalists, human rights defenders and Indigenous leaders has gradually extended to society as a whole, affecting anyone perceived as a threat to official policies or state narratives.

CC7

NICARAGUA: THE YEAR ENDS WITH SYSTEMATIC REPRESSION AND A STREAMLINED STATE STRATEGY AGAINST ANY FORM OF DISSENT - AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Violent response to protest and criticism

Since the outbreak of protests in April 2018, the response of the Nicaraguan authorities has been disproportionate and violent, with a devastating number of victims. At the time, various regional and universal human rights mechanisms documented at least 355 deaths and more than 2 000 people injured in the context of the repression of the first protests of 2018, most of which resulted from the use of firearms in vital areas and many of which may constitute extrajudicial executions. In addition, between April and October 2018, more than 1 600 people were arbitrarily detained and subjected to conditions of detention that included torture, enforced disappearances and cruel and degrading treatment. **The repression included not only the use of police forces, but also "parapolice" groups operating in a coordinated manner to quell any acts of protest or dissent, leaving a trail of violence and fear in Nicaraguan society.**

According to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), between February and June 2019 the government released a total of 493 people from prison, 387 through unilateral announcements by the state and 104 following the approval of the amnesty law. However, despite being out of prison, these individuals never enjoyed real freedom. **In many cases, they and their families reported suffering acts of aggression, intimidation and harassment by the police, parapolice forces or local control networks linked to the government. Thus, their release from prison did not mark an end to the repression, which continued and resulted in the forced exile of hundreds of Nicaraguans perceived by the authorities as dissidents.**

Widespread surveillance and repression. When everyone is a potential state target

In Nicaragua, the repressive apparatus has evolved over the years, adapting and expanding in an attempt to eliminate all traces of dissent. While repression initially focused on the most prominent public and political figures, activists and student leaders, as mentioned above, over time the government has broadened its strategy to include religious leaders, members of civil society organizations and, more recently, **people with no apparent political affiliation.**

In 2024, the authorities extended their repression to anyone perceived as a threat, including former public officials. On this basis, **they have strengthened their control mechanisms, imposing restrictions on movement and constant surveillance on those they consider to be potential opponents, making it clear that repression is no longer directed solely at openly and publicly critical or dissident actors.** In this context, local organizations have documented a number of arbitrary arrests and acts of intimidation against members of the judiciary and their families.

Harassment is now indiscriminate, affecting even those with no history of activism or dissent, sending a clear message that the authorities will not tolerate any form of organization or exercise of rights that they perceive as challenging their power. This widening of the profile of those persecuted and intimidated has a chilling effect on the population, fostering a heightened climate of fear and self-censorship in which no one feels safe. This situation reveals the absolute control of a state where arbitrariness thrives and where anyone, regardless of their background, can be considered a dissident voice and a threat in the eyes of the authorities. According to the Mechanism for the Recognition of Political Prisoners in Nicaragua, as of 7 November 2024, 46 people were arbitrarily detained, presumed opponents, deprived of their liberty or in a situation of enforced disappearance. Some of these cases have been documented by Amnesty International in order to be included as exemplary cases in this public statement.

CC8

REPORT OF THE GROUP OF HUMAN RIGHTS EXPERTS ON NICARAGUA - UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Introduction

The Group previously found reasonable grounds to believe that, since April 2018, State and non-State actors had committed serious human rights violations and abuses against an ever-growing range of real or perceived opponents and their relatives in a systematic and widespread manner. Some violations constituted, prima facie, the crimes against

humanity of murder, imprisonment, torture, including rape and other forms of sexual violence of comparable gravity, enforced disappearance, deportation and persecution on political grounds.

Evolution of the profiles of victims

The Group has documented patterns of serious human rights violations – including extrajudicial executions, arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, unfair trials, arbitrary deprivation of nationality, expulsions, entry bans, arbitrary confiscations, surveillance, threats and harassment – perpetrated by State and non-State actors through four phases of repression since 2018. **The first phase (2018–2020) was characterized by a violent and disproportionate crackdown on legitimate widespread protests. The second phase (2021) was characterized by intensified targeted repression to ensure the re-election of the President, Daniel Ortega. The third phase (2022) saw increased efforts to eliminate all remaining political opposition, the amplification of repression against the Catholic Church and accelerated dismantling of civic space. The fourth phase (2023 to the present) has been characterized by violations aimed at eliminating all criticism and preventing any resistance movements, especially from within the State apparatus and the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN), to ensure that the Co-Presidents, Mr. Ortega and Rosario Murillo, maintain absolute control over all State entities and the population, including abroad.**

Persistent patterns of human rights violations

19. As the Government advanced towards its objective of absolute control, these patterns of human rights abuse evolved: some violations subsided, others persisted and new ones emerged. While extrajudicial executions and mass arrests ended after the protests, targeted arbitrary detention has continued, alongside enforced disappearance. **One of the most notorious developments of the fourth phase of repression, however, has been the expansion and escalation of transnational human rights violations.**

38. Victims are forced into a situation of extreme vulnerability, abruptly cut off from their livelihoods and support networks. Entry bans also result in family separation and often cause harm to relatives in Nicaragua, especially children and older persons, who depend on those barred from returning.

(ii) Denial of passports and official records

39. Nicaraguan consular authorities have refused to issue or renew passports, legalize power of attorney and perform other functions, or have delayed such procedures, for people considered “threats” to the Government and for their relatives. Decisions to deny passports are taken

by the Deputy Minister of the Interior and the Directorate General for Migration and Alien Affairs after consultation with Ms. Murillo and transmitted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of the Interior to embassies and consulates for implementation.

Confiscation of property

Since 2018, and particularly since 2023, confiscation of the property and assets of exiled real or perceived opponents and their relatives, such as homes, vehicles, land, bank accounts, businesses and pensions, has increasingly been undertaken by the authorities. The cases documented by the Group were arbitrary, carried out after unfair trials or without any known legal proceedings. The Attorney General and her Office have implemented these confiscations, executing court orders or arbitrary decisions made in consultation with Ms. Murillo, and allocating seized properties to State institutions and, at times, individuals linked to FSLN. The Executive President of the Nicaraguan Social Security Institute has implemented the confiscation of pensions and contributions.

With these confiscations, the authorities have deliberately intensified economic hardship for exiled Nicaraguans as a form of punishment and a means of deterring dissenting activities abroad. Many victims have been forced into poverty. These measures have also disproportionately affected the most vulnerable – women with dependants, older persons and children – who rely on a fixed income to meet basic needs.

Proxy punishment of in-country relatives

43. The authorities have regularly targeted the in-country relatives – including minor children – and associates of exiled real or perceived opponents as a means of punishing and exerting pressure on them. Family members and associates have been subjected to surveillance, harassment, threats, arbitrary detention, arbitrary confiscation of property, alteration of civil records, denial of passports and prohibition from leaving the country, by virtue of mere association. This form of collective punishment, which deliberately targets vulnerable family members, often women, takes a particularly severe economic and/or psychological toll on victims. It has contributed to widespread fear and self-censorship both in Nicaragua and abroad.

Crimes against humanity

The violations investigated by the Group since 2018 amount, prima facie, to the crimes against humanity of murder, imprisonment, torture,

deportation, enforced disappearance (other inhumane acts) and persecution on political grounds under customary international law.

As outlined above, victims with diverse profiles were targeted on the basis of their political identity, activities and/or opinions, pursuant to a discriminatory policy designed to systematically silence dissent. Across successive phases of repression, the Government has progressively refined its methods and continued to expand the pool of targets, including to Nicaraguans abroad.

CC9

NICARAGUA: FREEDOM IN THE WORLD 2025 - FREEDOM HOUSE

The 2006 election of Sandinista leader Daniel Ortega began a period of democratic deterioration marked by the consolidation of all branches of government under his party's control, the limitation of fundamental freedoms, and unchecked corruption in government. In 2018, state forces, with the aid of informally allied armed groups, responded to a mass antigovernment movement with violence and repression. The rule of law collapsed as the government moved to put down the movement, with rights monitors reporting killings, extrajudicial detentions, disappearances, and torture. **Since then, Ortega's regime has consolidated its power by engaging in surveillance, curtailing press freedoms, arresting political opponents, sending opposing voices into exile, and stripping away their citizenship.**

B3 - Are the people's political choices free from domination by forces that are external to the political sphere, or by political forces that employ extrapolitical means?

President Ortega controls all government branches and public institutions, as well as the country's media, granting him and the FSLN significant influence over people's political choices.

D3 - Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination?

Since the 2018 crisis, teachers have experienced harassment from authorities and progovernment groups and must follow the Education Ministry's strict guidelines. Students at the primary and secondary levels are reportedly required to attend progovernment rallies. Pro–FSLN materials are often displayed in school buildings. Under a 2022 law, the

government-controlled National Council of Universities functions as the main academic governing body, limiting academic autonomy.

D4 - Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution?

An ongoing campaign of repression and intimidation by state and progovernment forces inspires a general climate of fear and terror that restricts free expression. State and progovernment forces routinely monitor the activities of individuals who oppose the regime. The families of victims of regime violence and people who return from abroad are also monitored and surveilled. Authorities are known to use international mobile subscriber identity (IMSI) catchers, which allow operators to intercept the mobile communications of users who unwittingly connect to them.

G1 - Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education?

The 2018 repression against protesters, the 2021 crackdown on political opponents, and continued surveillance and harassment at the hands of police and paramilitary groups have created a climate of fear and mistrust that discourages free movement.

G2 - Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors?

In 2023, the Ortega regime deepened its policy of arbitrarily seizing private assets. Individuals who were deemed "traitors to the homeland" had their property seized by the state.

Several laws and legislative amendments passed in 2024 legalized the government's common practice of seizing the property and assets of individuals and organizations accused of certain crimes. In September, the National Assembly adopted reforms to the penal code, allowing authorities to confiscate property from those convicted of committing crimes against the state, even if they reside outside of Nicaragua.

CC10

"MY NEIGHBOR IS WATCHING ME" HOW THE REGIME RESTRUCTURED CPCS FOR NEIGHBORHOOD ESPIONAGE - DIVERGENTES

The sight of members of the Citizen Power Councils (CPCs)—the repressive and political surveillance structure of the Sandinista Front in neighborhoods—accompanying National Police officers is becoming increasingly common in Nicaragua.

After Daniel Ortega and Rosario Murillo's regime activated a new surveillance structure last year, Sandinista party militants have coordinated with the National Police, becoming the front line of repression in neighborhoods.

Meanwhile, the Police confirmed that with this strategy, the police model "is organized fromnindividuals, families, and communities with coordination, articulation, and communication with political secretaries and the electoral network to contribute to peace, stability, and security."

CPCs in direct line with the regime's police

Critics and opponents describe how the harassment against them started with a visit from CPC members to their homes to ask for personal information (full name, age, employment status).

Subsequently, police officers conducted searches or intimidation at the same homes, armed with more detailed information. **"The CPCs meet every week, they communicate more with each other, and they have a direct line to the Police," said a Sandinista militant who spoke on condition of anonymity because they disagree with the situation.**

The CPCs and Family Cabinets were structured in 2007 with the aim of distributing social programs and performing proselytizing tasks. **But since April 2018, when the sociopolitical crisis erupted in Nicaragua, they began operating as a political espionage apparatus.**

Since then, thousands of Sandinista militants across the country have carried out covert surveillance. Their protocol involved espionage, where they informed the Police, and officers acted by conducting searches and harassing opponents.

Now, CPCs meet in neighborhoods, walk, and work with police officers in broad daylight and with their faces uncovered.

Identify, monitor, and report

Additionally, they are called by the police to cross-check lists of critics to find out whether members of those families are in the country or what activities they are engaged in.

"They are assigned to watch or monitor several people, or just one person. Generally, it's the closest neighbors who are watching," said

the source. “This surveillance used to be carried out by the police, but now it’s done by the CPCs,” they added.

CPC surveillance sometimes turns violent

A former political prisoner from a northern municipality, now in exile, said the harassment against him intensified precisely after the police visits in the neighborhoods last year. “They came to the neighborhood, met, and weeks later, two men on motorcycles intercepted and beat me; they didn’t steal anything,” said this opponent.

“The police officer told me that if I didn’t answer the call, they would come looking for me to put me in jail,” said the opponent, now in the United States, where he sought refuge from this harassment, but who still fears giving his name because his family remains in Nicaragua.

“I had a neighbor who was watching me. I knew it was him because when there was an important date (the anniversary of the April Rebellion, Sandinista celebrations in July, or Christmas in December), patrol cars would park near my house to watch me, and they would go to his (the neighbor’s) house to talk and meet,” said the former political prisoner.

This behavior is part of the strict control imposed by the Ortega-Murillo regime’s police state since late 2018, when it stopped the rebellion that began in April of that year with violence.

First, physical protests were banned, and later, even virtual spaces were censored through imprisonment and exile. **Currently, in Nicaragua, there is no space for opposition without it resulting in arrests, threats, harassment, and intimidation.**

CC11

US IMMIGRATION: 'THEY'D RATHER DIE THAN RETURN TO NICARAGUA' - BBC NEWS

A climate of fear

Affectionately known as Comandante Daniel to his supporters, Mr Ortega has long been accused of abandoning the revolution's ideals by turning into a dictator, harshly suppressing any opposition.

Since then, the clampdowns have continued and escalated, with the UN's human rights chief warning that new criminal legislations are being used to persecute perceived opponents of the Ortega government.

In one week in early June alone, almost 200 civil society and non-governmental organisations were shut down in what the Paris-based Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders said was an attempt to eliminate "all social and political vision that differs from that established by the regime".

CC12

NICARAGUA HAS COMMITTED EXECUTIONS, CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY, U.N. GROUP STATES - NBC NEWS

Nicaragua's government has committed serious and systematic violations which amount to crimes against humanity, a United Nations-appointed team of human rights experts said on Thursday, calling for international sanctions against the government.

Asked about the scale of the abuses, the experts said they had documented over 100 cases of executions, hundreds of cases of torture and arbitrary detention, and thousands of cases of political persecution.

It names President Daniel Ortega and Vice President Rosario Murillo, who is his wife, as participants in the violations and calls for international legal action and sanctions against those involved.

"The objective (of the government) is to eliminate by different means any opposing or dissenting voices in the country," Jan Simon, Chair of the Group of Human Rights Experts on Nicaragua, told journalists at a briefing to present the findings, saying the government was "weaponizing the functions of the state against the population".

"This has resulted in the Nicaraguan population living in fear," he said.

CC13

ORTEGA ORDERS INCREASED 'REVOLUTIONARY SURVEILLANCE' TO 'CAPTURE AND PROSECUTE TRAITORS' IN NICARAGUA - EL PAIS

Just as it appeared that his slow-burning tirade might be coming to a close, Ortega issued a threat that, despite being a reality for years now, reaffirmed the terror that Nicaraguans live under in their own neighborhoods: the political surveillance and harassment faced by anyone who disagrees with the Sandinista regime, and who is often betrayed by their own neighbors.

"That's why we must always keep up with all the tasks we have to accomplish: study, preparation, work, and various activities, without neglecting the place, the neighborhood where we're working, without neglecting our revolutionary vigilance," Ortega stated, ordering the redoubling of a practice that dates back to the first Sandinista regime in Nicaragua in the 1980s. "And that way, there will be no room for terrorists, conspirators, traitors, because they will know that as soon as they are discovered, they will be captured and prosecuted," said the president.

Since 2023, the Nicaraguan Police have activated a new political surveillance structure in the neighborhoods "to ensure peace." Officers coordinate with coordinators of the Citizen Power Council (CPC), the Sandinista officials who dominate the localities. The initiative was part of the ironclad police state imposed by the Ortega-Murillo regime since late 2018, when it crushed the rebellion that began in April of that same year with bullets. On July 19, Ortega made it clear that he was redoubling his efforts to deepen the practice.

In Nicaragua, raids against individuals considered opponents of the regime continue unabated.

CC14

A 'TROPICALIZED TALIBAN REGIME' AND A FAMILY SUCCESSION PLAN UNDERWAY: ORTEGA AND MURILLO RADICALIZE REPRESSION IN NICARAGUA - EL PAIS

Since 2018, the Nicaraguan police have stepped up repression every April, when citizens and government opponents commemorate the mass social protests that broke out against the regime of President Daniel Ortega and his

wife, Vice President Rosario Murillo, and were crushed by a brutal paramilitary and police crackdown. This year is no different. Police have detained five people and increased their activities in the country's main capital cities. The individuals arrested are relatives of protesters who died in the police crackdown and released political prisoners.

"Nicaragua has changed a lot since 2018," Manuel Orozco, a political scientist at the Inter-American Dialogue, tells EL PAÍS. **"The country went from a political crisis fighting to democratize and dismantle a nepotist infrastructure, to a tropicalized Taliban-style radicalization regime, supported by five pillars: criminalizing democracy and the Constitution; control of the State; fear with violence; international isolation and post-truth to guarantee the consolidation of a dynasty."**

Nicaraguans have become used to living in fear and silencing their criticism of the government in order to survive. This, however, is still no guarantee that they won't end up in prison, exile or, in the worst-case scenario, dead in a garbage dump.

CC15

TRIALS VIA VIDEO CALL, DISAPPEARANCES AND DISEASE: THIS IS WHAT POLITICAL PRISONERS ARE SUBJECTED TO IN NICARAGUA - EL PAIS

The student leader's trial illustrates one of the new arbitrary practices of the Nicaraguan justice system, which is controlled by the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN), the ruling party. Nowadays, political prisoners aren't even taken to a court to be tried: instead, they're declared guilty through video calls. Lawyers also cannot know the file numbers or charges, so it's impossible to formulate any viable defense.

"Over the last six months, we've identified the following repressive patterns in the arbitrary detentions perpetrated by the state of Nicaragua: illegal raids, forced disappearances against people considered to be opponents or critics of state party politics, as well as trials being held via video call. [We have also observed] coordination between the penitentiary system and the police during interrogations, as well as the dire prison conditions, which include infestations of bedbugs," the report summarizes.

The arrests

The chain of arbitrariness begins with the arrests of opponents. In these cases, anguish is felt by family members, such as those of Freddy Quezada, a retired professor who was arrested on January 29, 2023 for

making critical comments against the regime on social media. The arrest of the former university professor was coordinated by civilians, who oversaw three police officers. Since his arrest more than a year ago, his family has no knowledge of his whereabouts.

CC16

NICARAGUA OPPRESSION IS 'TANTAMOUNT TO CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY', SAYS REPORT - THE GUARDIAN

UN-backed human rights experts have accused Nicaragua's government of systematic human rights abuses "tantamount to crimes against humanity", implicating a range of high-ranking officials in the government of President Daniel Ortega.

In the past year, repression has expanded to large swaths of society with a focus on "incapacitating any kind of opposition in the long term", according to the independent group of UN experts investigating the issue since March 2022.

Jan Simon, an expert who headed the investigation, said at a news conference on Thursday in Geneva that the Nicaraguan government's persecution targets "all forms of opposition, whether real or perceived, both domestically and abroad".

Ortega's government has repeatedly said that the mass demonstrations against it in 2018 constituted a failed coup attempt orchestrated by the United States, and typically defends any repression as a crackdown on anti-government plots.

The report says Gustavo Porras, the head of the country's national assembly, pushes through legislation to facilitate repression. It says Marvin Aguilar García, the head of the supreme court, takes direct orders from Ortega's government, and commands lower-level judges to fall in line. Meanwhile, the office of country's chief prosecutor, Ana Julia Guido Ochoa, fabricates evidence against real or perceived opponents, the report says.

CC17

A "SPY" ON EVERY CORNER OF NICARAGUA - GATO ENCERRADO NEWS

Like the neighbor who spies on this public health doctor, there are thousands of Sandinista militants throughout the country conducting covert surveillance through the Citizen Power Councils (CPCs) and Citizen Power Cabinets, according to security experts. The core idea behind this structure was established in November 2007, at the beginning of Ortega's presidency, with the aim of distributing social programs and carrying out proselytizing activities. But since April 2018, when the sociopolitical crisis erupted in Nicaragua, they have operated openly as a political espionage apparatus.

“Ultimately, the CPC or Family Cabinet are people who live behind the window. If the person went to the store, they take note; if they saw an unusual visitor arrive at the home of the person under surveillance, they take note. They are constantly reporting both what is usual and what is unusual,” Cuadra asserts.

In response to these allegations, the authorities remain silent. There is no access to public information, and all attempts to obtain an official statement have been met with complete silence.

CC 18

THEY DENOUNCE THE “MODUS OPERANDI” OF THE CPC AND SANDINISTA YOUTH IN NEIGHBORHOODS AND PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS - CONFIDENCIAL 30 NEWS

In detailing the modus operandi used to intimidate citizens, the document states that the victims of these graffiti “are not chosen at random, but there is a 'well-founded' reason why graffiti is done on their houses, based on lists prepared by people affiliated with the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN), which include the location, name and other data of the victims.

Another possibility is that the CPC will send investigators through the Sandinista Youth and the police, who will monitor his social media and **conduct "preventive visits" to invite him to participate in party activities, or he will be harassed. If he is not home, a formal invitation to FSLN events will be left for him, and if he does not attend or does not accept the invitation, he will be accused of being a traitor, his level of "danger" being measured by his reaction.**

“All these acts are carried out under the protection of the judicial system and the security forces, so in most cases it is impossible to report these events,” the document states, adding that victims also do not report them for fear of being arrested or receiving further reprisals.

“WE’RE BEING FORCED TO ATTEND”: WORKERS ORDERED TO BRING A ‘GUEST’ TO FILL THE SQUARE ON JULY 19 - CONFIDENCIAL 30 NEWS

The order to “go to the square” is nothing new, nor is the effort to monitor attendance by taking roll at the beginning and end of every event to determine who showed up—and who stayed through the final speech. This year, however, authorities have added another requirement. Just as employees must register themselves on a list using their national ID number, they must also provide the name and ID number of the person accompanying them. There are no exceptions.

Anselmo: “How Am I Supposed to Ask a Student to Go to the Square?”

I’m a professor at one of the universities that was confiscated by the government. A week ago, we were told that we had to attend the rally and that each of us had to persuade two students who are not members of UNEN, the pro-government National Union of Nicaraguan Students, to take part. In other words, two students who are not involved in any organized group. We were told this was mandatory.

Exhibit 3

Nicaragua 2024 Human Rights Report

Executive Summary

The human rights situation in Nicaragua worsened during the year. The government intensified attacks on civil liberties and also violated religious liberty by harassing and detaining churchgoers and religious leaders.

Significant human rights issues included credible reports of: arbitrary or unlawful killings; disappearances; torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment; arbitrary arrest and detention; transnational repression against individuals in another country; serious restrictions on freedom of expression and media freedom, including violence or threats of violence against journalists, unjustified arrests or prosecution of journalists, censorship, and serious restrictions on internet freedom; restrictions on religious freedom; trafficking in persons, including forced labor; significant restrictions on workers' freedom of association; and worst forms of child labor.

The government did not take credible steps to identify and punish officials who committed human rights abuses.

Parapolice – nonuniformed, armed, and masked units with marginal tactical training and loose hierarchy that acted in coordination with government security forces and reported directly to the Nicaraguan National Police and

individuals linked to the government of President Daniel Ortega Saavedra – carried out a campaign of harassment, intimidation, and violence toward perceived enemies of the regime, such as former political prisoners and their families, farmworker activists, prodemocracy opposition groups, human rights defenders, private-sector leaders, clergy, other religious actors, and church-affiliated civil society groups, as well as members of the ruling party who expressed dissent or the will to defect. Authorities did not investigate or prosecute these actions.

Section 1. Life

a. Extrajudicial Killings

There were several reports the government or its agents committed arbitrary or unlawful killings during the year. Ruling party and parapolice harassment and persecution hindered human rights groups from obtaining information. Nonetheless, human rights organizations and independent media alleged some killings were politically motivated, an allegation difficult to confirm because the government refused to conduct official inquiries.

Reports of killings were common in the North Caribbean Autonomous Region. Human rights groups stated these killings illustrated a continuation of a campaign of terror against Indigenous groups by members or affiliates of the ruling Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) seeking to encroach on and seize land and natural resources from autonomous Indigenous

territories. On March 22, 30 *colonos* (non-Indigenous armed outsiders) attacked an Indigenous community in Amtrukna in the Mayangna Sauni As territory. Colonos fired on unarmed civilians and set fire to several houses. It was difficult to assess the severity of the attack due to the lack of an official investigation.

b. Coercion in Population Control

There were no reports of coerced abortion or involuntary sterilization on the part of government authorities.

Section 2. Liberty

a. Freedom of the Press

The law provided for freedom of expression, including for members of the press and other media, but the government did not respect this right. Violations concerning press freedom, the absence of an independent judiciary, and a nondemocratic political system combined to obstruct freedom of expression, including for members of media. Independent media faced official and unofficial restrictions. The government penalized arbitrarily those who expressed views counter to the ruling party's ideology.

The government used reprisals and the law to shut down the ability of individuals to criticize the government. Police and parapolice subjected

persons who criticized the government, the ruling party, or its policies, including in discussion of matters of public interest, to surveillance, harassment, imprisonment, and abuse. Favorable expressions of the Catholic religion were severely attacked.

Physical Attacks, Imprisonment, and Pressure

Journalists were subject to government violence, harassment, cyberattacks, and death threats. In addition, the government exiled some media owners and journalists and stripped them of their nationality. Authorities blocked others from leaving or re-entering the country, withdrew their passports, or purposefully did not renew them. According to a July report by the Nicaraguan Independent Journalists and Communicators Group, surveillance, harassment, and persecution by police, parapolice, or FSLN members forced 10 journalists into exile, bringing the total number of journalists in exile to 276 since 2018. According to the same report, no independent news was produced in more than half the country.

On July 9, Nicaraguan National Police (NNP) officers raided the house of Nohelia González, former editor of *La Prensa* newspaper and former contributor to the Catholic television channel and expelled her from the country without a formal accusation or legal process against her.

Authorities detained briefly and released other journalists with the threat they would be imprisoned unless they ceased publishing news counter to

official narratives.

The government seized the property and equipment of media whose licenses had been canceled. The government continued to occupy the offices of *La Prensa*, the weekly newspaper *Confidencial*, and the 100% Noticias television channel.

Censorship by Governments, Military, Intelligence, or Police Forces, Criminal Groups, or Armed Extremist or Rebel Groups

Although the law providing the right to information did not permit censorship, the government and actors under its control retaliated against the press and radio and television stations by blocking transmissions, confiscating recording equipment, blocking reentry to the country, imprisoning journalists and citizens for expressing news and opinions on social media, and committing violence against journalists. Many independent news outlets reported from exile; the few journalists remaining in the country operated clandestinely to avoid censorship, assaults, and threats.

Restrictions on acquiring broadcast licenses and equipment and arbitrary cancellation of licenses prevented media from operating freely.

Independent news outlets, a few of which operated from inside the country but a majority from exile, faced restrictions on gathering information, such as not being permitted to attend official government events, being denied

interviews by government officials, and receiving limited or no direct access to government information. Official media were not similarly restricted.

The government cancelled the operating licenses of six media outlets, including Radio Maria, a radio station with nationwide coverage linked to the Catholic Church. According to the Nicaraguan Independent Journalists and Communicators Group, in the preceding six years the government closed 56 media organizations; in addition, 22 news programs and 13 opinion talk shows ceased operations due to harassment and persecution.

The state exercised considerable influence, ownership, and control over most media outlets. The ruling party merged all official media and private media under their direct ownership under a Communication and Citizenry Council headed by the president and vice president's son, Daniel Edmundo Ortega Murillo. The council served to coordinate targeted messaging by the ruling party and to procure training for staff of these media in China and the Russian Federation or by their in-country "experts." Business associates of the president or his family members largely controlled or directly owned and administered national television outlets. Eight of the 10 basic channels available were under direct FSLN influence or owned and controlled by persons with close ties to the government. Media stations owned by the presidential family generally limited news programming and served as outlets for progovernment or FSLN propaganda and campaign advertisements. Other media operating in the country significantly self-

censored to avoid official retaliation.

A decree obliging all private cable stations to broadcast official television and radio emergency and special interest messaging was in effect and was used regularly, even for nonemergencies. The government obligated independent press to use official media to cover presidential activities and used troll farms – groups of internet commenters paid to manipulate political opinions – both inside and outside the country to amplify its own messaging or attack independent media websites. There were credible reports the government censored online content. A September cybercrime law barred anyone, including those outside the country, from disseminating information that could produce "anxiety" in the public.

Press and human rights organizations claimed the use of state funds for official media, as well as biased distribution of government advertising dollars, placed independent outlets at an extreme disadvantage. Some independent-media owners also alleged the government exerted pressure on private firms to limit advertising in independent media, although other observers believed the lack of advertising resulted from self-censorship by private companies. Many journalists practiced self-censorship, fearing economic and physical repercussions for investigative reporting on crime or official corruption. In addition, media outlet owners exercised self-censorship by choosing not to publish news that affected public perceptions of the government or the FSLN.

Parapolice under the control of the FSLN worked in tandem with the NNP and FSLN neighborhood committees to target, surveil, and curtail any form of expression critical of the ruling party or its policies and interests. In March, NNP officers and parapolice targeted and detained Catholic laypeople participating in Holy Week events, often for publicly expressing the desire for Monsignor Rolando Álvarez's release from prison.

There were credible reports the government monitored private online communications without appropriate legal authority and in some cases censored online content or restricted or disrupted access to the internet. Independent media reported the government provided logistical support for troll farms that routinely carried out cyberattacks against opposition media websites and social media accounts. Trolls and bots reportedly tracked opposition social media accounts to retaliate against users deemed opponents of the ruling party. Paid government supporters used social media and website commentary spaces to harass prominent members of civil society, human rights defenders, individuals affiliated with Catholic dioceses and evangelical churches, and well-known journalists. Indigenous women human rights defenders were attacked online. Anecdotal evidence indicated cases of image-based abuse, doxing, cyberbullying, online gender and sexual harassment, and cyberstalking.

b. Worker Rights

Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining

The law provided for the right of all workers, except the military and police, to form and join unions without prior authorization, to bargain collectively, and to conduct strikes. Nonetheless, workers lived in what the International Labor Organization's Committee of Experts called a "persistent climate of intimidation and harassment of independent workers' and employers' organizations." The government's control of all major unions effectively nullified the right of workers to join independent unions of their own choice. The ruling party used its control over major unions to harass and intimidate workers in several sectors, including construction, education, health care, the public sector, and free trade zones.

Collective bargaining agreements lasted up to two years and were renewed automatically if neither party requested their revision. Collective bargaining agreements in the free trade zone regions, however, were for five-year periods. Companies in disputes with their employees were required to negotiate with the employees' union if one existed. By law, several unions could coexist at any one enterprise, and the law permitted management to sign separate collective bargaining agreements with each union. Although the law established a labor court arbitration process, it was subject to long wait times and lengthy, complicated procedures, and many labor disputes

were resolved out of court.

The constitution recognized the right to strike, with restrictions. The law prohibited antiunion discrimination and provided for the right to reinstatement for workers dismissed for union activity. Burdensome and lengthy conciliation procedures and government control of all major unions impeded workers' ability to call strikes. In smaller businesses where major unions were not present, the government created government-aligned unions to diffuse efforts to organize strikes or other labor actions. In addition, if a strike continued for 30 days without resolution, the Ministry of Labor could suspend the strike and submit the matter to arbitration.

Freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining were not respected, and the government often intervened for political reasons. For example, the government suspended one union and arrested its leader for questioning because the union planned a conference in the country that would have included attendees from an international labor organization. The government did not effectively enforce the laws. The law did not establish specific fines for labor law violations; penalties imposed at the discretion of Ministry of Labor officials were commensurate with those for other laws involving denials of civil rights, such as discrimination. Penalties were sometimes applied against violators.

Politically motivated firings occurred. FSLN party affiliation or letters of recommendation from party secretaries, family cabinet coordinators, or

other party officials allegedly were required from applicants seeking public-sector jobs or retain employment in the public sector. By law, during a strike, employers could not hire replacement workers. Observers noted a sense of impunity when ruling party-aligned employers or unions interfered in the functioning of workers' organizations and committed other violations related to freedom of association and collective bargaining. Labor leaders noted employers routinely violated collective bargaining agreements and labor laws with impunity. Observers accused government-affiliated union federations of protecting employer interests by identifying and isolating workers who attempted to organize independent unions. The government was accused of frustrating attempts to form independent unions through arbitrary procedural delays.

Many employers in the formal sector continued to blacklist or fire union members and did not reinstate them. Many of these cases did not reach the court system or a mediation process led by the Ministry of Labor. Employers also avoided legal penalties by organizing employer-led unions that lacked independence and by frequently using contract workers to replace striking employees. There were reports FSLN party dues were automatically deducted from paychecks. Public-sector staff reported being forced to take weapons training, supposedly to defend the country against another attempted coup.

Forced or Compulsory Labor

See the Department of State's annual *Trafficking in Persons Report* at https://www.state.gov/trafficking-in-persons-report/.

Acceptable Work Conditions

Wage and Hour Laws

The law established a statutory minimum wage for 10 economic sectors. According to independent analysts, the average legal minimum wage covered less than 50 percent of the cost of basic goods.

The standard legal workweek was limited to 48 hours, with one day of rest. The law dictated an obligatory year-end bonus equivalent to one month's pay, proportional to the number of months worked. The law mandated premium pay for overtime, prohibited compulsory overtime, and set a maximum of three hours of overtime per day not to exceed nine hours per week.

Employers often ignored legal limitations on hours worked and would claim workers readily volunteered for extra hours for additional pay. Compulsory overtime was reported in the private-security sector, where guards often were required to work excessive shifts without relief.

Employers often delayed severance payments to fired workers or omitted the payments altogether.

Occupational Safety and Health

There were occupational safety and health (OSH) standards for the countries' main industries. The Ministry of Labor's OSH experts actively identified unsafe conditions and responded to workers' complaints. The Ministry of Labor, through its Office of Hygiene and Occupational Safety, was responsible for enforcing OSH laws. By law, workers could remove themselves from situations that endangered their health or safety without jeopardy to their employment. It was unclear whether authorities effectively protected employees in such cases. The National Council of Labor Hygiene and Safety, as well as its departmental committees, was responsible for implementing worker safety legislation and collaborating with other government agencies and civil society organizations in developing assistance programs and promoting training and prevention activities. According to labor representatives, the council was inactive throughout the year. Companies were required to form worker-management OSH committees.

Safety and health accidents most often occurred in manufacturing, agriculture, and ranching.

Wage, Hour, and OSH Enforcement

The government generally enforced minimum wage laws in the formal sector but did not effectively enforce overtime and OSH laws. Penalties for

violations of minimum wage and overtime laws were commensurate with those for similar crimes, such as fraud. Penalties were rarely applied against violators.

The law allowed labor inspectors to conduct unannounced inspections and initiate sanctions for violations. There were reports of inspector corruption. The Ministry of Labor was the primary enforcement agency. The government did not allocate adequate staff or other measures to enforce compliance with wage, overtime, or OSH provisions. Penalties for violations of OSH laws were commensurate with those for crimes such as negligence but were rarely applied.

Independent groups estimated the informal sector to be more than 80 percent of the workforce. The government did not enforce labor laws in this sector.

c. Disappearance and Abduction

Disappearance

There were reports of enforced disappearances by or on behalf of government authorities. Various human rights organizations reported the NNP and prison authorities forcibly disappeared political opposition members. These organizations cited many cases in which authorities detained political opponents without informing family members or legal

counsel, without providing information regarding where they were held, without presenting the prisoners in a public court of law and denying all access to legal recourses such as habeas corpus. In at least nine cases, security forces kept political prisoners incommunicado for up to three months, occasionally transferring them to different prisons and to and from hospitals and medical clinics without securing an order from civilian authorities or informing the prisoners' legal counsel or families. Authorities did not publish many of the cases against political prisoners in the judiciary's online information system. Authorities detained, imprisoned, and banished to Rome at least nine priests without informing family members or legal counsel or formally pressing charges against them.

Prolonged Detention without Charges

The law prohibited arbitrary arrest and detention and provided for the right of persons to challenge the lawfulness of their arrest or detention in court. The government, however, generally did not allow those deemed political opposition to challenge the lawfulness of their arrest or detention. In these cases, judges regularly denied or ignored constitutional protections for detainees, including habeas corpus. According to independent nongovernmental organizations, authorities made many detentions based on political decisions made by the president and vice president or a small group of intelligence officers working under their command with the help of FSLN neighborhood committees.

Lengthy pretrial detention was a problem. Many opposition leaders and prodemocracy protesters were detained and held with no charges and without being granted due process. Observers noted that in several instances authorities deliberately imposed lengthy pretrial detentions against specific protest leaders and Catholic clergy.

Police could hold a suspect legally for 48 hours before arraignment or release and the Public Prosecutor's Office could request a judicial order for the NNP to hold suspects for 15 to 90 days if the judge deemed the case complex. A judge then was required to order the suspect released or transferred to jail for pretrial detention. Human rights organizations reported police and parapolice agents routinely detained persons deemed as opposition to the ruling party for longer than the 48-hour window, without fulfilling the requirement of requesting the extension limited to no more than 90 days to continue its investigation. The NNP and penitentiary guards held several prisoners for three to five months before they were arraigned.

The government detained several members of the Roman Catholic Church for extended periods without formal charges. Experts on security affairs claimed a small group of intelligence officers under the direction of Ortega and Murillo led monitoring activities that informed the arbitrary arrests of opposition members, party members who could defect, or disgruntled public-sector staff. On January 1, authorities arrested Carlos Bojorge after

he shouted “Viva la Iglesia Católica” at the end of Sunday mass in Managua. His family was able to identity his place of detention only in June after searching for him throughout the detention centers in the city.

Human rights organizations indicated delays in the release of prisoner after they finished prison terms led to many cases of arbitrary continuation of a state of arrest. On September 5, the government released 135 political prisoners who had been held for prolonged periods and expelled them from the country.

d. Violations in Religious Freedom

See the Department of State’s annual *International Religious Freedom Report* at https://www.state.gov/religiousfreedomreport/.

e. Trafficking in Persons

See the Department of State’s annual *Trafficking in Persons Report* at https://www.state.gov/trafficking-in-persons-report/.

Section 3. Security of the Person

a. Torture and Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

Although the law prohibited such practices, government officials carried out

acts that resulted in severe physical or mental suffering for the purposes of securing information, inflicting punishment, and psychologically deterring other citizens from reporting on the government's actions or participating in civic actions against the government. Torture and mistreatment against prisoners bore similarities to treatment against prisoners released in 2023 that the UN Group of Human Rights Experts on Nicaragua concluded "reached the threshold of torture."

Prison authorities subjected more than 150 prisoners held in the Jorge Navarro "La Modelo" prison to cruel and degrading treatment. Human rights organizations reported the prisoners were intentionally underfed and fed spoiled food, continually interrogated after conviction, subjected to extended periods of darkness or light, deprived of sunlight or kept outside in extreme heat, prevented from speaking, subjected to psychological torment, denied access to reading material and religious objects such as rosaries and bibles, and kept in solitary confinement for extended periods.

A human rights organization that tracked political prisoners reported cell block Captain Rosa Velásquez of the La Modelo prison allowed inhuman treatment of at least 50 political prisoners held in two cell blocks under her custody. The same organization reported prison guards beat prisoners in cell block 300 on August 12-18 for celebrating the news of a public outcry against the flawed elections in Venezuela and named Roberto Guevara, director of La Modelo, as the leader of the guards who attacked the

Exhibit 4

NICARAGUA 2018 HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Nicaragua has a highly centralized, authoritarian political system dominated by President Daniel Ortega Saavedra and his wife, Vice President Rosario Murillo Zambrana. Ortega's Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) party exercises total control over the executive, legislative, judicial, and electoral functions despite the country's official status as a multiparty constitutional republic. President Ortega was inaugurated to a third term in office in January 2017 following a deeply flawed electoral process. The 2016 elections expanded the ruling party's supermajority in the National Assembly, which previously allowed for changes in the constitution that extended the reach of executive branch power and the elimination of restrictions on re-election for executive branch officials and mayors. Observers have noted serious flaws in municipal, regional, and national elections since 2008. Civil society groups, international electoral experts, business leaders, and religious leaders identified persistent flaws in the 2017 municipal elections and noted the need for comprehensive electoral reform.

Civilian authorities maintained effective control over police and parapolice security forces. Parapolice are nonuniformed, masked, and armed groups with tactical training and organization, acting in coordination with government security forces, under the direct control of the government, and reporting directly to the Nicaraguan National Police (NNP).

In April President Ortega and Vice President Murillo ordered police and parapolice forces to put down with violence peaceful protests that began over discontent with a government decision to reduce social security benefits. The government's excessive response included the use of live ammunition and snipers. Protesters built makeshift roadblocks and confronted NNP and parapolice with rocks and homemade mortars. As of late November, the ensuing conflict left at least 325 persons dead, more than 2,000 injured, hundreds illegally detained and tortured, and more than 52,000 exiled in neighboring countries. Beginning in August the Ortega government instituted a policy of "exile, jail, or death" for anyone perceived as opposition, amended terrorism laws to include prodemocracy activities, and used the justice system to characterize civil society actors as terrorists, assassins, and coup-mongers.

Human rights deteriorated markedly during the year. Issues included reports of unlawful or arbitrary killings committed by the government or its agents; forced

disappearance by parapolice forces; torture; physical abuse, including rape, by government officials; and arbitrary arrest and detention. There were harsh and life-threatening prison conditions; political prisoners; arbitrary and unlawful interference with privacy; arrests of journalists, censorship, site blocking, and criminal libel; and substantial interference with the rights of peaceful assembly and freedom of association, including attacks on the Roman Catholic Church and Church officials. The government stripped the legal status of several nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations, seizing their assets and preventing them from operating. There was widespread corruption; trafficking in persons; attacks against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) persons; discrimination against ethnic minorities and indigenous communities; and child labor.

President Ortega actively strengthened impunity for human rights abusers who were loyal to him.

Section 1. Respect for the Integrity of the Person, Including Freedom from:

a. Arbitrary Deprivation of Life and Other Unlawful or Politically Motivated Killings

There were numerous reports that the government or its agents committed arbitrary or unlawful killings.

NNP officers and parapolice forces shot high-caliber weapons from concealed, elevated, and distant locations at protesters in Esteli, Masaya, and Managua. Independent forensic investigations by human rights organizations and local media suggested the shooters specifically aimed to kill, as 19 victims suffered high-precision gunshot wounds to the head and thorax.

On May 10, the NNP and parapolice raided the Polytechnic University in Managua and fired live ammunition, killing several students. On July 12-13 in Managua, the NNP and parapolice attacked students from the National Autonomous University of Nicaragua (UNAN) who had found shelter in a nearby church, leaving one student dead.

Parapolice, reportedly well trained and equipped with vehicles and high-caliber weapons, and the NNP attacked roadblocks and barricades throughout the country, resulting in numerous deaths.

There were several reports from individuals claiming that a family member believed to have been detained was later found dead. Such bodies were found in the morgue or discovered strewn about city streets.

Approximately 40 of the protest deaths were police officers or members of the ruling party, according to President Ortega. There were credible reports the government killed some police officers for refusing to follow orders to suppress protests.

There were credible reports the government directed the Ministry of Health to deprive protesters of medical attention and instructed public hospitals and clinics under the control of the Social Security Institute not to provide medical care to wounded protesters. On April 20, a 15-year-old who was shot in the face while bringing water to protesters was denied medical care and became the first minor to die in the protests.

Reports of killings were common in the north-central regions and the North Caribbean Autonomous Region (RACN). These killings were widely believed to be related to the army's pursuit of armed antigovernment groups in the north-central region, although the army admitted only the presence of criminals and delinquents. Government forces continued to carry out arbitrary or unlawful killings during confrontations with armed groups (both criminal organizations and possibly antigovernment groups), in the north-central and Caribbean regions. Human rights organizations and independent media alleged some killings were politically motivated, an allegation difficult to confirm because the government refused to conduct official inquiries. In some cases, the individuals killed by military or police personnel were members of groups identifying themselves on social media as politically motivated and that had taken up arms against the government.

There was no indication the government investigated claims that three members of a self-proclaimed politically motivated armed group in Siuna, in the RACN, had been tortured and killed extrajudicially in 2017. There were no further developments in the September 2017 killing of three individuals in Siuna by the army's "Ecological Battalion." There was no further investigation of the November 2017 killing of six individuals, including a known opposition figure, his brother, and two minors, by the military in the municipality of La Cruz de Rio Grande in the South Caribbean Autonomous Region (RACS).

b. Disappearance

The Nicaraguan Pro-Human Rights Association (ANPDH) reported more than 500 disappearances between April 19 and July 26. Armed parapolice forces arbitrarily detained protesters and often held them in makeshift facilities without allowing them to inform family members or seek legal counsel. The detentions generally lasted between two weeks and one month. NNP officers and prison authorities often denied detainees were in custody. Other detainees were eventually found dead in the morgue or in city streets. Human rights organizations claimed the NNP and prison system's inability to locate prisoners was not due to poor recordkeeping, but was instead a deliberate part of a misinformation campaign. The government made no efforts to prevent, investigate, or punish such acts.

c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

Although the law prohibits such practices, cases of torture were well documented, and public officials intentionally carried out acts that resulted in severe physical or mental suffering for the purposes of securing information, inflicting punishment, and psychologically deterring other citizens from reporting on the government's actions or participating in civic actions against the government. Members of civil society and student leaders involved in the protests that began on April 19 were more likely than members of other groups to be subjected to such treatment.

In its August 29 report, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) gave detailed accounts from detainees who had been subjected to physical and psychological torture by the NNP, parapolice, or prison authorities, including burnings with Taser guns and cigarettes, use of barbed wire, beatings with fists and tubes, attempted strangulation, and death threats. Local NGO Permanent Commission for Human Rights reported at least one detainee had one of his nails pulled out and another received electric shocks. Another detainee reported suffering beatings, electrocution, waterboarding, and sodomization with a firearm. Several detainees released from La Modelo prison said the NNP brought police cadets into the prison to show them how to beat prisoners without leaving obvious marks.

The OHCHR reported many detainees were subjected to degrading treatment and sexual violence, including rape of men and women, while in the custody of parapolice forces, prison officials, and the NNP, as well as the Directorate of Judicial Assistance (DAJ), a special police investigations unit, in its jail commonly referred to as "El Chipote," especially during arrests related to the protests.

According to media reports, on August 30, NNP members beat a man in Esteli, raped him using a knife, and subsequently castrated him and left him on the side of a road.

Prison and Detention Center Conditions

Prison conditions were harsh and potentially life threatening. Overcrowding, poor sanitation, difficulties obtaining medical care, and violence among prisoners remained serious problems in prison facilities.

Physical Conditions: Prison conditions continued to deteriorate due to antiquated infrastructure and increasing inmate populations. In October the government reported holding 20,918 prisoners in facilities with a capacity of 11,781. Due to overcrowding, pretrial detainees often shared cells with convicted prisoners and juveniles shared cells with adults.

Many prisoners suffered mistreatment from prison officials and other inmates. Inmates also suffered from parasites, inadequate medical attention, frequent food shortages, contaminated water, and inadequate sanitation. Released prisoners and family members of prisoners reported poor ventilation and lighting in the DAJ jail located in Managua. Although conditions for female inmates were generally better than those for men, they were nevertheless unsafe and unhygienic.

Conditions in jails and temporary holding cells were also harsh. Most facilities were physically decrepit and infested with vermin; had inadequate ventilation, electricity, or sewage systems; and lacked potable water.

Administration: Although prisoners and detainees could submit complaints to judicial authorities without censorship and request investigation of credible allegations of inhuman conditions, authorities often ignored or did not process complaints. The extent to which the government investigated allegations of poor prison conditions was unknown. The government ombudsman could serve on behalf of prisoners and detainees to consider such matters as informal alternatives to incarceration for nonviolent offenders, although this generally did not occur. In certain instances the government restricted prisoners' access to visitors, attorneys, and physicians. Staff members of human rights organizations, family members, and other interested parties were not allowed access to the prison system or to prisoners in custody.

Independent Monitoring: The government denied prison visits by local human rights groups and media. NGOs generally received complaints through family members of inmates and often were unable to follow up on cases until after the release of the prisoner due to lack of access. The government denied all requests from local human rights organizations for access to prison facilities.

There was limited independent monitoring of prison conditions by international human rights organizations. Authorities allowed the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) rapporteur on the rights of persons deprived of liberty into the Chipote and Modelo prisons during a May 18-21 visit to the country, but they did not respond to his request for a follow-up visit in September. The government denied the IACHR access to the DAJ offices and jail facilities on June 28 but on July 2 granted access to the IACHR rapporteur for Nicaragua, Antonia Urrejola, who was in the country to confirm the location and conditions of detainees from antigovernment protests.

d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention

Human rights NGOs noted hundreds of cases of arbitrary arrests by the NNP, parapolice forces, and army, although parapolice and the army have no authority to make arrests. Many members of a group of 170 detainees released on April 24 were unloaded from vans along a road leading to La Modelo prison in Tipitapa rather than being released to family members, human rights organizations, or Catholic Church representatives. On September 19, the vice minister of interior, Luis Canas, acknowledged the penitentiary system had 204 detainees in the context of civil protests; human rights organizations believed the number was closer to 500.

Role of the Police and Security Apparatus

The constitution establishes the NNP as an apolitical, nonpartisan institution protecting all citizens equally under the law. The army is responsible for external security but also has some domestic responsibilities, including countering illicit trafficking in narcotics and human trafficking and providing for the transportation of election-related materials, including ballots.

The NNP responds directly to the president as commander in chief, as established by constitutional changes in 2014 that diminished the Ministry of Interior's role in oversight of the NNP. Parapolice forces emerged on May 30 in the context of stopping social unrest. On July 30, President Ortega said these parapolice forces

were voluntary police, although their actions, including arrests, killings, and forced disappearances, did not fit within the legal structure afforded to voluntary police. Parapolice members were heavily armed, shot live ammunition at protesters, and coordinated actions with regular police. In some cases, police vehicles transported them.

The army is a functionally autonomous force responding directly to the president pursuant to constitutional and military code reforms enacted in 2014 that diminished the role of the (civilian) Defense Ministry in oversight of the army. The army repeatedly stated it would remain neutral during the protests and government repression that began on April 19 and denied reports of its participation in the violence. Security experts, including former Nicaraguan military officials, suggested the military did cooperate with suppressing the protests, noting the high-caliber weapons handled by highly trained persons during the repression of protesters were used exclusively by the military.

Civilian authorities maintained effective control over the NNP and the military, and the government did not employ effective mechanisms to investigate and punish abuse. The NNP Office of Internal Affairs is responsible for investigating complaints and abuses regarding police officers or internal police activities. The Ministry of Interior and the NNP each have law enforcement and internal security responsibilities throughout the country. The Ministry of Interior oversees the General Directorate for Migration and Foreigner Services, which works together with police to oversee migration and border security. The Office of the Inspector General is responsible for investigating abuses and corruption in the army, but public information available on its activities was limited.

Observers noted the politicization of the NNP, exemplified by the use of parapolice forces outside the NNP chain of command and under no legal framework, to respond to orders from President Ortega and his wife, Vice President Murillo. The NNP arrested protesters on grounds of crimes including terrorism, organized crime, and financing terrorism, and the Prosecutor's Office and judges processed their cases.

The NNP Office of Internal Affairs, and to a lesser extent the Office of the Inspector General, are responsible for investigating police abuse; however, lack of separation of power among the NNP, the ruling party, and the justice system did not allow for an impartial investigation into corruption, inefficiency, and violations of human rights. Due to limited information on the activities of the Office of Internal Affairs, human rights organizations and security experts were unable to

assess how the NNP investigated allegations of abuses and human rights violations by its members.

Human rights organizations and civil society activists continued to express strong concern regarding the 2015 Sovereign Security Law, which significantly broadened the definition of state sovereignty and security and established a National Committee of Sovereign Security, an executive-level committee with the enforcement backing of the military. The law includes "any other factor that creates danger to the security of the people, life, family, and community, as well as the supreme interests of the Nicaraguan nation" when it outlines potential risks and threats to the country's sovereign security. Human rights NGOs and civil society organizations argued the Sovereign Security Law was the basis for repression against protests, although the government did not publicly cite the law in specific cases.

Impunity remained a severe problem, and the government did not provide training to increase respect for human rights by security forces. The NNP, Prosecutor's Office, and judges under the influence of the ruling party arrested, investigated, and charged antigovernment protesters while ignoring crimes committed by the NNP, progovernment individuals, and parapolice.

Arrest Procedures and Treatment of Detainees

The law requires police to obtain a warrant from a judicial authority prior to detaining a suspect and to notify family members of the detainee's whereabouts within 24 hours, but this rarely happened within the context of arrests related to civil unrest.

Police may hold a suspect legally for 48 hours before arraignment, when they must bring the person before a judge. A judge then must order the suspect released or transferred to jail for pretrial detention. The suspect is permitted family member visits after the initial 48 hours. The detainee has the right to bail unless a judge deems there is a flight risk. The criminal code lists a number of crimes that may be tried by a judge without a jury and that would not qualify for bail or house arrest during the duration of the trial. The Truth, Justice, and Peace Commission, created by the National Assembly to investigate violence related to civil unrest, stated in its July report that 204 of the 505 known detainees had been detained for more than the established 48 hours without being brought before a judge. Detainees have the right to an attorney immediately following their arrest, and the state provides indigent detainees with a public defender. There were numerous reports detainees

did not have immediate access to an attorney or legal counsel and were not afforded one during their 48-hour detention. In several instances authorities denied having detainees under custody in a specific jail, even to their family members or legal counsel.

Arbitrary Arrest: According to NGOs and other human rights groups, arbitrary arrests occurred regularly, including but not limited to the context of the protests that started in April. Numerous reports claimed authorities used DAJ jail cells for arbitrary arrests beyond the prescribed 48 hours of detention legally allowed. Many arrests were allegedly made without warrants and without informing family members or legal counsel. Human rights organizations indicated delays in the release of prisoners after finishing prison terms led to many cases of arbitrary continuation of a state of arrest. The NNP and army also committed irregular arrests and detentions during investigations into armed opposition groups or other violent crimes in the north-central regions of the country. On November 26, immigration authorities called women's activist Ana Quiros, a Nicaraguan-Costa Rican dual citizen, to their offices, whereupon authorities handcuffed her, detained her in El Chipote prison for more than five hours, revoked her Nicaraguan citizenship, deported her to Costa Rica in violation of due process.

Pretrial Detention: Lengthy pretrial detention continued to be a problem. Many of those arrested during the social upheaval that started on April 19 were detained and held with no charges and without following due process. Observers noted that in several instances lengthy pretrial detention was intentional against specific protest leaders. Observers attributed other delays to limited facilities, an overburdened judicial system, judicial inaction, and high crime rates. No information was available on the percentage of the prison population in pretrial detention or the national average length of pretrial detention.

Detainee's Ability to Challenge Lawfulness of Detention before a Court: While the law provides detainees the ability to challenge the legality of their detention before a court, the government generally did not allow those detained in the unrest to challenge in court the lawfulness of their arrests or detentions. There were reports legal counsels faced obstacles when they attempted to invoke constitutional protections for detainees, including habeas corpus, and courts frequently ignored their requests.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

The law provides for an independent judiciary, but the government did not respect judicial independence and impartiality. The law requires vetting of new judicial appointments by the Supreme Court of Justice (CSJ), a process wholly influenced by nepotism, personal influence, and political affiliation. Once appointed, many judges submitted to political pressure and economic inducements for themselves or family members that compromised their independence. NGOs complained of delayed justice caused by judicial inaction and widespread impunity, especially regarding family and domestic violence and sexual abuse. In many cases trial start times were changed with no information provided to one or both sides of the trial, according to human rights organizations. Authorities occasionally failed to respect court orders.

According to the constitution, defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty; observers claimed, however, that persons detained in the context of the antigovernment protests were criminalized even before the start of the trial. In a July 13 session at the Organization of American States (OAS), Foreign Minister Denis Moncada said that Medardo Mairena, coordinator of the anti-Law 840 peasant group and a civil society member of a national dialogue, was a terrorist. Authorities arrested Mairena that same day and later accused him of terrorism. Authorities provided neither a reason for his arrest nor legal representation, nor did they inform his family, all of which were violations of due process. Following a trial that was deeply procedurally and substantively flawed, the prosecutor recommended a 72-year sentence.

Trial Procedures

Changes to the law enacted in 2017 allowed judges to deny jury trials in a wider range of cases, deny bail or house arrest based on unclear rules, and arbitrarily move a case from other judicial districts to Managua, to the disadvantage of defendants, their families, or their counsel. Defendants have the right to be fully and promptly informed of the charges against them and the right to a fair trial. While the law establishes specific time periods for cases to come to trial, most cases encountered undue delay. Trials are public, but in some cases involving minors or at the victim's request, they may be private. The law requires defendants must be present at their trial, although this was not always respected. Proceedings in most cases related to charges of terrorism brought against protesters in the context of antigovernment protests starting on April 19 were made private, except for official media. One judge who made a protest-related proceeding public was dismissed from her position within a few days.

Defendants have the right to legal counsel, and the state provides public defenders for indigent persons. Defendants have the right to adequate time and facilities to prepare a defense, but judges commonly failed to grant counsel's access to the defendant. In several instances related to antigovernment protests, defendants were not allowed to name their legal counsel and the court appointed a public defendant, which family members of the accused and human rights organizations claimed was in detriment of the defendant's case. In many cases legal counsels of the defendants received death threats, which caused some to resign. Although the constitution recognizes indigenous languages, defendants were not always granted court interpreters or translators. Defendants may confront and question witnesses and have the right to appeal a conviction. Defendants may present their own witnesses and evidence in their defense; however, some judges refused to admit evidence on behalf of the defense. Defendants may not be compelled to testify or confess guilt.

The August 29 OHCHR report found that "trials of people charged in relation to the protests have serious flaws and do not observe due process, including the impartiality of the courts."

On August 30, a court found Brandon Lovo Taylor and Glen Slate guilty of the April 21 murder of journalist Angel Gahona in the Caribbean coastal town of Bluefields. Gahona died of a single gunshot to the head while streaming live protests from his phone. The trial was conducted in Managua, limiting the defendants' access to legal counsel and their family members. Proceedings took place behind closed doors except for official government media. The IACHR Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts did not have access to the courtroom in this case, despite an agreement with the government to help with legal proceedings stemming from protest-related violence. The prosecutor alleged the two men shot a homemade weapon at the journalist from across the street. When the defense's independent ballistics expert stated that would be impossible given the distance, angle, and precision of the shot, the judge dismissed the independent expert witness. None of the prosecutor's witnesses could place the accused at the scene of the crime, and the NNP officers on the scene did not participate in the trial.

Women's rights organizations believed the court system continued to operate under unofficial orders to forgo jail time or pretrial detention in domestic violence cases. The policy reportedly applied only to domestic violence cases considered mild.

Political Prisoners and Detainees

Human rights NGOs characterized the protesters detained in the context of antigovernment protests starting on April 19 as political prisoners. As of November 19, the Nicaraguan Center for Human Rights (CENIDH) counted more than 600 protesters detained. The NNP arrested more than 100 of the detainees under charges of terrorism, organized crime, and financing terrorism. The FSLN supermajority in the National Assembly enabled some of these arrests when it amended Law 977 to apply to "anyone who damages public or private buildings, wishes to alter the constitutional order, or wishes to force the government to take a certain action or refrain from taking certain action." The prison sentence for such acts is 15 to 20 years.

After the July 2 IACHR visit, the government did not allow local or international human rights organizations access to these political prisoners, so it was unknown if such persons were given the same protections as other detainees. On September 19, the government issued photographs of three high-profile political prisoners as purported proof of their well-being, but human rights organizations claimed the photographs were taken closer to the time of arrest.

Civil Judicial Procedures and Remedies

Individuals and organizations may file suit in civil courts to seek damages for human rights violations, but authorities did not always respect court decisions.

The lack of an effective civil law system resulted in some civil matters being pursued as criminal cases, which were often resolved more quickly. In a number of instances, individuals and groups appealed to the IACHR, which passed their cases to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights.

Property Restitution

The government regularly failed to enforce court decisions with respect to seizure, restitution, or compensation of private property. Enforcement of court orders was frequently subject to nonjudicial considerations. Members of the judiciary, including those at senior levels, were widely believed to be corrupt or subject to political pressure. The government failed to evict those who illegally took possession of private property. Within the context of social upheaval starting on April 19, members of the FSLN illegally took over privately owned lands, with implicit and explicit support by municipal and national government officials.

Some land seizures were politically targeted and directed against specific individuals, such as businessmen traditionally considered independent or against the ruling party. As of August 24, the private sector confirmed approximately 15,000 acres remained seized.

f. Arbitrary or Unlawful Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence

The government failed to respect prohibitions against unlawful interference with privacy, family, home, and correspondence. FSLN party-based grassroots organizations such as the Citizen Power Councils colluded with parapolice, armed masked men, or party loyalists to target the homes of antigovernment protesters. Without a warrant and under no legal authority, these groups illegally raided homes and detained occupants. These actions were widespread in the large cities, particularly Managua, Matagalpa, Esteli, Masaya, Rivas, Leon, and Jinotega. On June 16, after occupants reportedly refused to allow them to place gunmen on the roof of a Managua home, parapolice set fire to the house, killing a family of six. Parapolice remained outside the house, guns drawn, to ensure the family could not escape the blaze and to prevent access to the house by voluntary firefighters, according to witnesses. Six months later, the NNP issued a press accusing student protestors of the arson and CENIDH of a secret campaign to persuade survivors to blame the NNP in exchange for visas.

Domestic NGOs, Catholic Church representatives, journalists, and opposition members alleged the government monitored their email and telephone conversations. Church representatives also stated their sermons were monitored. As part of a continuing social media campaign against antigovernment protests, ruling party members and supporters used social media to publish personal information of human rights defenders and civil society members. Progovernment supporters marked the houses of civil society members with derogatory slurs or threats and then published photographs of the marked houses on social media.

On October 3, the government published an amendment to the Financial Analysis Unit (UAF) Law to allow the UAF to access individuals' personal data held by eight public institutions, including salary information, international travel, personal property registration, and credit and banking records. The UAF does not require a judicial decision or warrant to access this information, nor is it required to disclose to the individual that he or she is under investigation. The UAF investigated perceived members of the opposition in order to support charges of terrorist financing.

Exhibit 5

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

JANUARY 12, 2026

Nicaragua

The government of Daniel Ortega and Rosario Murillo tightened its authoritarian hold over Nicaragua. A sweeping constitutional overhaul further concentrated power in the executive, while authorities continued systematically repressing dissent through arbitrary arrest and prosecution, enforced disappearance, forced exile, revocation of citizenship and confiscation of assets.

Concentration of Power

In January, the ruling-party-controlled National Assembly passed a sweeping constitutional change. The amendment named Murillo, Ortega's wife and then vice-president, as "co-president," and empowered their presidency to "coordinate" the judiciary and legislative branches of government. Ortega has been in power since 2007. A constitutional amendment approved by the Assembly in 2014 abolished presidential term limits.

Persecution of Critics

The government continues to target all forms of dissent and in 2025 expanded the repression to include some government supporters. As of October, a human rights organization reported that at least 77 remained behind bars as political prisoners. Security forces sustain a climate of fear through surveillance, harassment, and arbitrary detention.

In August, lawyer Carlos Cárdenas and opposition figure Mauricio Alonso died in custody following weeks of enforced disappearance, according to the media outlet *Confidencial*. At least six political prisoners have died in custody since 2019.

The new Constitution allows authorities to revoke the Nicaraguan nationality of people deemed responsible for "treason," a provision that provides domestic legal cover for a practice that began in 2023. At least 452 Nicaraguans have reportedly been arbitrarily deprived of their nationality, leaving many stateless; authorities have also seized their assets. Over 200 members of the Catholic clergy have been forced into exile, deported, or denied re-entry since 2022.

Transnational Repression

According to UN experts, government critics abroad face surveillance and harassment by Nicaraguan authorities, and, at times, violent attacks.

In June, Roberto Samcam, a retired army major and outspoken critic of Ortega, was killed at his home in San José, Costa Rica. He had previously received death threats linked to Nicaraguan security agents. In September, Costa Rican authorities detained four people in connection with the case; three are currently held in pretrial detention.

Since 2018, at least seven Nicaraguan critics in exile have been killed or attacked, according to Nicaraguan human rights groups. In September, the Group of Human Rights Experts on Nicaragua (GHREN) called for "robust protection mechanisms for exiled populations and comprehensive investigations into the transnational dimension of the threats they face."

Freedom of Expression and Association

Authorities have largely dismantled civil society, cancelling the legal registration of thousands of NGOs since 2018. As of November, over 5,500 organizations, roughly 80 percent of active groups, had been shut down by the government, including human rights groups, humanitarian organizations, charities, and universities. At least 58 media outlets have been closed.

In November, a new telecommunications law entered into force, requiring public telecommunication and audiovisual providers to hand over location data and unrestricted system access to regulators, posing a threat to privacy, data protection, and freedom of expression.

Between 2018 and mid-2025, 293 journalists fled the country—the second-highest figure in the region.

Indigenous People's Rights

Indigenous and Afro-descendant leaders have faced systematic persecution, including surveillance, arbitrary detention, prosecutions, and entry bans. In 2023, police arrested Brooklyn Rivera and Nancy Henríquez, two leaders of YATAMA, an Indigenous political party. Henríquez was sentenced in late 2023 to eight years in prison for "undermining national integrity," Rivera's whereabouts remained unknown at time of writing.

Access to Abortion

Nicaragua has prohibited abortion under all circumstances since 2006. Those who have abortions face up to two years in prison, and medical professionals who perform them face up to six. The ban forces women and girls to continue unwanted pregnancies, putting their health and lives at risk. In January, the UN Human Rights Committee found Nicaragua violated the rights of 12- and 13-year-old rape survivors by forcing them into pregnancy and motherhood, amounting to torture and violating their rights to life and

dignity. The committee urged Nicaragua to "review its legal framework and ensure access to pregnancy termination services for all women and girls who are victims of sexual violence…."

Refugees, Asylum Seekers, and Migrants

Between 2018 and mid-2025, more than 342,000 Nicaraguans had sought asylum abroad, primarily in Costa Rica, the United States, Mexico and Spain. An additional 31,000 had been formally recognized as refugees. In July, the US government announced the termination of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Nicaraguans, ending protections for roughly 4,000 people. The measure entered into force in September; a court challenge to the termination was pending at time of writing.

During the first half of the year, US authorities returned over 2,100 Nicaraguans to Managua.

Justice and Accountability

In April, the UN Human Rights Council extended the mandate of the GHREN for two years. The group has found reasonable grounds to believe that authorities have committed crimes against humanity, including murder, imprisonment, torture, sexual violence, forced deportation, and persecution on political grounds. It has called on states to bring a case against Nicaragua at the International Court of Justice for violations of the UN Conventions on Statelessness.

In 2025, the government continued isolating itself from multilateral oversight. Between February and June, Nicaragua announced or formalized disengagement with the UN Human Rights Council, the Food and Agriculture Organization, the International Labor Organization, the International Organization for Migration, UNESCO, and the UN Refugee Agency. In March, Nicaragua also decided to not participate in the adoption of its UN Universal Periodic Review outcome. The government withdrew from the Organization of American States in 2023.

No international rights monitoring bodies have been allowed to enter Nicaragua since 2018.

Sanctions

In April, the US imposed visa restrictions on more than 250 Nicaraguan officials for undermining fundamental freedoms; in total, US visa bans now cover over 2,000 current or former officials. The US also maintains targeted financial sanctions on senior officials and state-linked entities.

In October, the European Union renewed sanctions against 21 individuals and three state-linked entities who it determined had undermined human rights, democracy and rule of law. The United Kingdom and Canada have sanctioned 17 and 35 individuals, respectively, for serious human rights violations.

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Exhibit 6

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

JULY 17, 2023

Nicaragua's People Need a Robust International Response

Published in EurActiv



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For over five years, Nicaragua has been facing one of the worst human rights crises in Latin America. However, the response of the international community has been ineffective in addressing the crisis. To protect the rights of Nicaraguans, democratic governments, especially in the Americas and the European Union (EU), should strengthen and coordinate their actions effectively.



Nicaragua's President Daniel Ortega speaks next to first lady and Vice President Rosario Murillo during the inauguration ceremony for a highway overpass in Managua, Nicaragua, Thursday, March 21, 2019.

© 2019 AP Photo/Alfredo Zuniga

Daniel Ortega's government has targeted all segments of society in a bid to remain in power indefinitely. Since 2018, the Nicaraguan government has shut down more than 3,500 civil society organizations, including humanitarian organizations such as the Red Cross. Abusive laws severely restrict the work of independent journalism and civil society, and the authorities have arbitrarily detained and prosecuted journalists, human rights defenders, and community leaders.

Currently, 64 people perceived as government critics remain incarcerated, among them Bishop Rolando Alvarez, a religious leader known for advocating on behalf of victims. The treatment of Bishop Álvarez, who has been sentenced to more than 20 years in prison on spurious charges, exemplifies the ruthless persecution of the Catholic Church.

Exhibit 7

Nicaragua: Doctors, Health Workers Arbitrarily Fired

hrw.org/news/2018/08/07/nicaragua-doctors-health-workers-arbitrarily-fired

August 7, 2018

Dismissals Compound Effort to Limit Protesters' Access to Medical Care



04 August 2018, Nicaragua, Managua: Demonstration in support of doctors arbitrarily dismissed by the Nicaraguan Health Ministry authorities in apparent retaliation for participating in protests or otherwise disagreeing with government policy. © 2018 Carlos Herrera/picture alliance via Getty Images

(New York) – Nicaraguan Health Ministry authorities have fired dozens of doctors and other health workers in apparent retaliation for participating in protests or otherwise disagreeing with government policy, Human Rights Watch said today. The dismissals follow government efforts to limit access for thousands of wounded anti-government protesters to medical treatment.

In recent weeks, the Nicaraguan Health Ministry authorities have fired at least 135 doctors, nurses and other health workers from several public hospitals across Nicaragua, according to the Nicaraguan Medical Association.

“After cracking down against protesters, the Ortega government is targeting everyone who dares question its power,” said José Miguel Vivanco, Americas director at Human Rights Watch. “Dismissing the doctors is further proof the Ortega administration cares more about securing unchecked power than guaranteeing Nicaraguans’ basic rights.”

Human Rights Watch interviewed 15 health workers who were fired from hospitals or health centers in the cities of Santa Teresa, Jinotepe, Diriamba, San Marcos, and León, and reviewed 10 of their dismissal letters. Nine of the letters had identical wording – despite being issued by authorities from different hospitals – and do not indicate the cause of dismissal. Eleven of the health workers interviewed had worked for the Health Ministry for over 20 years.

Javier Pastora, 55, was fired by the School Hospital Oscar Danilo Rosales Arguello in León on July 27. Pastora had worked for the Health Ministry for 32 years and was the hospital’s head of surgery and a teacher at the National University of Nicaragua in León. The hospital director, Judith Lejarza Vargas, called him to her office at 7 a.m. that day and gave him a dismissal letter, which lists no cause. When Pastora asked for an explanation, Vargas said his participation in protests made him an “unstable element” for the hospital, Pastora told Human Rights Watch. The hospital fired 13 other health workers that day.

On July 30, Vargas posted in Facebook that “there will be more doctors fired for being terrorists.” In an earlier post that day she said, “the medical students are participants in a coup and terrorists.” Government officials have repeatedly accused protesters of being terrorists. Only in July, the Prosecutor’s Office brought “terrorism” charges against at least 50 people and the National Police accused 16 others of the same crime in their official statements.

One of the doctors was fired from the Regional School Hospital of Jinotepe on August 1. He had worked for the Health Ministry for 20 years. The local head of the ministry met with him and other workers at 7 a.m., telling them that people who criticized the government could not work in the hospital, he and another doctor who attended the meeting told Human Rights Watch. At 11 a.m., the hospital’s deputy director, Álvaro Urroz, gave the doctor his dismissal letter but no explanation for his firing. On July 15, the doctor had treated protesters wounded by firearms. He told Human Rights Watch he believes he was dismissed for criticizing the government’s brutal response to the protests. “I cannot agree with so much barbarism,” he said.

In a visit to the country in May, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) received numerous complaints that public hospitals had denied care to wounded demonstrators. The rights body also documented cases in which public hospital authorities demanded that relatives of deceased protestors waived their right to file a complaint if they wanted to receive the remains of their relatives or their death certificate. The commission also

identified people who chose not to seek care in public health centers out of mistrust or fear of reprisals.

A doctor from Carazo, in southwestern Nicaragua, told Human Rights Watch his superior from the Health Ministry told him the health center he directed should only attend “our people,” apparently referring to pro-government gangs. On July 8, about 20 armed members of those gangs arrived at the center and did not allow anyone else in, the doctor said. Eight wounded members of the gangs received medical attention, he said, but no protesters. The gang members left the hospital later that day.

Police have also restricted first responders’ access to gravely injured protesters. On the evening of July 13, armed pro-government gangs indiscriminately shot at the Divina Misericordia church, where 200 university students, doctors, and journalists had sought refuge. Police barred ambulances from approaching the church until 10:30 pm, when they allowed four injured people to be evacuated. The police did not break the barrier until approximately 9 a.m. the next day. According to the IACHR, two students were killed, and 16 people were injured in the attack on the church.

Since protests broke out on April 18, at least 317 people have been killed and over 2,000 have been injured, in most cases by police officers and pro-government armed gangs.

The United Nations Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials forbids governments from employing excessive force against protesters and calls them to ensure that assistance and medical aid are provided at the earliest possible moment to anyone injured by law enforcement officials.

International law also guarantees the right to free expression and forbids governments from discriminating or retaliating against people because of their legitimate exercise of that right.

“The Nicaraguan government should immediately allow health workers to return to their jobs or else compensate them for these arbitrary dismissals,” Vivanco said. “Doctors should not be punished for meeting their duty to provide indiscriminate medical care to everyone who needs it.”

Exhibit 8



© Tininiska Rivera

17 December 2024

Also available in Español,Français

Nicaragua: Ortega’s repressive machinery continues to stifle any dissent

- **Brooklyn Rivera designated a prisoner of conscience**
- **Public statement on a year ending with systematic repression**

Amnesty International has today designated Brooklyn Rivera, a leader of the Miskito Indigenous people, as a prisoner of conscience and calls on the Nicaraguan authorities to order his immediate and unconditional release. The organization has also issued a public statement in which it continues to denounce the repressive model of Daniel Ortega’s government, which has plunged Nicaragua into an unprecedented human rights crisis that has been growing for six years.

“The repression in Nicaragua means that no one is safe,” said Ana Piquer, Americas director at Amnesty International. “From indigenous leaders, journalists, human rights defenders and anyone seen as a risk to the government’s policies, the authorities continue to consolidate a climate of fear in which dissent is punishable by imprisonment, exile or disappearance.”

“

The repression in Nicaragua means that no one is safe. rom indigenous leaders, journalists, human rights defenders and anyone seen as a risk to the government's policies, the authorities continue to consolidate a climate of fear in which dissent is punishable by imprisonment, exile or disappearance.

Ana Piquer, Americas director at Amnesty International.

The case of Brooklyn Rivera, a leader of the Miskito Indigenous people, now designated a prisoner of conscience by Amnesty International, illustrates this systematic repression. In April 2023, after denouncing the situation of Indigenous peoples at an international forum, the authorities denied him entry into the country. After entering through alternative routes in September of that year, on the basis of the right to freedom of movement recognized for cross-border Indigenous peoples, he was arbitrarily detained and subjected to 14 months of enforced disappearance. In November 2024, during a session of the UN Universal Periodic Review, the Nicaraguan authorities finally admitted that they were holding Brooklyn Rivera on charges of treason, undermining national integrity and conspiracy.

"Exercising his rights and opposing government policies made him a target of the repressive machinery. His case illustrates how the authorities have sustained a policy of intolerance and punishment of any critical voices", explained Ana Piquer.

Brooklyn Rivera is one of hundreds of people unjustly imprisoned in Nicaragua over the past six years for exercising their rights. "By declaring him a prisoner of conscience, we reaffirm that no one should be deprived of their liberty for defending their rights. This designation seeks to recognize the many people who are still deprived of their liberty or subjected to enforced disappearance for peacefully exercising their rights, and all those who, while in forced exile, continue to resist and fight for a country that respects and protects human rights."

"

By declaring him a prisoner of conscience, we reaffirm that no one should be deprived of their liberty for defending their rights. This designation seeks to recognize the many people who are still deprived of their liberty or subjected to enforced disappearance for peacefully exercising their rights, and all those who, while in forced exile, continue to resist and fight for a country that respects and protects human rights.

Ana Piquer, Americas director at Amnesty International.

Moreover, the organization notes in its statement that, in a context of repression and closure of civic space in Nicaragua, the authorities have continued to implement and streamline a strategy of repression that has escalated from the use of lethal force against demonstrators in 2018, to the current arbitrary deprivation of nationality of persons perceived as dissidents. Despite releases from prison in 2023 and 2024, many people continue to be deprived of their liberty for political reasons or simply for expressing anti-government views. The harassment, intimidation and misuse of criminal law that initially targeted protesters, activists, political opponents, journalists, human rights defenders and Indigenous leaders has gradually extended to society as a whole, affecting anyone perceived as a threat to official policies or state narratives.

Amnesty International once again calls on the Nicaraguan government to put an immediate end to all repressive practices, respect the human rights of the entire population, and end the criminalization of dissident voices.

Amnesty International demands the immediate and unconditional release of Brooklyn Rivera and all those arbitrarily detained for exercising their rights. It urges an end to the practice of arbitrary deprivation of nationality, as well as the full restitution of the rights of those who have had their nationality revoked. Furthermore, it advocates for the authorities to provide clear information and access for the families of disappeared persons, ensuring that they may be allowed regular contact with them and that minimum standards for the treatment of detainees are upheld.

Amnesty International also calls on the international community to closely monitor the crisis in Nicaragua through international human rights protection mechanisms, and to host and protect displaced and expelled persons, ensure that they receive humanitarian assistance, and facilitate family reunification. The organisation also urges states to activate universal jurisdiction to investigate and, if there is sufficient admissible evidence, prosecute all those suspected of individual criminal responsibility for possible crimes against humanity, thereby sending a strong message that impunity will not be tolerated.

"States cannot remain silent in the face of the inhumane tactics used by the Ortega and Murillo government for more than six years," concluded Ana Piquer. "It is imperative that the international community takes concrete and effective measures and acts in a coordinated manner to put an end to this machinery of repression and guarantee access to justice and reparation for the thousands of victims."

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> **It is imperative that the international community takes concrete and effective measures and acts in a coordinated manner to put an end to this machinery of repression and guarantee access to justice and reparation for the thousands of victims.**
>
> **Ana Piquer, Americas director at Amnesty International.**

Amnesty International's designation as a prisoner of conscience is based on the information available to the organization regarding the circumstances leading to the

person’s detention. By designating a person as a prisoner of conscience, Amnesty International affirms that the person should be immediately and unconditionally released but does not endorse their past or present views or conduct.

For more information or to schedule an interview, please contact press@amnesty.org.

Exhibit 9

www.amnesty.org

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL. PUBLIC STATEMENT

Date: 17 December Index: AMR 43/8834/2024

Nicaragua: The year ends with systematic repression and a streamlined state strategy against any form of dissent

In a context of repression and total closure of civic space in Nicaragua, the authorities have continued to implement and streamline a strategy of repression that has escalated from the use of lethal force against protesters in 2018 to the current arbitrary deprivation of nationality of those considered dissidents. Despite releases from prison in 2023 and 2024, many people continue to be deprived of their liberty for political reasons or simply for expressing anti-government views. The harassment, intimidation and misuse of criminal law that initially targeted protesters, activists, political opponents, journalists, human rights defenders and indigenous leaders has been extended to society as a whole and now affects anyone perceived as a threat to official policy or the state narrative. International mechanisms have extensively documented the situation and have concluded that crimes against humanity are being committed in Nicaragua. [1]

Violent response to protest and criticism

Since the outbreak of protests in April 2018, the response of the Nicaraguan authorities has been disproportionate and violent, with a devastating number of victims. At the time, various regional and universal human rights mechanisms documented at least 355 deaths[2] and more than 2 000 people injured in the context of the repression of the first protests of 2018,[3] most of which resulted from the use of firearms in vital areas and many of which may constitute extrajudicial executions. In addition, between April and October 2018, more than 1 600 people were arbitrarily detained and subjected to conditions of detention that included torture, enforced disappearances and cruel and degrading treatment.[4] The repression included not only the use of police forces, but also "parapolice" groups operating in a coordinated manner to quell any acts of protest or dissent, leaving a trail of violence and fear in Nicaraguan society.

According to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), between February and June 2019 the government released a total of 493 people from prison, 387 through unilateral announcements by the state and 104 following the approval of the amnesty law.[5] However, despite being out of prison, these individuals never enjoyed real freedom. In many cases, they and their families reported suffering acts of aggression, intimidation and harassment by the police, parapolice forces or local control networks linked to the government. Thus, their release from prison did not mark an end to the repression, which continued and resulted in the forced exile of hundreds of Nicaraguans perceived by the authorities as dissidents.

Many of the persons released from prison have also been re-arrested. In September of this year, Amnesty International was able to speak with Juan Carlos Baquedano, a 67-year-old released prisoner who was deprived of his liberty in July

[1] In May 2018, the OAS, together with the IACHR, created the Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts (GIEI). The group was established to investigate the violent events that had occurred in Nicaragua since 18 April 2018. The GIEI submitted its final report in December 2018, concluding that crimes against humanity had been committed in Nicaragua during the protests and subsequent repression. See: https://gieinicaragua.org/giei-content/uploads/2018/12/GIEI_INFORME_DIGITAL.pdf
In March 2022, the UN Human Rights Council established the Group of Human Rights Experts on Nicaragua (GHREN), which has also investigated and denounced human rights violations in the country. This mechanism presented its first report in March 2023, concluding that the Nicaraguan government had committed widespread human rights violations that amount to crimes against humanity since April 2018. See: https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/03/nicaragua-crimes-against-humanity-being-committed-against-civilians?utm=

[2] IACHR. Special Monitoring Mechanism for Nicaragua. "Fatal Victims Registry". Available at: https://www.oas.org/en/iachr/jsForm/?File=/en/iachr/meseni/registro.asp

[3] Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Human Rights Violations and Abuses in the Context of Protests in Nicaragua. 18 April – 18 August 2018. Available at: https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/NI/HumanRightsViolationsNicaraguaApr_Aug2018_EN.pdf

[4] IACHR. *Annual Report 2021. Chapter IV.B Nicaragua*. OEA/Ser.L/V/II. Doc. 64 rev. 1, 26 May 2022, para. 3.

[5] IACHR. *IACHR Concerned about Ongoing Repression in Nicaragua*. 11 July 2019. Available at: https://www.oas.org/en/iachr/media_center/PReleases/2019/172.asp

2018 for supporting the protests. According to his testimony, after spending 11 months in prison in inhumane conditions, he was released in 2019 and subsequently went into exile in Mexico. [6]

In August 2023, after returning to Nicaragua to attend to a personal matter, he was arrested again at his home. After more than a year of illegal detention, he was released in September 2024 and exiled to Guatemala along with 134 other people who, like him, had been deprived of their liberty on the grounds that they were dissidents and political opponents.[7] Today, this activist faces the harsh reality of living in exile, stripped of his nationality, without access to his property or his pension, and with serious physical and psychological scars as a result of the torture he claims to have suffered during his two periods of detention in Nicaraguan prisons.[8]

From lethal violence against protesters in 2018, to arbitrary arrests and covert actions under amnesty laws that perpetuate harassment and rights abuses, the government has consolidated a climate of fear and control. The cases documented by Amnesty International in recent years show how this repression extends beyond the prisons and into the lives of those who have been persecuted, tortured and ultimately forcibly exiled. The state's response to protest and criticism is not only violent but has been streamlined to ensure impunity and stifle any attempt at resistance, consolidating a regime of absolute control.

Restrictive laws and selective criminalization

Following the suppression of the 2018 protests, the Nicaraguan authorities intensified their harassment of civil society and human rights defenders through a strategy of control that has undermined the right to freedom of association and expression in the country. In October 2020, the National Assembly, which is controlled by the ruling party, passed laws that severely affect the exercise of these rights. The Law on the Regulation of Foreign Agents (Law 1040)[9] imposes disproportionate restrictions that make it difficult for organizations to receive international funding, thus restricting their legitimate human rights activities. The Special Law on Cybercrime (Law 1042)[10] criminalizes speech that the government deems to "cause alarm, fear or anxiety", allegedly to prevent the spread of fake news. In addition, the Law on the Defence of the Rights of the People to Independence, Sovereignty and Self-Determination for Peace (Law 1055)[11] was approved on 21 December 2020 and criminalizes as "traitors to the homeland" those who, according to the government, commit acts that are vaguely defined as "harming the supreme interests of the nation". This law punishes and disqualifies from public office any person who engages in legitimate activities, such as receiving international funding or proposing measures to exert international pressure, effectively allowing for the persecution of any dissenting voices.

In 2021, the National Assembly and other state institutions continued to pass legislation that is contrary to international human rights standards and supports the strategy of repression, such as the reform of Article 37 of the Constitution,[12] the regulations for the Regulation, Supervision and Sanctioning of Foreign Agents,[13] Law 1060 on the Reform of the Code of

[6] Amnesty International interview with 67-year-old victim of expulsion and arbitrary deprivation of nationality. September 2024. Guatemala City, Guatemala.
[7] New York Times in Spanish. *Nicaragua Releases 135 Political Prisoners on Humanitarian Grounds. 5* September 2024. Available at: https://www.nytimes.com/es/2024/09/05/espanol/nicaragua-libera-presos-politicos-guatemala.html
[8] On 1 March 2024, the IACHR issued resolution 7/2024 granting precautionary measures in favour of Juan Carlos Baquedano, after considering that he was in a serious and urgent situation presenting a risk of irreparable harm to his rights in Nicaragua. Available at: https://www.oas.org/en/iachr/decisions/mc/2024/res_7-24%C2%A0_mc_95-24%C2%A0_ni_en.pdf
[9] National Assembly of Nicaragua. *Ley de Regulación de Agentes Extranjeros* [Law on the Regulation of Foreign Agents] (Law 1040). Approved on 15 October 2020 and published in Official Gazette Nbr. 192 of 19 October 2020. Available at: http://legislacion.asamblea.gob.ni/normaweb.nsf/9e314815a08d4a6206257265005d21f9/3306286cd4e82c5f06258607005fdf6b
[10] National Assembly of Nicaragua. *Ley Especial de Ciberdelitos* [Special Law on Cybercrime] (Law 1042). Approved on 27 October 2020 and published in Official Gazette Nbr. 201 of 30 October 2020. Available at: http://legislacion.asamblea.gob.ni/normaweb.nsf/($All)/803E7C7FBCF44D7706258611007C6D87
[11] National Assembly of Nicaragua. *Ley de Defensa de los Derechos del Pueblo a la Independencia, la Soberanía y Autodeterminación para la Paz* [Law on the Defence of the Rights of the People to Independence, Sovereignty and Self-Determination for Peace] (Law 1055). Approved on 21 December 2020. Available at: http://legislacion.asamblea.gob.ni/SILEG/Iniciativas.nsf/C4084E2665A5610F06258642007E9C3F/$File/Ley%20N%C2%B0%201055,%20Ley%20Defensa%20de%20los%20Derechos%20del%20Pueblo.pdf?Open
[12] Approved on 18 January, it establishes life imprisonment for serious crimes under vague circumstances of hate and cruelty. This measure has been used to intimidate and persecute dissenters.
[13] Regulations issued on 27 January imposing sanctions of up to half a million dollars and allowing the revocation of the legal status of organizations, with serious consequences for human rights defenders.

people,[49] most of whom were already in exile, marked a significant escalation in the repressive policies of the Ortega regime and was yet another sign that the regime will spare no effort to continue creating new instruments of repression.[50]

In September 2024, this strategy of deprivation of nationality and expulsion was again applied to 135 people,[51] many of whom had previously been criminalized and imprisoned, forcing them into exile. More than 400 Nicaraguans have now been affected by this human rights violation.

Through the knowledge of some of these cases, such as that of **Sergio Catarino Castiblanco** and **Jacqueline de Jesús Rodríguez**,[52] a couple who were part of the last group of exiled persons and who were interviewed by Amnesty International in September of this year,[53] the organization has been able to verify the devastating impact of these measures on their lives. These individuals have difficulty settling in another country, are plagued by the anguish of not being able to return home, lack support networks, have to deal with the consequences of the break-up of their families and often have no guarantees that their human rights will be protected in the host country. In addition, they experience constant uncertainty about their migration status, in most cases have limited access to health services, employment and education, and must try to rebuild their lives in an unfamiliar environment.

Amnesty International,[54] the GHREN[55] and the IACHR[56] have claimed that this practice constitutes a flagrant violation of the right to nationality and the right to freedom from inhuman and degrading treatment.

Arbitrary deprivation of nationality has become a tool used by the authorities to intimidate and eradicate any form of dissent, leaving victims in legal and emotional limbo while consolidating authoritarian control and dismantling Nicaragua's social fabric. As part of the recent constitutional reform, the National Assembly approved articles that allow the revocation of Nicaraguan nationality from persons considered "traitors to the homeland".[57]

Widespread surveillance and repression. When everyone is a potential state target

In Nicaragua, the repressive apparatus has evolved over the years, adapting and expanding in an attempt to eliminate all traces of dissent. While repression initially focused on the most prominent public and political figures, activists and student leaders, as mentioned above, over time the government has broadened its strategy to include religious leaders, members of civil society organizations and, more recently, people with no apparent political affiliation.

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[49] El País. Ortega despoja de la nacionalidad a otros 94 nicaragüenses, entre ellos los escritores Sergio Ramírez y Gioconda Belli [Ortega strips 94 more Nicaraguans of their nationality, including writers Sergio Ramírez and Gioconda Belli]. 15 February 2023. Available at: https://elpais.com/internacional/2023-02-15/ortega-despoja-de-su-nacionalidad-a-otros-94-nicaraguenses-entre-ellos-los-escritores-sergio-ramirez-y-gioconda-belli.html

[50] Amnesty International. Nicaragua: A cry for justice: Five years of oppression and resistance. AMR 43/6679/2023. April 2023

[51] El País. Daniel Ortega quita la nacionalidad a los 135 presos políticos liberados y expulsados de Nicaragua [Daniel Ortega revokes the nationality of 135 political prisoners released and expelled from Nicaragua]. 10 September 2024. Available at: https://elpais.com/america/2024-09-10/daniel-ortega-quita-la-nacionalidad-a-los-135-presos-politicos-liberados-y-expulsados-de-nicaragua.html

[52] The couple were arrested on 22 April 2023 as part of the crackdown on the fifth anniversary of the April 2018 protests, an example of how Daniel Ortega's government not only persecutes individuals but extends its repression to entire families. This tactic has a profound impact on the psychological and social fabric of people who dissent or peacefully protest against the state's repressive policies. The simultaneous arrest of parents or guardians, as in this case, exacerbates economic and emotional hardship, which in turn particularly affects children.

[53] Interview by Amnesty International in Guatemala City in October 2024.

[54] Amnesty International. *Nicaragua: Replacing prison by forced exile, Daniel Ortega's government's new pattern of repression*. 17 February de 2023. Available at: https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/02/nicaragua-exilio-forzado-por-carcel-el-nuevo-patron-represivo-del-gobierno-de-daniel-ortega/

[55] GHREN. *Violaciones de los derechos humanos a la libertad de circulación y a la nacionalidad* [Violations of the human rights to freedom of movement and nationality]. A/HRC/55/CRP.3. 29 February 2024.

[56] IACHR. Press Release. *IACHR Welcomes Release of Political Prisoners in Nicaragua but Rejects Arbitrary Deprivation of Nationality*. 13 February 2023. Available at: https://www.oas.org/en/iachr/jsForm/?File=/en/iachr/media_center/preleases/2023/021.asp
IACHR. Press Release. *CIDH repudia la privación arbitraria de nacionalidad de las 135 personas* excarceladas [IACHR condemns arbitrary revocation of nationality of 135 recently released prisoners in Nicaragua]. 13 September 2024. Available at: https://www.oas.org/en/iachr/jsForm/?File=/en/iachr/media_center/preleases/2024/217.asp

[57] DW. *Congreso aprueba reforma que da poder total a Ortega [Congress approves reform that gives total power to Ortega]. 22 November 2024*. Available at: https://www.dw.com/es/asamblea-nacional-de-nicaragua-aprueba-reforma-que-da-poder-total-a-ortega-y-su-esposa/a-70864770

An analysis of the profiles of the persons who were detained, criminalized, deprived of their nationality and subsequently expelled in February 2023 reveals a prevalence of protesters linked to the social unrest of 2018, human rights defenders, journalists and political opposition figures. However, the group similarly treated and expelled in September 2024 shows a more diverse set of actors, including a greater number of religious figures, activists and human rights defenders. This change underlines the regime's determination to eliminate any leadership that could inspire resistance, whether from the political, social or religious spheres.

In 2024, the authorities extended their repression to anyone perceived as a threat, including former public officials. On this basis, they have strengthened their control mechanisms, imposing restrictions on movement and constant surveillance on those they consider to be potential opponents, making it clear that repression is no longer directed solely at openly and publicly critical or dissident actors.[58] In this context, local organizations have documented a number of arbitrary arrests and acts of intimidation against members of the judiciary and their families.[59]

Harassment is now indiscriminate, affecting even those with no history of activism or dissent, sending a clear message that the authorities will not tolerate any form of organization or exercise of rights that they perceive as challenging their power. This widening of the profile of those persecuted and intimidated has a chilling effect on the population, fostering a heightened climate of fear and self-censorship in which no one feels safe. This situation reveals the absolute control of a state where arbitrariness thrives and where anyone, regardless of their background, can be considered a dissident voice and a threat in the eyes of the authorities. According to the Mechanism for the Recognition of Political Prisoners in Nicaragua, as of 7 November 2024, 46 people were arbitrarily detained, presumed opponents, deprived of their liberty or in a situation of enforced disappearance. Some of these cases have been documented by Amnesty International in order to be included as exemplary cases in this public statement.

Conclusions and appeals

Recent legal and constitutional reforms have consolidated the repression and absolute control of Daniel Ortega's government, deepening the human rights crisis in the country. The recent constitutional reforms consolidate the absolute power of the executive, effectively dismantle the separation of powers and legitimize repression by allowing the deprivation of nationality and removing the explicit prohibition of torture, in contravention of international standards.

As noted above, the systematic and sophisticated repression in Nicaragua reflects a pattern of gross human rights violations and even crimes under international law, aimed at eliminating all forms of dissent and imposing absolute control over society. Since 2018, the Ortega government has deployed a strategy that has evolved from the repression of protests to the widespread harassment of anyone perceived as an opponent. The extension of these tactics to religious leaders, human rights defenders and people with no clear political affiliation shows that in Nicaragua no one is safe from becoming a victim of repressive state policies. Arbitrary arrests, deprivation of nationality, exile and enforced disappearances have had a profound impact on the country's social fabric, creating a climate of terror and self-censorship. In this context, Amnesty International once again calls on the Nicaraguan government to put an immediate end to these repressive practices and to respect the human rights of the entire population. Amnesty International calls for the immediate and unconditional release of prisoner of conscience Brooklyn Rivera, an indigenous Miskito leader and founder of the YATAMA party, and all those arbitrarily detained solely for exercising their rights. The organization also calls for an end to the criminalization and harassment of those who speak out against the government.

Amnesty International also calls on the authorities to allow the families of those who have been subjected to enforced disappearance, including Lesbia Gutiérrez, to be informed of the exact whereabouts of those detained, to be provided with details of any charges against them, and to be allowed regular communication and contact with their loved ones, in accordance with international human rights law and minimum standards for the treatment of detainees.

We urge the international community to continue to monitor, document and denounce the situation in Nicaragua through the institutional mechanisms of the IACHR, the Human Rights Council and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. We also call on the international community to intensify its efforts to host those who have been displaced and expelled from Nicaragua, ensuring their protection, family reunification and humanitarian assistance.

We urge states to continue to demand in multilateral spaces that the Nicaraguan authorities comply with their human rights obligations and implement the recommendations of regional and universal human rights protection mechanisms,

[58] Mechanism for the Recognition of Political Prisoners in Nicaragua. Press Statement. 7 November 2024. Available at: https://presasypresospoliticosnicaragua.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Personas-Presas-Politicas-Nicaragua-Octubre-2024.pdf
[59] Mechanism for the Recognition of Political Prisoners in Nicaragua. Press Statement. 7 November 2024. Available at: https://presasypresospoliticosnicaragua.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Personas-Presas-Politicas-Nicaragua-Octubre-2024.pdf

and that they provide the necessary international protection to people who have been forced to leave the country or who have been expelled from it.

Finally, we call on states to consider activating universal jurisdiction based on the findings of both the GIEI and the GHREN to prosecute those responsible for possible crimes against humanity that have been and are being committed by the authorities and their agents since 2018, and to prevent the further spread of unchecked repression in the country.

Exhibit 10

United Nations A/HRC/61/56

General Assembly

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6 February 2026

Original: English

Human Rights Council
Sixty-first session
23 February–2 April 2026
Agenda item 4
Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Report of the Group of Human Rights Experts on Nicaragua*, **

Summary

The present report, submitted to the Human Rights Council pursuant to its resolution 58/18, contains the findings and conclusions of the Group of Human Rights Experts on Nicaragua with respect to the profiles of victims, the gender dimensions and persistent patterns of human rights violations in the country and abroad, repressive State structures, financing of repressive activities and accountability.

* Agreement was reached to publish the present document after the standard publication date owing to circumstances beyond the submitter's control.

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I. Introduction

1. Pursuant to its resolution 49/3, the Human Rights Council established the Group of Human Rights Experts on Nicaragua, to investigate alleged human rights violations and abuses committed in Nicaragua since April 2018, including the possible gender dimensions of such violations and abuses, and provide guidance on access to justice and accountability. In its resolution 58/18, the Council extended the mandate of the Group for a period of two years. The Group comprises Jan-Michael Simon (Chair), Ariela Peralta Distéfano and Reed Brody.

2. The Group previously found reasonable grounds to believe that, since April 2018, State and non-State actors had committed serious human rights violations and abuses against an ever-growing range of real or perceived opponents and their relatives in a systematic and widespread manner.[1] Some violations constituted, prima facie, the crimes against humanity of murder, imprisonment, torture, including rape and other forms of sexual violence of comparable gravity, enforced disappearance, deportation and persecution on political grounds.

3. In the present report, the Group examines the evolving profiles of victims, the gender dimensions and persistent patterns of human rights violations, particularly the expansion of transnational violations, repressive State structures, individual responsibility and the financing of repressive activities. The gender dimensions of the repression will be further detailed in an accompanying conference room paper.

4. The Government of Nicaragua continues to refuse to engage with the Group, despite the repeated calls by the Human Rights Council to do so. Since the beginning of its mandate, the Group has sent 21 unanswered letters to the authorities requesting information.[2] While not a member of the Council, in February 2025 Nicaragua discontinued cooperation with the Council and its mechanisms. An advance copy of the present report was sent to the Government.

II. Evolution of the profiles of victims

5. The Group has documented patterns of serious human rights violations – including extrajudicial executions, arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, unfair trials, arbitrary deprivation of nationality, expulsions, entry bans, arbitrary confiscations, surveillance, threats and harassment – perpetrated by State and non-State actors through four phases of repression since 2018.[3] The first phase (2018–2020) was characterized by a violent and disproportionate crackdown on legitimate widespread protests. The second phase (2021) was characterized by intensified targeted repression to ensure the re-election of the President, Daniel Ortega. The third phase (2022) saw increased efforts to eliminate all remaining political opposition, the amplification of repression against the Catholic Church and accelerated dismantling of civic space. The fourth phase (2023 to the present) has been characterized by violations aimed at eliminating all criticism and preventing any resistance movements, especially from within the State apparatus and the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN), to ensure that the Co-Presidents, Mr. Ortega and Rosario Murillo, maintain absolute control over all State entities and the population, including abroad.

[1] See A/HRC/52/63; A/HRC/55/27; A/HRC/58/26; and the seven accompanying conference room papers and the additional paper entitled “Nicaragua: persecution beyond borders – exile and transnational human rights violations”, available at https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/ghre-nicaragua/index.

[2] See correspondence, available at https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/ghre-nicaragua/correspondence-group-human-rights-experts-nicaragua-2022-2023.

[3] A/HRC/58/26, paras. 7–10.

and population.[4] It paints a picture in sharp contrast to the gender equality advances flaunted by the Government in international forums.

14. Since 2018, women and LGBTIQ+ persons who are real or perceived opponents have been subjected to sexual and gender-based violence and repression. Women human rights defenders, students, feminists and LGBTIQ+ activists participating in protests were among the first to be targeted. In public spaces and detention facilities, the police, prison staff and members of pro-government armed groups used sexualized violence, including rape, threats of rape, forced nudity and gender-based insults, to punish them for protesting and deter them from further political engagement.

15. As the repression became more systematic, the authorities arbitrarily arrested women protest leaders, students, journalists, political leaders, academics and human rights defenders. In detention facilities, particularly in police stations and prisons, many were subjected to sexual and gender-based violence, prolonged solitary confinement, incommunicado detention and enforced disappearance. Women political leaders were disproportionately targeted. The authorities also restricted their contact with their families and children, intensifying harm given the socially-assigned caregiving roles of women.

16. Police and prison officials specifically targeted detained LGBTIQ+ persons using sexualized humiliation and verbal abuse against their gender identity and/or sexual orientation, including degrading slurs, to stigmatize and dehumanize them, thereby reinforcing their exclusion and fear. Such behaviour reflected entrenched gender norms and stereotypes, serving not only to punish individuals for their political opposition, but also to discipline them for their bodies and identities where perceived as transgressive.

17. Over time, women relatives or associates of real or perceived opponents have also been subjected to sexual and gender-based violence, including invasive searches, particularly during prison visits. In the Caribbean region of Nicaragua, Indigenous and Afrodescendent women human rights defenders faced compounded risks due to their roles defending the collective rights of their communities, exposing some to arbitrary detention, heightened risks of sexual and gender-based violence, and forced displacement by State officials, armed settlers and criminal gangs.

18. Taken together, the Group's findings indicate that women and LGBTIQ+ persons have been subjected to political persecution with distinct gendered dimensions and differentiated effects. Women and LGBTIQ+ critics of the Government, political or community leaders, human rights defenders or alleged "traitors" to FSLN were targeted for demanding the end of political repression and justice for victims. These violations were committed in a context where the authorities subjected women and LGBTIQ+ movements and organizations to defamation campaigns and mass closures.

III. Persistent patterns of human rights violations

19. As the Government advanced towards its objective of absolute control, these patterns of human rights abuse evolved: some violations subsided, others persisted and new ones emerged. While extrajudicial executions and mass arrests ended after the protests, targeted arbitrary detention has continued, alongside enforced disappearance. One of the most notorious developments of the fourth phase of repression, however, has been the expansion and escalation of transnational human rights violations.

20. The serious human rights violations, abuses and crimes exposed by the Group, which have affected thousands of victims, have gone entirely unpunished, resulting in a context of generalized impunity deliberately constructed through legislative and constitutional reforms, including the Amnesty Act of 2019 and the constitutional reform conducted in 2025. These codified mechanisms to criminalize the exercise of certain fundamental rights and freedoms shield perpetrators from accountability.

[4] Conference room paper containing the detailed conclusions of the Group of Human Rights Experts on Nicaragua, available at https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/ghre-nicaragua/index, paras. 906–914 and 921.

Nicaraguans declared “traitors to the homeland” following blatantly unfair proceedings. In 94 of these cases, the trials, if they took place, were held in absentia and in secret.

34. A wide range of individuals has been affected, including political figures, human rights defenders, feminists, journalists, lawyers, students, academics, writers, Indigenous and campesino leaders, members of the Catholic and other Christian churches, businesspersons and former public officials. They were targeted on political grounds, and most were rendered stateless. This practice violates the right to a nationality and has far-reaching consequences for the enjoyment by victims and their families of other human rights.

35. Several Nicaraguans living abroad were deprived of their nationality without any notification of legal proceedings. The victims were simply told by consular or migration authorities, while seeking to obtain official documents, that they, the victims, did not exist. These cases also constitute a de jure deprivation of nationality, meaning that the victims, despite having little to no evidence to prove the formal deprivation of their nationality, are also entitled to the protection provided by international standards on statelessness.

(d) De facto deprivation of nationality

36. In addition to the de jure deprivation of nationality of hundreds of Nicaraguans, hundreds – perhaps thousands – more have been subjected to measures, such as those described in the following paragraphs, that render them de facto stateless when they do not hold a second citizenship, as they remain outside of Nicaragua without the protection or assistance of their State of nationality.

(i) Prohibition of entry into one’s own country

37. Since 2018, the Government has increasingly barred Nicaraguans, including children, from re-entering their own country. While the Group has documented hundreds of such cases, underreporting is highly likely owing to the victims’ fear of reprisals. Entry bans are decided by the Deputy Minister of the Interior in consultation with Ms. Murillo and communicated by the Directorate General for Migration and Alien Affairs to border officials, airlines and other transport companies.

38. Victims are forced into a situation of extreme vulnerability, abruptly cut off from their livelihoods and support networks. Entry bans also result in family separation and often cause harm to relatives in Nicaragua, especially children and older persons, who depend on those barred from returning.

(ii) Denial of passports and official records

39. Nicaraguan consular authorities have refused to issue or renew passports, legalize power of attorney and perform other functions, or have delayed such procedures, for people considered “threats” to the Government and for their relatives. Decisions to deny passports are taken by the Deputy Minister of the Interior and the Directorate General for Migration and Alien Affairs after consultation with Ms. Murillo and transmitted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of the Interior to embassies and consulates for implementation.

40. The authorities have also sought the “civil death” of exiled Nicaraguans and their relatives by blocking access to, altering or deleting documents in the Central Civil Registry, especially birth records and marriage certificates. Such measures, overseen by the Supreme Electoral Council in consultation with the Deputy Minister of the Interior and Ms. Murillo, deprive victims of their legal identity, impairing their ability to establish property rights, obtain a passport, regularize their migration status and establish filiation, as well as severely restricting their enjoyment of other human rights. They also affect their relatives, especially children and spouses. The victims are unable to avail themselves of the assistance of Nicaragua and are therefore rendered de facto stateless.

(e) Confiscation of property

41. Since 2018, and particularly since 2023, confiscation of the property and assets of exiled real or perceived opponents and their relatives, such as homes, vehicles, land, bank

accounts, businesses and pensions, has increasingly been undertaken by the authorities. The cases documented by the Group were arbitrary, carried out after unfair trials or without any known legal proceedings. The Attorney General and her Office have implemented these confiscations, executing court orders or arbitrary decisions made in consultation with Ms. Murillo, and allocating seized properties to State institutions and, at times, individuals linked to FSLN. The Executive President of the Nicaraguan Social Security Institute has implemented the confiscation of pensions and contributions.

42. With these confiscations, the authorities have deliberately intensified economic hardship for exiled Nicaraguans as a form of punishment and a means of deterring dissenting activities abroad. Many victims have been forced into poverty. These measures have also disproportionately affected the most vulnerable – women with dependants, older persons and children – who rely on a fixed income to meet basic needs.

(f) Proxy punishment of in-country relatives

43. The authorities have regularly targeted the in-country relatives – including minor children – and associates of exiled real or perceived opponents as a means of punishing and exerting pressure on them. Family members and associates have been subjected to surveillance, harassment, threats, arbitrary detention, arbitrary confiscation of property, alteration of civil records, denial of passports and prohibition from leaving the country, by virtue of mere association. This form of collective punishment, which deliberately targets vulnerable family members, often women, takes a particularly severe economic and/or psychological toll on victims. It has contributed to widespread fear and self-censorship both in Nicaragua and abroad.

2. Gendered impact of transnational human rights violations

44. Since 2023, the gendered impact of State repression has become particularly evident in the context of exile. Transnational violations have particularly targeted women activists, human rights defenders and journalists. While deprivation of nationality, entry bans and other restrictions on free movement have affected Nicaraguans broadly, their consequences have been experienced differently depending on gender, sexual orientation, age and social roles. Women and LGBTIQ+ victims have faced distinct and often more severe consequences because of gender norms, caregiving responsibilities and structural inequalities.

45. Limitations in the regularization of migration status, combined with gender-specific vulnerabilities related to displacement, significantly restrict exiled women's access to services, formal employment, safe housing and shared accommodation on the same terms as men, due to heightened safety risks. Furthermore, women and LGBTIQ+ persons have reported higher exposure to gender-based violence in host countries compared with men. For Indigenous and Afrodescendent women, such limitations and risks are compounded by structural racism and language barriers. Older women, particularly those arbitrarily stripped of their nationality, property and/or pensions, have experienced acute vulnerability, often without an income, access to social protection or other form of livelihood, and have thus often resorted to working in precarious conditions or become dependent on relatives.[8]

3. Transnational surveillance and intelligence network[9]

46. The wide surveillance and intelligence network documented by the Group[10] has been crucial to enable the State to identify, monitor and target exiled Nicaraguans. Transnational surveillance is orchestrated via a multilayered intelligence architecture involving the army, the police, other State institutions, the diplomatic service and non-State actors, notably FSLN

[8] For more details, see the accompanying conference room paper.

[9] For a list of functional diagrams relating to the present report and available on the Group's web page, including a functional diagram of this transnational surveillance and intelligence network, see annex II.

[10] A/HRC/58/26, paras. 21 and 69–74; conference room paper on institutions and individuals responsible for the main patterns of human rights violations and abuses and crimes perpetrated in Nicaragua since April 2018, paras. 66–68 and 725–774; and additional paper entitled "Nicaragua: persecution beyond borders", pp. 7 and 18–20.

V. Crimes against humanity

77. The violations investigated by the Group since 2018 amount, prima facie, to the crimes against humanity of murder, imprisonment, torture, deportation, enforced disappearance (other inhumane acts) and persecution on political grounds under customary international law.

78. As outlined above, victims with diverse profiles were targeted on the basis of their political identity, activities and/or opinions, pursuant to a discriminatory policy designed to systematically silence dissent. Across successive phases of repression, the Government has progressively refined its methods and continued to expand the pool of targets, including to Nicaraguans abroad.

79. The Group finds that, since 2024, real or perceived opponents, including former Sandinistas, and their relatives in exile have increasingly been the target of transnational human rights violations, which, in some cases, amount prima facie to the crime against humanity of persecution on political grounds. These acts, ordered by and coordinated from the highest levels of the executive branch (see sect. III.A above), are committed as part of the widespread and systematic attack against part of the Nicaraguan population.

80. The Group has also documented the persistence of arbitrary detention, ill-treatment and enforced disappearance of several months to over two years in duration, which the Group had previously determined to amount, prima facie, to crimes against humanity under customary international law.

81. The Group further found that the crime against humanity of persecution on political grounds was committed with a gendered dimension. Women and members of feminist movements and women-led organizations were deliberately targeted because of their actual or perceived political opposition and their role as autonomous political actors. The acts of persecution were frequently accompanied by gender-based violence and coercion, through which authorities instrumentalized gender norms to stigmatize, punish and deter women's participation in public life, including by resorting to sexualized violence, moral shaming, attacks on caregiving roles and the suppression of feminist organizing.

VI. Responsibility

A. State responsibility

82. The Group has found reasonable grounds to believe that the State of Nicaragua is responsible for grave violations of international law, in particular numerous provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the American Convention on Human Rights, the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women, the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness and the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169), of the International Labour Organization (ILO).

83. The Group notes with great concern the Government's decisions in 2025 to discontinue cooperation with the Human Rights Council and to withdraw from five United Nations entities, which dramatically reduced avenues for international oversight and accountability. Nevertheless, the State of Nicaragua remains bound by customary international law and the international treaties that it has ratified.

84. The Group also recalls that the State of Nicaragua bears responsibility for human rights violations committed – in whole or in part – outside its territory where it exercises power or effective control.[21] International jurisprudence affirms that treaty obligations apply

[21] See additional paper entitled "Nicaragua: persecution beyond borders", p. 5, footnote 9.

Exhibit 11

Invest in Freedom's Future. Support Freedom House.

Freedom House

FREEDOM IN THE WORLD 2025

Nicaragua

NOT FREE

14 /100

Political Rights	**2** /40
Civil Liberties	**12** /60

LAST YEAR'S SCORE & STATUS

16 /100 **Not Free**

A country or territory's Freedom in the World status depends on its aggregate Political Rights score, on a scale of 0–40, and its aggregate Civil Liberties score, on a scale of 0–60. See the methodology.



Overview

TOP

The 2006 election of Sandinista leader Daniel Ortega began a period of democratic deterioration marked by the consolidation of all branches of government under his party's control, the limitation of fundamental freedoms, and unchecked corruption in government. In 2018, state forces, with the aid of informally allied armed groups, responded to a mass antigovernment movement with violence and repression. The rule of law collapsed as the government moved to put down the movement, with rights monitors reporting killings, extrajudicial detentions, disappearances, and torture. Since then, Ortega's regime has consolidated its power by engaging in surveillance, curtailing press freedoms, arresting political opponents, sending opposing voices into exile, and stripping away their citizenship.

Key Developments in 2024

- On a single day in August, the regime canceled the legal status of 1,500 nonprofit organizations, bringing the total number of organizations whose legal status had been canceled since the regime's 2018 crackdown on civil society to more than 5,200.
- In September, the regime released 135 political prisoners to Guatemala, stripping their citizenship and leaving them stateless. The month prior, the regime also expelled seven Roman Catholic priests, sending them to Vatican City.
- The National Assembly adopted reforms to the penal code in September, including provisions allowing the government to prosecute and seize property from individuals and organizations accused of committing crimes against the state, even if they are located outside of Nicaragua. The National Assembly also amended the Special Cybercrimes Law (LEC), expanding the law to apply to material posted on social media and allowing the government to prosecute alleged cybercrimes committed abroad.
- In November, the National Assembly approved constitutional reforms that, if enacted, would increase government control over the media, expand executive powers, increase presidential terms to six years, and install President Ortega's wife, Vice President Rosario Murillo, as "copresident." The reforms, which observers noted would likely entrench Murillo as Ortega's

B3 0-4 pts

Are the people's political choices free from domination by forces that are external to the political sphere, or by political forces that employ extrapolitical means?	**0** / 4

President Ortega controls all government branches and public institutions, as well as the country's media, granting him and the FSLN significant influence over people's political choices.

B4 0-4 pts

Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, racial, religious, gender, LGBT+, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities?	**1** / 4

Minority groups, especially Indigenous residents in the Caribbean and eastern regions, are politically underrepresented. The government and FSLN largely ignore their grievances. Indigenous groups have experienced increased state-led repression in recent years. In 2023, the regime ended the legal status of Yatama, an Indigenous political party. In November 2024, officials admitted that Brooklyn Rivera and Nancy Henríquez, Yatama legislators who disappeared in late 2023, had been detained by the government; their whereabouts remained unknown as of year-end 2024.

The regime's continued crackdown on religious organizations, particularly the Roman Catholic Church and those affiliated with it, has sharply curtailed such groups' ability to exercise their political rights. The closure of thousands of religious organizations and persecution of religious figures critical of the regime in recent years has suppressed their capacity to meaningfully and independently engage in politics, silencing large numbers of previously politically active community leaders and human rights advocates.

In practice, successful political advocacy by women is generally restricted to initiatives that enjoy the support of the FSLN.

Score Change: The score declined from 2 to 1 because crackdowns on dissent in recent years have included the forced disappearance of Indigenous legislators and

D3 0-4 pts

Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination?	**1** / 4

Since the 2018 crisis, teachers have experienced harassment from authorities and progovernment groups and must follow the Education Ministry's strict guidelines. Students at the primary and secondary levels are reportedly required to attend progovernment rallies. Pro–FSLN materials are often displayed in school buildings. Under a 2022 law, the government-controlled National Council of Universities functions as the main academic governing body, limiting academic autonomy.

Authorities have closed institutions of higher education in recent years, with the legal status of at least 37 revoked between 2021 and 2024. The regime has labeled at least one of these institutions as a "center of terrorism," and has often seized their assets.

D4 0-4 pts

Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution?	**0** / 4

An ongoing campaign of repression and intimidation by state and progovernment forces inspires a general climate of fear and terror that restricts free expression. State and progovernment forces routinely monitor the activities of individuals who oppose the regime. The families of victims of regime violence and people who return from abroad are also monitored and surveilled. Authorities are known to use international mobile subscriber identity (IMSI) catchers, which allow operators to intercept the mobile communications of users who unwittingly connect to them.

The regime criminalized the spread of "false news" and targeted whistleblowing by government employees. The LEC also gives the government broad access to user data. In 2021, the National Assembly amended the constitution to allow for life sentences for hate crimes; Ortega has referred to opposition activities as such. The government also relies on the Sovereignty Law to crack down on opposition

activities. September 2024 amendments to the LEC extend surveillance and censorship to social media platforms.

E. Associational and Organizational Rights

E1 0-4 pts

Is there freedom of assembly?	0 / 4

Freedom of assembly has severely deteriorated since 2018, when at least 328 people were killed in a brutal crackdown on antigovernment protests. Most abuses were attributed to the National Police and armed allied groups.

Assembly rights have been restricted since, with authorities stopping Catholic worshippers from holding public processions and surveilling churchgoers attending mass. In 2024, the regime once more banned public assemblies celebrating Lent, Good Friday, and Easter.

E2 0-4 pts

Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights– and governance-related work?	0 / 4

Groups critical of the government or focusing on issues like corruption have operated within an increasingly restrictive environment under the Ortega regime. Authorities have targeted nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), accusing them of undermining the regime or acting as foreign agents. Human rights groups have reported continued monitoring and surveillance and have denounced activist repression, including sexual assaults on women activists.

Under an NGO law passed in 2022, the government can rescind the legal status of organizations that "promote campaigns to destabilize" Nicaragua and can seize NGOs' assets in certain circumstances. On a single day in August 2024, the regime canceled the legal status of 1,500 nonprofit organizations, including several NGOs.

As of that month, the legal status of over 5,200 organizations had been canceled since the regime's 2018 crackdown on civil society.

E3 0-4 pts

Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations?	**2** / 4

The FSLN controls Nicaragua's most influential labor unions, and the legal rights of non–FSLN unions are not fully guaranteed in practice. FSLN–controlled unions endorsed Ortega's 2021 reelection bid.

F. Rule of Law

F1 0-4 pts

Is there an independent judiciary?	**0** / 4

Nicaragua lacks an independent judiciary. The executive branch strongly influences the nomination of judges, and loyalty to the ruling party determines their appointments. In the run-up to the 2021 election, the judiciary played a critical role in ordering the arrest of opposition members and ending the legal status of opposition parties. The judiciary has also overseen sham trials of the government's opponents, with defendants being convicted of "undermining judicial integrity" in closed proceedings.

Vice President Murillo continued to preside over a purge of the judicial branch into 2024. At least 900 judges and officials were dismissed in 2023. In July 2024, Nicaraguan authorities appointed more than 50 new judges; the new appointees reportedly have no formal judicial training and were selected by the regime on partisan grounds. In January and May, the National Assembly approved reforms of the Judicial Career Law and Organic Law of the Judiciary that weaken judicial independence by slashing the judiciary's autonomous budget, among other things.

F2 0-4 pts

Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters?	**0** / 4

Since the 2018 protests, the United Nations and human rights organizations have documented rampant due process violations. Police and progovernment forces have engaged in arbitrary and politically motivated arrests and detentions, while authorities have acted without warrants. Detainees' locations are sometimes not publicized, and individuals have been held incommunicado.

Political prisoners and opposition activists have been denied due process. The 2022 trials against high-profile political prisoners unfolded behind closed doors and under accelerated timelines. Opposition members, human rights defenders, and journalists who were arrested in May 2023 were tried en masse and were not allowed to retain legal counsel of their choosing.

A constitutional amendment and related law passed in 2023 allow the regime to strip citizenship from "traitors to the homeland." The regime used this power to strip the citizenship of the 222 prisoners it had unilaterally exiled that same day, while another 94 people had their citizenship stripped later that month. In September 2024, the regime ordered a new wave of forced removals, stripping 135 political prisoners of their citizenship and releasing them to Guatemala. The Mechanism for the Recognition of Political Prisoners reported that 45 people were still being held as political prisoners as of late 2024.

F3 0-4 pts

Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies?	**1** / 4

The 2018 protest movement and subsequent rallies have been met with violent repression by police and informally allied armed forces. Reports from the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the relatives of political prisoners have documented severe abuses; detainees face psychological and physical torture, sexual violence, forced confessions, disappearances, significant deterioration of prison conditions, and extrajudicial killings. In

September 2024, the OHCHR published a report stating that "the human rights situation in Nicaragua has continued to seriously deteriorate."

International human rights organizations estimate that more than 200,000 Nicaraguans have fled to Costa Rica since 2018.

F4 0-4 pts

Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population?	**1** / 4

The constitution and laws nominally recognize the rights of Indigenous communities, but those rights have not been respected in practice. Approximately 5 percent of the population is Indigenous and lives mostly in the North Caribbean Coast Autonomous Region (RACCN) and the South Caribbean Coast Autonomous Region (RACCS). While Indigenous populations have been granted legal rights and protections to land, the government does not enforce these laws.

Attacks against Indigenous populations and land incursions have been perpetrated with impunity in recent years. In 2022, Indigenous representatives reported that they lived at "a high risk of ethnocide" due to mistreatment and the loss of land rights. That same year, the OHCHR expressed concern over violence against Indigenous Nicaraguans and residents of African descent.

LGBT+ people are subject to threats and discrimination, and many, particularly transgender Nicaraguans, have been forced into exile.

G. Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights

G1 0-4 pts

Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education?	**1** / 4

The 2018 repression against protesters, the 2021 crackdown on political opponents, and continued surveillance and harassment at the hands of police and paramilitary groups have created a climate of fear and mistrust that discourages free movement. Poor infrastructure limits free movement in some majority-Indigenous areas.

In February 2023, the National Assembly amended Article 21 of the constitution and passed a related law allowing the government to strip the citizenship of those deemed "traitors to the homeland." The 222 prisoners unilaterally released that month lost their citizenship and were rendered stateless. Another 94 people, most of whom were already living in exile abroad, lost their citizenship later that month. In September 2024, the regime exiled another 135 political prisoners, stripping their citizenship and removing them to Guatemala.

G2 0-4 pts

Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors?	**1** / 4

Property rights are protected on paper but can be tenuous in practice. Titles are often contested, and individuals with connections to the FSLN enjoy an advantage during property disputes.

In 2023, the Ortega regime deepened its policy of arbitrarily seizing private assets. Individuals who were deemed "traitors to the homeland" had their property seized by the state. The same occurred to business leaders, the Jesuits, and institutions of higher education, including the Central American University (UCA) and the Central American Institute of Business Administration (INCAE).

Several laws and legislative amendments passed in 2024 legalized the government's common practice of seizing the property and assets of individuals and organizations accused of certain crimes. In September, the National Assembly adopted reforms to the penal code, allowing authorities to confiscate property from those convicted of committing crimes against the state, even if they reside outside of Nicaragua.

Exhibit 12

“My neighbor is watching me” How the regime restructured CPCs for neighborhood espionage

divergentes.com/my-neighbor-is-watching-me-how-the-regime-restructured-cpcs-for-neighborhood-espionage

Alice Arlen August 26, 2024



Leer en Español

The sight of members of the Citizen Power Councils (CPCs)—the repressive and political surveillance structure of the Sandinista Front in neighborhoods—accompanying National Police officers is becoming increasingly common in Nicaragua.

After Daniel Ortega and Rosario Murillo’s regime activated a new surveillance structure last year, Sandinista party militants have coordinated with the National Police, becoming the front line of repression in neighborhoods.

At least three sources (opponents and critics of the Ortega-Murillo regime) interviewed for this article confirmed that the harassment against them in recent months began with members of the CPCs in their respective neighborhoods.

The coordination between the National Police and the CPCs and Family Cabinets is not new in the police state imposed in Nicaragua. However, on November 7, 2023, during the first Citizen Security Congress, which included figures from the closest circle of the ruling couple, the involvement of Sandinista militants in the security apparatus became even clearer.



Divergentes

“They talked, of course, about staying vigilant, connected, and coordinated, as it should be, to defend and safeguard peace,” said Rosario Murillo about this congress on November 8, 2023.

Meanwhile, the Police confirmed that with this strategy, the police model “is organized from individuals, families, and communities with coordination, articulation, and communication with political secretaries and the electoral network to contribute to peace, stability, and security.”

CPCs in direct line with the regime’s police

Critics and opponents describe how the harassment against them started with a visit from CPC members to their homes to ask for personal information (full name, age, employment status).

Subsequently, police officers conducted searches or intimidation at the same homes, armed with more detailed information. “The CPCs meet every week, they communicate more with

each other, and they have a direct line to the Police," said a Sandinista militant who spoke on condition of anonymity because they disagree with the situation.

The new coordination of the CPCs within the repression structure began with visits from the National Police, called "human and citizen security meetings," which started in August of last year. Initially understood as door-to-door visits, these meetings eventually took place in a single house in each neighborhood, where neighbors were invited by CPC coordinators, according to DIVERGENTES.



Divergentes

The Police reported an average of 56 meetings per day across the country between August and November of last year. Since then, no further information about these operations has been disclosed.

Representatives of the Sandinista Front in the neighborhoods extended invitations to houses known to have Sandinista militants. However, the meetings were led by police commissioners, who were accompanied by several officers. At the end of the meetings, they shouted, "Long live Commander Daniel Ortega!"

The CPCs and Family Cabinets were structured in 2007 with the aim of distributing social programs and performing proselytizing tasks. But since April 2018, when the sociopolitical

crisis erupted in Nicaragua, they began operating as a political espionage apparatus.

Since then, thousands of Sandinista militants across the country have carried out covert surveillance. Their protocol involved espionage, where they informed the Police, and officers acted by conducting searches and harassing opponents.

Now, CPCs meet in neighborhoods, walk, and work with police officers in broad daylight and with their faces uncovered.

Identify, monitor, and report



The CPCs coordinate with the police to hold meetings in the neighborhoods where surveillance and espionage operations are coordinated. Divergentes | EFE.

The Sandinista militant said that one of the tasks of the CPCs “is to identify opponents in the neighborhoods, monitor them, and report to the police.”

Additionally, they are called by the police to cross-check lists of critics to find out whether members of those families are in the country or what activities they are engaged in.

“They are assigned to watch or monitor several people, or just one person. Generally, it’s the closest neighbors who are watching,” said the source. “This surveillance used to be carried

out by the police, but now it's done by the CPCs," they added.

CPC surveillance sometimes turns violent



Divergentes

A former political prisoner from a northern municipality, now in exile, said the harassment against him intensified precisely after the police visits in the neighborhoods last year. "They came to the neighborhood, met, and weeks later, two men on motorcycles intercepted and beat me; they didn't steal anything," said this opponent.

Later, days after the beating, a police officer came to his house to tell him that he was being monitored by Police Intelligence. Twice a month, he had to report via phone call and send the officer a photo and location via WhatsApp of where he was at that moment.

"The police officer told me that if I didn't answer the call, they would come looking for me to put me in jail," said the opponent, now in the United States, where he sought refuge from this harassment, but who still fears giving his name because his family remains in Nicaragua.

"I had a neighbor who was watching me. I knew it was him because when there was an important date (the anniversary of the April Rebellion, Sandinista celebrations in July, or

Christmas in December), patrol cars would park near my house to watch me, and they would go to his (the neighbor's) house to talk and meet," said the former political prisoner.

This behavior is part of the strict control imposed by the Ortega-Murillo regime's police state since late 2018, when it stopped the rebellion that began in April of that year with violence.

First, physical protests were banned, and later, even virtual spaces were censored through imprisonment and exile. Currently, in Nicaragua, there is no space for opposition without it resulting in arrests, threats, harassment, and intimidation.

Exhibit 13

US immigration: 'They'd rather die than return to Nicaragua'

bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-61735603

By Bernd Debusmann Jr

June 23, 2022



Getty Images

A climate of fear



Getty Images

A homeless man walks past a mural of Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua in April 2020

The stories shared by Nicaraguans at the shelter have two common themes: a struggling economy and fear of the government of Daniel Ortega, the leader of Nicaragua's 1979 Sandinista revolution who earlier this year was sworn into a fourth consecutive term as President.

Affectionately known as Comandante Daniel to his supporters, Mr Ortega has long been accused of abandoning the revolution's ideals by turning into a dictator, harshly suppressing any opposition.

These crackdowns have become more pronounced since Mr Ortega was returned to office in November, in an election that saw opposition candidates arrested or exiled alongside prominent regime critics, journalists, business leaders, human rights advocates and students.

Since then, the clampdowns have continued and escalated, with the UN's human rights chief warning that new criminal legislations are being used to persecute perceived opponents of the Ortega government.

In one week in early June alone, almost 200 civil society and non-governmental organisations were shut down in what the Paris-based Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights

Defenders said was an attempt to eliminate "all social and political vision that differs from that established by the regime".

The harsh measures imposed by the Ortega regime prompted the US government to announce that Nicaragua would not be invited to the recent Summit of the Americas in Los Angeles. A senior administration official cited a "lack of democratic space" as the reason.

The Nicaraguan American Human Rights Alliance, which helps citizens who have fled the country, has been inundated with daily inquiries from citizens who've drawn the ire of Mr Ortega's government, according to its president, Anita Wells.

Exhibit 14

LATINO

Nicaragua has committed executions, crimes against humanity, U.N. group states

It names President Daniel Ortega and Vice President Rosario Murillo, his wife, as participants in the violations and calls for international legal action and sanctions against those involved.



Daniel Ortega and Rosario Murillo in Managua in 2018. Inti Ocon / AFP via Getty Images file

March 3, 2023, 1:54 PM GMT-3 / Source: Reuters

By Reuters

Nicaragua's government has committed serious and systematic violations which amount to crimes against humanity, a United Nations-appointed team of human rights experts said on Thursday, calling for international sanctions against the government.

The three-person body said the government has committed, and continues to commit, acts of torture, extrajudicial executions, arbitrary detention since 2018.

Asked about the scale of the abuses, the experts said they had documented over 100 cases of executions, hundreds of cases of torture and arbitrary detention, and thousands of cases of political persecution.

It names President Daniel Ortega and Vice President Rosario Murillo, who is his wife, as participants in the violations and calls for international legal action and sanctions against those involved.

“The objective (of the government) is to eliminate by different means any opposing or dissenting voices in the country,” Jan Simon, Chair of the Group of Human Rights Experts on Nicaragua, told journalists at a briefing to present the findings, saying the government was “weaponizing the functions of the state against the population”.

“This has resulted in the Nicaraguan population living in fear,” he said.

Nicaragua’s diplomatic mission in Geneva did not reply to a request for comment on the report’s findings.

The group of experts said it sent 12 letters to the government since it began working a year ago as well as the final report but never received a response.



Exhibit 15

Ortega orders increased ‘revolutionary surveillance’ to ‘capture and prosecute traitors’ in Nicaragua

english.elpais.com/international/2025-07-21/ortega-orders-increased-revolutionary-surveillance-to-capture-and-prosecute-traitors-in-nicaragua.html

Wilfredo Miranda Aburto July 21, 2025

Nicaragua

The leader praised China and Russia on the 46th anniversary of the Sandinista revolution, in a ceremony that lacked any high-profile international guests



Nicaraguan government workers during the May 1st celebration in Managua.Presidencia de Nicaragua

Nicaragua leaders Daniel Ortega and Rosario Murillo presided over the 46th anniversary of the Sandinista Revolution on July 19, in Managua’s Plaza de la Fe square, in one of the most foreign-inspired celebrations in living memory. In the absence of any prominent international guests, including the notable absence of the heads of state of Cuba and Venezuela, the Sandinista leader devoted much of his speech to praising China and Russia, while advocating for the dissolution of the United Nations and virulently attacking Europe. In his 81-minute

address, Ortega ordered the redoubling of “revolutionary vigilance” to “capture and prosecute traitors” in the Central American country.

It was a speech that largely put to sleep the thousands of public workers, armed forces and special guests who attended the Sandinista celebration, but it also served to expose an Ortega whose speech was increasingly slow and stumbling, in keeping with his 79 years of age. Instead of presenting a national agenda or addressing the repression his regime maintains against any critical voice, a president accused of crimes against humanity showered praise on Beijing and Moscow.

The two most prominent figures on the flower-decked stage were Ma Hui, vice minister of the International Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China; and Anna Yurievna Kuznetsova, deputy speaker of the Moscow State Duma. Both were low-profile officials within the Moscow and communist establishment.



A family walks past the flags of Nicaragua and the Sandinista National Liberation Front during the celebration of the 46th anniversary of the Sandinista popular revolution in Managua.STR (EFE)

Ortega’s speech was disorganized and riddled with vague historical references. He referenced the era of Napoleon, ranting against the French, and moved on to Nicaragua’s independence in 1821 and Simón Bolívar’s struggle for liberation. The leader invoked Mao Zedong and the Red Army “as sources of inspiration” for the Sandinista Front. He attributed

the defeat of Nazism to China and Russia and accused Europe of “continuing to commit colonial crimes” under the auspices of NATO. At the same time, he extolled a supposed “national peace” while 54 people remain imprisoned for political reasons and a sustained crackdown on dissidents persists in the country.

Just as it appeared that his slow-burning tirade might be coming to a close, Ortega issued a threat that, despite being a reality for years now, reaffirmed the terror that Nicaraguans live under in their own neighborhoods: the political surveillance and harassment faced by anyone who disagrees with the Sandinista regime, and who is often betrayed by their own neighbors.

“That’s why we must always keep up with all the tasks we have to accomplish: study, preparation, work, and various activities, without neglecting the place, the neighborhood where we’re working, without neglecting our revolutionary vigilance,” Ortega stated, ordering the redoubling of a practice that dates back to the first Sandinista regime in Nicaragua in the 1980s. “And that way, there will be no room for terrorists, conspirators, traitors, because they will know that as soon as they are discovered, they will be captured and prosecuted,” said the president.



Rosario and Daniel Ortega during an official event in 2019.Alfredo Zuniga (AP)

Since 2023, the Nicaraguan Police have activated a new political surveillance structure in the neighborhoods “to ensure peace.” Officers coordinate with coordinators of the Citizen Power Council (CPC), the Sandinista officials who dominate the localities. The initiative was part of the ironclad police state imposed by the Ortega-Murillo regime since late 2018, when it crushed the rebellion that began in April of that same year with bullets. On July 19, Ortega made it clear that he was redoubling his efforts to deepen the practice.

In Nicaragua, raids against individuals considered opponents of the regime continue unabated. The latest major incident occurred a few months ago, culminating in the capture of retired General Álvaro Baltodano, one of the most influential figures in the Sandinista economic and military circles in recent years. Subsequently, some 20 retired military officers were arrested, thanks in part to intelligence gathered through this surveillance system used by the intelligence directorates of the Army and Police, and coordinated by the Ministry of the Interior.

Exhibit 16

A ‘tropicalized Taliban regime’ and a family succession plan underway: Ortega and Murillo radicalize repression in Nicaragua

english.elpais.com/international/2024-04-18/a-tropicalized-taliban-regime-and-a-family-succession-plan-underway-ortega-and-murillo-radicalize-repression-in-nicaragua.html

Wilfredo Miranda Aburto April 18, 2024

Nicaragua

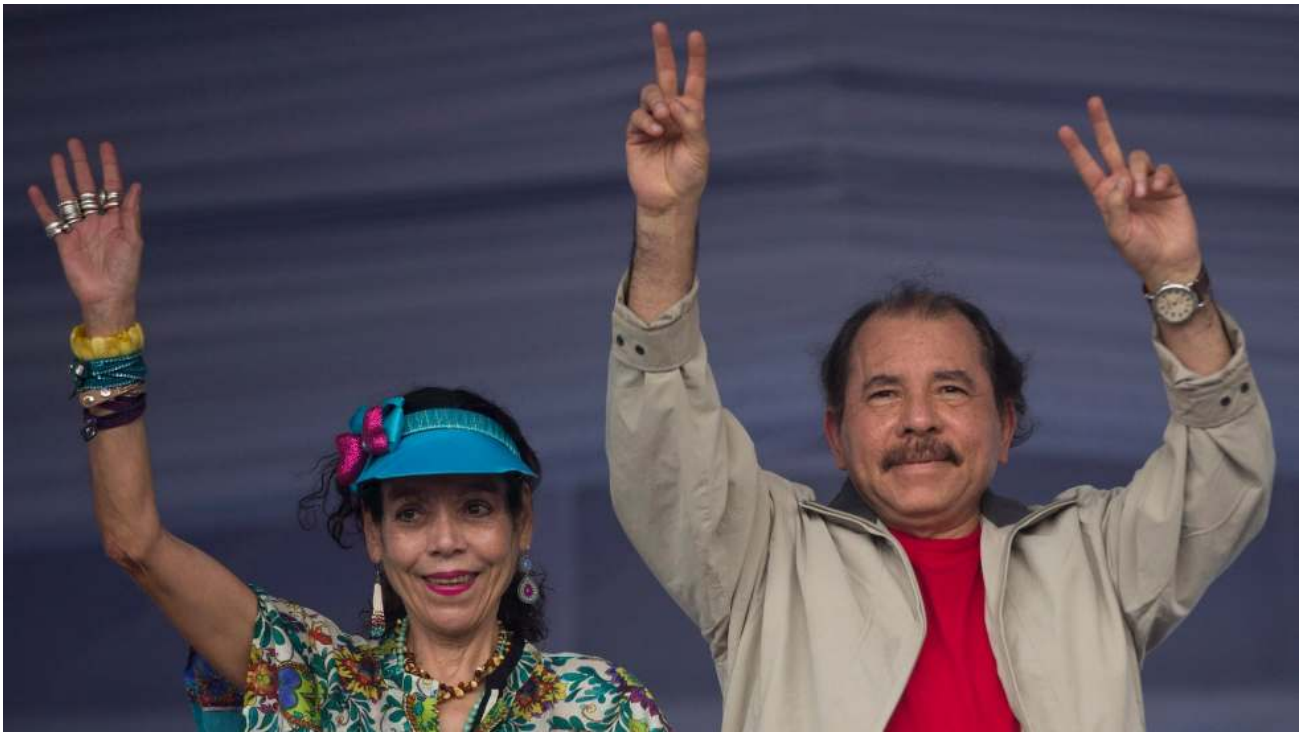
Six years after the massive protests of 2018, the system remains unchanged, political violence has increased and all opposition groups and dissenting voices have been silenced



Young people protest against the government of Daniel Ortega in Managua, Nicaragua in 2018.OSWALDO RIVAS (REUTERS)

Since 2018, the Nicaraguan police have stepped up repression every April, when citizens and government opponents commemorate the mass social protests that broke out against the regime of President Daniel Ortega and his wife, Vice President Rosario Murillo, and were crushed by a brutal paramilitary and police crackdown. This year is no different. Police have detained five people and increased their activities in the country’s main capital cities. The individuals arrested are relatives of protesters who died in the police crackdown and released political prisoners.

Since the social unrest of 2018, the political violence in Nicaragua has continued unabated. After six years of a sustained sociopolitical crisis, the regime is still capable of shocking the people with the extent of its terror: on Tuesday, April 15, the body of government opponent Carlos Alberto Garcia Suárez was found in the municipal dump of the city of Jinotepe. Ninety percent of his body was burned, completely scorched.



The president of Nicaragua, Daniel Ortega, and the first lady and vice president, Rosario Murillo, in Managua, Nicaragua.Esteban Felix (AP)

“Nicaragua has changed a lot since 2018,” Manuel Orozco, a political scientist at the Inter-American Dialogue, tells EL PAÍS. “The country went from a political crisis fighting to democratize and dismantle a nepotist infrastructure, to a tropicalized Taliban-style radicalization regime, supported by five pillars: criminalizing democracy and the Constitution; control of the State; fear with violence; international isolation and post-truth to guarantee the consolidation of a dynasty.”

The regime’s repression has dismantled every type of political and social organization in Nicaragua, including NGOs, media outlets, political parties, universities, peasant movements, environmentalists, feminists, critical businessmen and, recently, even the Catholic Church. What’s left of the opposition in Nicaragua is tiny. These groups operate in complete secrecy, and have zero margin for action. Nicaraguans have become used to living in fear and silencing their criticism of the government in order to survive. This, however, is still no guarantee that they won’t end up in prison, exile or, in the worst-case scenario, dead in a garbage dump.

These violations “have caused, and continue to cause, multiple additional human rights violations which are so far-reaching that they are impossible to quantify, thereby demonstrating the authorities’ intention to relentlessly incapacitate any opposition in the longer term,” the Group of Human Rights Experts on Nicaragua said in their latest report. What’s more, in addition to their absolute control of society, the Ortega-Rosario regime is preparing the family succession.

All signs indicate that Laureano Ortega Murillo, the opera-loving son of the presidential couple, is next in line. In 2012, his parents appointed him “presidential advisor for the promotion of investments, trade and international cooperation.” But it’s in the last two years that he has played a greater role, so much so that in December 2023, he appeared before a delegation of the Chinese Communist Party as “special representative of the secretary general of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN).” Only his father has ever held this position in the party. His mother, Rosario Murillo, the powerful “co-president,” is orchestrating the transition plan from behind the curtains.

“The dictatorship is consolidating itself. I do not agree with the optimistic messages that the dictatorship is in decline. What they are doing is cleansing themselves of internal adversaries, as they did with the purge in the Supreme Court of Justice, to then launch the line of succession, which is first Rosario Murillo and then Laureano,” says Eliseo Núñez, a former opposition deputy, who was stripped by the regime of his Nicaraguan citizenship.



Demonstrators protest in front of La Modelo prison to demand the release of political prisoners in Tipitapa, Nicaragua.Oswaldo Rivas (REUTERS)

Experts agree that, as long as these conditions are maintained, the Ortega-Murillo regime will continue to be there, ruling and filling the country's prisons with political prisoners, in an endless revolving door. As of April 2024, 138 citizens are in prison for political reasons, according to the Mechanism for the Recognition of Political Prisoners.

Exhibit 17

Trials via video call, disappearances and disease: this is what political prisoners are subjected to in Nicaragua

english.elpais.com/international/2024-02-21/trials-via-video-call-disappearances-and-disease-this-is-what-political-prisoners-are-subjected-to-in-nicaragua.html

Wilfredo Miranda Aburto February 21, 2024

Nicaragua

The Legal Defense Unit (UDJ) – a local NGO – denounces the 'coordinated action that reveals the instrumentalization of the state apparatus to repress' prisoners for political reasons



A woman protests outside El Chipote prison in Managua, the capital of Nicaragua, in 2018.Carlos Herrera (Getty Images)

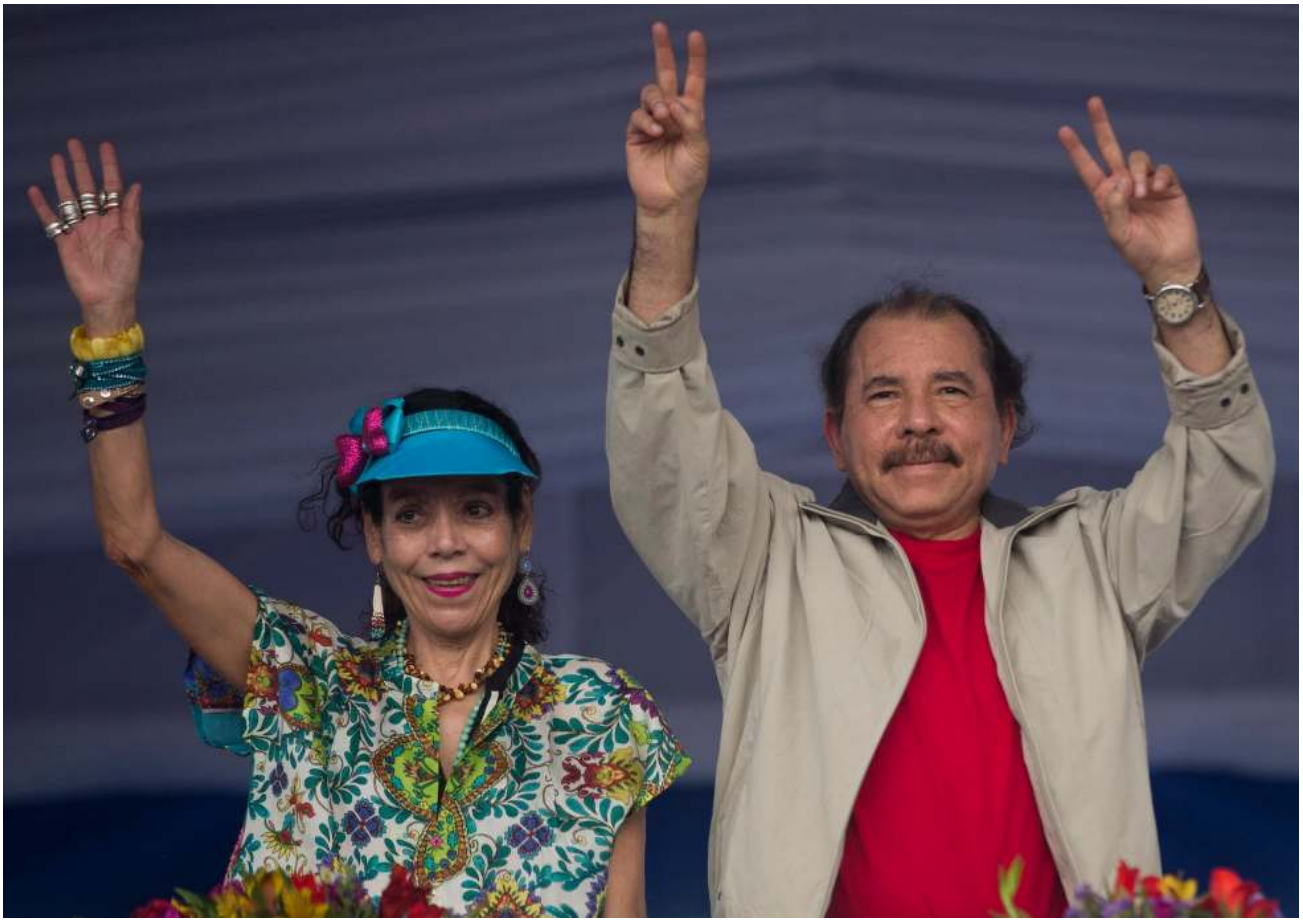
The jailers at La Modelo prison in Managua, the capital of Nicaragua, took student leader Jasson Salazar out of his cell on August 8, 2023. They sat him down in front of a computer. On the screen, through a video call, was the image of Judge Ulisa Yahoska Tapia Silva, head of the 13th Criminal Court of Managua. A "Zoom trial" began in which the young man didn't have a defense lawyer who understood the charges. In the same session he was found guilty of the crime of "undermining national integrity and spreading fake news."

Salazar is one of the more than 100 political prisoners being held in Nicaraguan prisons by the regime of Daniel Ortega and Rosario Murillo. The number was higher until just a little while ago, but this past January 14, Bishop Rolando Álvarez and 17 other Catholic clerics were taken from their cells and exiled to Rome.

The student leader's trial illustrates one of the new arbitrary practices of the Nicaraguan justice system, which is controlled by the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN), the ruling party. Nowadays, political prisoners aren't even taken to a court to be tried: instead, they're declared guilty through video calls. Lawyers also cannot know the file numbers or charges, so it's impossible to formulate any viable defense.

The Legal Defense Unit (UDJ), an organization that monitors the judicial processes of political prisoners in Nicaragua, catalogs virtual trials as a new repressive measure being used by the regime. But this isn't the only new pattern detected between August of 2023 and January of 2024. According to a report from the UDJ, various repressive methods reveal "the instrumentalization of the state apparatus to repress [political prisoners] in Nicaragua."

"Over the last six months, we've identified the following repressive patterns in the arbitrary detentions perpetrated by the state of Nicaragua: illegal raids, forced disappearances against people considered to be opponents or critics of state party politics, as well as trials being held via video call. [We have also observed] coordination between the penitentiary system and the police during interrogations, as well as the dire prison conditions, which include infestations of bedbugs," the report summarizes.



Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega and his wife, Vice-President Rosario Murillo.Esteban Felix (AP)

The arrests

The chain of arbitrariness begins with the arrests of opponents. In these cases, anguish is felt by family members, such as those of Freddy Quezada, a retired professor who was arrested on January 29, 2023 for making critical comments against the regime on social media. The arrest of the former university professor was coordinated by civilians, who oversaw three police officers. Since his arrest more than a year ago, his family has no knowledge of his whereabouts.

Exhibit 18

Nicaragua oppression is ‘tantamount to crimes against humanity’, says report

theguardian.com/world/2024/feb/29/nicaragua-daniel-ortega-un-human-rights

Guardian staff reporter

29 de fevereiro de 2024



A woman spray-paints ‘Freedom for political prisoners’ in Managua, Nicaragua, in 2020. Photograph: Inti Ocón/AFP/Getty Images

UN-backed human rights experts have accused Nicaragua’s government of systematic human rights abuses “tantamount to crimes against humanity”, implicating a range of high-ranking officials in the government of President Daniel Ortega.

The allegations follow an investigation into the country’s expanding crackdown on political dissent. The Ortega government has gone after opponents for years, but it hit a turning point with mass protests against the government in 2018 that resulted in violent repression by authorities.

In the past year, repression has expanded to large swaths of society with a focus on “incapacitating any kind of opposition in the long term”, according to the independent group of UN experts investigating the issue since March 2022.

The experts do not speak for the world body, but work under a mandate from the human rights council.

“Serious systematic human rights violations, tantamount to crimes against humanity, continue to be perpetrated by the Nicaraguan government for political reasons,” the group said in a statement.

Jan Simon, an expert who headed the investigation, said at a news conference on Thursday in Geneva that the Nicaraguan government’s persecution targets “all forms of opposition, whether real or perceived, both domestically and abroad”.

The state has targeted civilians, including university students, Indigenous and Black Nicaraguans, and members of the Catholic church. Children and family members are now targeted simply for being related to people who raise their voices against the government.

Ortega’s government has repeatedly said that the mass demonstrations against it in 2018 constituted a failed coup attempt orchestrated by the United States, and typically defends any repression as a crackdown on anti-government plots.

The government did not immediately respond to an emailed request for comment about the report on Thursday.

The human rights report, which came after hundreds of interviews, implicated a number of high-ranking officials in crackdowns that have firmly consolidated power in the hands of Ortega and his vice-president, Rosario Murillo.

The report says Gustavo Porras, the head of the country’s national assembly, pushes through legislation to facilitate repression. It says Marvin Aguilar García, the head of the supreme court, takes direct orders from Ortega’s government, and commands lower-level judges to fall in line. Meanwhile, the office of country’s chief prosecutor, Ana Julia Guido Ochoa, fabricates evidence against real or perceived opponents, the report says.

The experts also cite high-ranking officials in the country’s interior ministry, the governmental body regulating migration and the body regulating non-governmental organizations.

Simon said the government’s “centralization of power not only ensures impunity for perpetrators, but also undermines efforts towards accountability”.

“The government has ensured that it remains in an increasingly solid bubble to perpetuate itself in power and annihilate anyone attempting to break that bubble,” he said.

Exhibit 19

A “spy” on every corner of Nicaragua

gatoencerrado.news/2021/02/23/un-espia-en-cada-esquina-de-nicaragua

GatoEncerrado February 23, 2021



“From time to time he would look up at the face that was staring at him from the opposite wall.

"BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU."

George Orwell. 1984.

CEvery time Dr. Arnoldo Toruño leaves or enters his house, someone is watching him. When he goes to the supermarket or runs any errand, a head peering out from a neighboring window diligently observes this respected doctor, originally from the city of León in western Nicaragua. The log of his movements ends up in the hands of the Sandinista Front's departmental apparatus, the ruling party that spies on all citizens considered critical by the administration of President Daniel Ortega and Vice President Rosario Murillo.

Dr. Toruño knows very well who is watching him, but prefers to omit the person's name out of respect for a long-standing neighborly relationship, even though that respect is not reciprocated. The watchful neighbor is a government supporter and is at the forefront of a national structure established at the highest political levels for territorial control in Nicaragua. This network is one of the fundamental pillars of the Ortega-Murillo authoritarian regime.

Like the neighbor who spies on this public health doctor, there are thousands of Sandinista militants throughout the country conducting covert surveillance through the Citizen Power Councils (CPCs) and Citizen Power Cabinets, according to security experts. The core idea behind this structure was established in November 2007, at the beginning of Ortega's presidency, with the aim of distributing social programs and carrying out proselytizing activities. But since April 2018, when the sociopolitical crisis erupted in Nicaragua, they have operated openly as a political espionage apparatus.

Dr. Toruño has experienced surveillance firsthand on numerous occasions since 2018, following his participation in civic protest marches. “Some people are watched more than others… For example, a few months ago I lent my truck to a nephew to run an errand. My nephew went to the house of someone connected to the party, and a few hours later that person received visitors who asked if he was 'betraying the party.' Undoubtedly, there are neighbors who carry out this task of spying and reporting,” recounts this doctor, a public health specialist and former dean of the Faculty of Medical Sciences at the National Autonomous University of Nicaragua (UNAN-León).

This doctor's home has been attacked on several occasions by Sandinista supporters, as evidenced by the graffiti on the wall that reads the euphemism "peace and good," a slogan associated with the Ortega-Murillo government. Photo: Wilfredo Miranda | Divergentes.

The surveillance goes so far that if several cars park at Dr. Toruño's house for a family party, the security guard informs the Sandinista Front's departmental headquarters about the movements. Starting in 2018, after the citizen uprising, a new protocol was implemented by this espionage network in cases like this: the ruling party notifies the police, and officers from the Directorate of Special Operations (DOEP) raid the monitored individual's home.

This structure operates in coordination with the police, the armed force that maintains a de facto state of siege in the country, to suppress any hint of social protest. Dr. Toruño suffered an illegal raid on his home by officers from the DOEP (Department of Special Operations) and the anti-narcotics division. Some thirty officers with dogs stormed the house , under the pretext of searching for drugs. They found no trace of narcotics, but the police set a precedent for trampling on citizens' rights: invoking a drug search as a pretext for raiding a home without a warrant.

“The CPCs are multipurpose. They support vaccination campaigns and conduct censuses, but they also carry out surveillance work,” Dr. Toruño reports.

“Direct democracy”

Rosario Murillo wields power just like her husband, President Daniel Ortega. She has orchestrated many organizations, such as the Family Cabinets and the Sandinista Youth, dedicated to proselytizing and espionage. EFE |

Divergent.

Questions soon arose regarding partisan favoritism in the distribution of aid, which delegitimized the CPCs. However, the most significant criticism was that Ortega and his wife, Rosario Murillo, were emulating the Sandinista Defense Committees (CDS) with the CPCs. The CDS, created in 1979 during the revolutionary period, initially carried out community work, but later shifted its focus to surveillance and information gathering on citizens within the context of the war between the Sandinista Army and the military forces of the so-called Contras.

“During the Sandinista revolution, it was more of a community-based organization, but some members of the CDS (Democratic Defense Councils) carried out that social control work,” explains sociologist Elvira Cuadra, one of Nicaragua’s leading security experts. Cuadra states that Ortega established the Citizen Power Councils (CPCs) in 2007—upon returning to power—due to the “low legitimacy” of the incoming government. Ortega won the presidency thanks to a pact with the liberal leader Arnoldo Alemán, through which he lowered the electoral threshold to just 35% of the vote to win the election in the first round.

“In 2007, Ortega faced a society before which he lacked sufficient political legitimacy. He knew that to govern, he would need coercion,” argues Elvira Cuadra. “To carry out his personal political project, which is also economic, he established the CPCs from the outset as a mechanism for surveillance and social control, thereby containing expressions of discontent.”

Ortega even attempted to elevate the CPCs to constitutional status. However, in 2007, the Supreme Court still retained a degree of independence and rejected the president's proposal. Despite this, the government continued establishing CPCs in the health and education sectors, as well as in the highly controversial area of citizen security.

“The National Police were given the order to coordinate with the CPCs in the territories. From that decision, a network of repression and social control was established. The CPCs also served as mechanisms for identifying what would later be known as shock groups or mobs, made up of at-risk youth,” Cuadra explains.

In 2008, municipal elections were held in Nicaragua. Election observers and the opposition documented “massive fraud,” which sparked citizen protests. The government responded by deploying shock troops to repress the discontent, including members of the CPCs (Community Participation Councils), who claimed to be defending “the revolution.” Elvira Cuadra asserts that in that same year, this structure of political surveillance and control was operating at full capacity. “They use it as a network of informants at the local level, approaching them to gather information on individuals of interest.”

As Ortega consolidates his authoritarian power, he diversifies social control by creating organizations such as the Sandinista Youth (JS) and the Sandinista Leadership Councils (CLS) within public institutions. All of these bodies work hand in hand with the Armed Forces.

The CPCs suffered a decline in popularity as a concept in 2013. That same year, the Parliament, controlled by the Sandinista Executive, legally incorporated into the Family Code the 'Family, Community and Life Cabinets', which are a new version of the CPCs, but incorporated into a legal framework.

“Ultimately, the CPC or Family Cabinet are people who live behind the window. If the person went to the store, they take note; if they saw an unusual visitor arrive at the home of the person under surveillance, they take note. They are constantly reporting both what is usual and what is unusual,” Cuadra asserts.

Rosario Murillo wields power just like her husband, President Daniel Ortega. She has orchestrated many organizations, such as the Family Cabinets and the Sandinista Youth, dedicated to proselytizing and espionage. EFE | Divergent.

Surveillance is a part of Dr. Toruño's life. He faces it with a resilience forged over years, having spent almost his entire life dealing with authoritarian regimes. “During the Somoza dictatorship, there was surveillance, but it was focused more on combatants, Sandinista guerrillas in that context. What's happening now is unparalleled,” the public health specialist asserts. “You know you're being watched and that there are neighbors, at least one on the block, who have that spying role. Once, the son of a professor from the medical school came to ask me for advice. They saw him at my house, and then the police came and confiscated the boy's motorcycle,” Dr. Toruño recounts.

From 2018 onward, the surveillance of Dr. Toruño's movements took on a more violent tone: his house was stoned at midnight and riddled with machine gun fire. The facade stands as a stark reminder of the surveillance and harassment. Sandinista supporters wrote the slogan "Peace and Life" on the wall, a phrase repeated ad nauseam by the government. It is, rather, a euphemism that reminds the doctor, like Winston Smith in George Orwell's novel *1984* , that "Big Brother" is watching him every day.

In response to these allegations, the authorities remain silent. There is no access to public information, and all attempts to obtain an official statement have been met with complete silence. *Otras Miradas* sought comment from Argentina del Socorro Parajón, president of the Health and Safety Commission, but received no response.

Complaints from neighbors

The CPCs were conceived upon Ortega's return to power as a citizen participation organization, but that function has been diluted into political activities. EFE | Divergent.

“The surveillance was so intense that if my husband played songs associated with the anti-government protests at home, a police patrol would show up in less than 20 minutes,” the woman recounts. “Before 2018, this Family Cabinet was practically inactive. They would sometimes hold meetings to discuss

community issues, but they never invited anyone. During the year of the protests, they suddenly started spying,” Hurtado González adds.

Sociologist Elvira Cuadra explains that 2018 was a watershed year for all the control and surveillance mechanisms. They began operating at full capacity. “Each body has its function. The function of the CPCs, or Family Cabinets, is to maintain surveillance over people linked to the various expressions of the civic movement. In 2018, they played a key role, identifying local leaders and handing over lists to higher levels of the party and the police. Many of the people on those lists ended up in prison.”

Exhibit 20

They denounce the “modus operandi” of the CPC and Sandinista Youth in neighborhoods and public institutions

confidencial.digital/politica/denuncian-modus-operandi-de-los-cpc-y-juventud-sandinista-en-barrios-e-instituciones-publicas

Iván Olivares March 28, 2023

Asidehu report detects “invisible patterns” of espionage in human rights violations in Nicaragua



Supporters of the Sandinista National Liberation Front gathered in Managua. // Photo: CCC

A report by the Intercultural Association for Human Rights (Asidehu) identified “invisible patterns” of human rights violations in Nicaragua between 2018 and 2023, among which the definition of the *modus operandi* used by the Sandinista Front to repress and control citizens they consider opponents stands out.

The 30-page document, published in the third week of March in San José (Costa Rica), presents a compendium of “all those constant violations of citizens' rights, which are not documented because they are not reported, so they are not in any report, they are not in the media, nor are they condensed in a document that reflects that pattern of behavior,” said Jhoswel Martínez, president of Asidehu, and main author of the text.

Watching for 'traitors'

Focusing on the Sandinista Front's *modus operandi* , Martínez noted that “many say that the CPC [Citizen Power Councils] and the JS [Sandinista Youth] repress and compile lists, but they don't say how. We detail step by step in the Report: What is their orientation? What is their order and hierarchy? How do they act? How do they repress? What do they investigate about the victims?”

In detailing the *modus operandi* used to intimidate citizens, the document states that the victims of these graffiti “are not chosen at random, but there is a 'well-founded' reason why graffiti is done on their houses, based on lists prepared by people affiliated with the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN), which include the location, name and other data of the victims.

According to the complaints and testimonies, these 'affiliated people' are part of the 'Citizen Power Councils (CPC)', who guide the armed and police groups, based on the specific guidelines dictated beforehand by the local political secretary of the FSLN, who indicates whether the aggression will be to make graffiti -or burn- the house; utter verbal threats, or give a police summons, according to the 'level of betrayal', or 'danger', that is assigned to the person.

The complainants explain that this 'level' is determined by having participated in opposition demonstrations, or other actions of dissent; by expressing opinions against the Government on social networks, by being neutral, by not participating in partisan activities, and even by not being liked by the person in charge of collecting the information, who may be a State worker or a supporter of the FSLN.

Another possibility is that the CPC will send investigators through the Sandinista Youth and the police, who will monitor his social media and conduct "preventive visits" to invite him to participate in party activities, or he will be harassed. If he is not home, a formal invitation to FSLN events will be left for him, and if he does not attend or does not accept the invitation, he will be accused of being a traitor, his level of "danger" being measured by his reaction.

The spying on public workers includes the assignment of 'points' for participating in proselytizing acts - even though it is mandatory - under penalty of being included on the

party's 'blacklist', and from there to the 'blacklist' of the CPC of the area where they live, reminding them that "only Sandinistas can be public employees."

Various forms of harassment

Some of the consequences of that 'investigation', or 'preventive visit', may be a false accusation of verbal or physical assault, made by the person in charge of the 'visit'; a false accusation for cybercrimes, especially if they find any 'inappropriate' publication on social networks; or a summons to sign a commitment agreement, promising to desist from any action that puts the FSLN at risk.

Another possibility is that he will be threatened on social media, either through defamatory posts, preventive messages, or death threats, always at the direction of the CPC, using 'bots' and fake accounts, which are replicated by other fake accounts.

If the option is to vandalize the victim's house with graffiti, party supporters, usually members of the Sandinista Youth, are instructed to do so in the early morning hours. They may also leave warning messages or threats, or proceed directly to telephone harassment, with calls at various times from unknown or private numbers, threatening death or saying things like, "Terrorist, we know where you live and what you do," to intimidate and psychologically torture them.

On other occasions, they send messages and threats, including firing bullets at the house; leaving projectiles, banners, or handwritten letters containing threats; bags containing bombs and other devices; and the ever-effective harassment of the home, which is directed by the CPCs and can be carried out by FSLN and Sandinista Youth motorcycle brigades, although the police can also be involved when the victim is considered a real threat. In this case, a police patrol parks in front of the victim's house, taking photos of those entering and leaving, and preventing the victims from leaving.

“All these acts are carried out under the protection of the judicial system and the security forces, so in most cases it is impossible to report these events,” the document states, adding that victims also do not report them for fear of being arrested or receiving further reprisals.

The attacks against the Church

More than a third of the text focuses on illustrating how freedom of belief is persecuted and the Church is attacked, detailing “the violations of freedom of belief , as well as the illegal detentions, criminalization and judicialization of priests, persecution of lay people linked to them ; the closure of Catholic news media which in turn represents a violation of the right to press and expression.”

Exhibit 21

“We’re Being Forced to Attend”: Workers Ordered to Bring a ‘Guest’ to Fill the Square on July 19

confidencial.digital/en/english/were-being-forced-to-attend-workers-ordered-to-bring-a-guest-to-fill-the-square-on-july-19

Iván Olivares July 17, 2026

Public employees report threats of dismissal unless they attend and bring a guest to create the appearance of mass support at FSLN events



Los seleccionados para asistir al acto del 19 de julio son en su mayoría trabajadores estatales, pero también asisten jóvenes y partidarios radicales del FSLN. Foto: CCC

The propaganda apparatus of the regime of Daniel Ortega and Rosario Murillo has flooded its media outlets with images of dozens of events commemorating the victory of the 1979 Sandinista Revolution. Behind the carefully edited photographs that portray large, spontaneous crowds, however, lies a different reality: state employees are being compelled to participate in these events, which culminate on July 19 with the main rally at Plaza de la Fe, while giant screens in municipalities across the country will broadcast the proceedings. But in

2026, there is a new requirement: those who are “bused in” must bring at least one or two “guests” to help fill the venue.

The order to “go to the square” is nothing new, nor is the effort to monitor attendance by taking roll at the beginning and end of every event to determine who showed up—and who stayed through the final speech. This year, however, authorities have added another requirement. Just as employees must register themselves on a list using their national ID number, they must also provide the name and ID number of the person accompanying them. There are no exceptions.

The reason is that in 2026, the main celebration will return to the expansive Plaza de la Fe rather than the much smaller Plaza de la República. The need to fill the larger venue—or at least make it appear full on television broadcasts, including those shown on giant screens set up in town squares and municipalities—explains why attendees are now being required to bring additional people with them.

CONFIDENCIAL spoke with four public employees who were “chosen” to attend the main event, where Ortega and Murillo are expected to appear. To protect their identities, they are identified by pseudonyms: César, a government employee; *Anselmo*, a university professor; *Jimena*, a university graduate who could only find work as a teacher with the Ministry of Education; and *Félix*, a general practitioner.

No one was given a choice. They have to go to the square and bring someone with them.

César: “They Want to Fill the Square with People Who Were Forced to Go”

All public employees have been told to bring a guest. The order was to take a friend or family member to the main rally. They say the goal is to reach a crowd of about 57,000 people.

And we already know what will happen to public employees who fail to comply with this order. It means they are going to mobilize every single government worker, their relatives whether they want to go or not, and the few party loyalists they still have.

With all these people who have been pressured into attending, they want to project strength and claim they still have popular support ahead of the electoral spectacle they plan to stage in 2027.

Some of those selected will march through the streets or gather in municipalities to watch the event on giant screens. Others will be sent to Plaza de la Fe simply to fill out the crowd,

because they are determined to make it look completely packed.

Anselmo: “How Am I Supposed to Ask a Student to Go to the Square?”

I’m a professor at one of the universities that was confiscated by the government. A week ago, we were told that we had to attend the rally and that each of us had to persuade two students who are not members of UNEN, the pro-government National Union of Nicaraguan Students, to take part. In other words, two students who are not involved in any organized group. We were told this was mandatory.

I already knew I would have to attend the event. That has never really been a problem for me. What is a problem is having to bring two students, because young people don’t like going. The whole ordeal is exhausting.

I see it as very difficult and burdensome because I can’t force them to go, and I can’t ask them as a favor either. This is the kind of favor you ask of a friend, someone who might support you in a situation like this, not someone with whom you only have a teacher-student relationship. I’m their professor, not their friend, so I can’t ask them for these kinds of “favors.”

Jimena: “The Order Is That We Have to Go, Sick or Healthy”

When they told us we had to fill out a form committing to attend the rally on July 19, several of my colleagues said no. They explained that they were sick and not feeling well. The official response was that anyone with high blood pressure, the flu, or asthma should simply bring their medication. The only people exempt are pregnant women.

I don’t agree with forcing employees to go to the square because our rights aren’t being respected. We don’t have the right to choose or to say yes or no. I’m a trained professional. I have a university degree. The truth is, I don’t like going to these events. They don’t interest me, but I do it to keep my job.

Now it’s not just that I’m being forced to go. I also have to bring someone with me. I asked my daughter, but she refused because I told her that last year they cut off our internet access “for security reasons.” We weren’t even allowed to get up to go to the bathroom because the controls were so strict. They want everything to be tightly disciplined.

When we enter the square, we’re searched because we’re not allowed to bring anything except our ID card and our cellphone. No caps, no sunglasses, no water. We’re only allowed

to wear plain white T-shirts with no slogans, blue pants, and comfortable shoes. Last year they gave us water, but no food of any kind.

Then there's the problem of getting back home. Many of my colleagues have complained about that. Some said they wouldn't go no matter what, but I think they'll end up going because they have no other choice.

One of my colleagues wanted to ride there on her motorcycle with her husband so they would have a way to get home afterward. When the event ends, the area around the square becomes complete chaos, and it's hard to find the buses. You don't get home until very late, often after midnight, even if you live near Managua. If you go in your own vehicle, at least you know you'll have transportation and can get home earlier. But they didn't allow my colleague to do that.

Félix: "This Year the Controls Are Even Tighter"

I'm a medical professional. I've earned my position through my own work. Demands like these make me feel harassed and uncomfortable because of the pressure and constant surveillance we're subjected to. I'm not the only one who feels this way. My colleagues do too, but they have to accept it in silence because this is how they make a living. This is their primary source of income.

It's true that many of us have private practices, but the salary we receive from the Ministry of Health is still our main source of income. Most people have a house or a car that they bought on credit because hardly anyone can afford to pay cash. This job provides the salary that covers those monthly payments. Being on a formal payroll also gives you greater financial credibility when applying for a loan, especially if you work for a government institution.

That's why most people give in to these kinds of abuses.

Although we were instructed to bring someone with us, I don't have anyone I can take. I know that could create problems for me, but not showing up at all would be even worse.

This is the first year they've required us to bring a guest, at least in our department of the Ministry of Health. It's also much harder to avoid attending now because they take attendance, we have to provide our national ID number, and we're picked up at a designated meeting point to board a bus.

Denis Enrique Tapia Maltez **File No. A. 240-744-477**

Proof of Service

On this day, I, Otavio Haverroth Silva, served a copy of the following documents:

RESPONDENT'S COUNTRY CONDITIONS IN SUPPORT OF ASYLUM AND WITHHOLDING OF REMOVAL

To the following:

Office Location:	**Mailing Address:**
Office of the Principal Legal Advisor Department of Homeland Security 100 Montgomery Street, Suite 200 San Francisco, CA 94104	US Immigration and Customs Enforcement US Department of Homeland Security Office of the Principal Legal Advisor P.O. Box 26449 San Francisco, CA 94126-644

by:

☒Through the EOIR Courts and Appeals System (ECAS), which will automatically send service notification to both parties that a new document has been filed.



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