

# URGENT ACTION

## RELEASED ACTIVISTS STILL FACE CHARGES

The 13 activists arrested on 14 November 2019 after giving water to a group of people on hunger strike to demand the release of their relatives were among the 91 people released on 30 December 2019. However, they still face charges and will be brought to court on 30 January 2020. According to local groups, 65 people detained in the aftermath of the April 2018 protests remain in prison. We urge the Nicaraguan authorities to drop all charges and immediately release all those detained solely on the grounds of exercising their right to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.

**TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER**

*Daniel Ortega Saavedra, President of Nicaragua  
c/o Minister for Foreign Affairs  
Del cine González 1 c. al Sur,  
sobre Avenida Bolívar,  
Managua, Nicaragua  
Twitter: @DenisCanciller*

*Dear President Ortega,*

*I write to express my concern about the continued persecution and criminalization strategy in Nicaragua since the April 2018 protests took place. According to local organizations, despite the recent release of 91 detainees, 65 people remain in prison. Moreover, the charges against 13 activists arrested on 14 November 2019 after giving water to a group of people on hunger strike demanding the release of their relatives haven't been dismissed and they continue to face trial.*

*I urge you to uphold the rights of these persons to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, to drop all charges against them, and to immediately release all people detained for exercising their basic rights.*

*Yours sincerely,*

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On 18 April 2018, protests broke out following the government's attempt to implement unpopular and non-consulted social security reforms. These protests were met with violent repression. According to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, the crisis has resulted in the deaths of 328 people and more than 2,000 injuries. Moreover, civil society figures establish that more than 700 have been arrested. Furthermore, 300 health professionals were dismissed from their jobs and 144 students have been expelled from the UNAN (National Autonomous University of Nicaragua). About 80,000 Nicaraguans have fled to neighbouring countries, 68,000 of whom were seeking asylum in Costa Rica as of August 2019, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Over 100 journalists and media workers have been forced into exile.

The Government has failed so far to fulfil its commitment, made in March 2019, to release all people detained solely for exercising their right to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly since 18 April 2018. An Amnesty Law was approved by the National Assembly of Nicaragua on 8 June 2019. Following this approval, 56 people were released on 11 June 2019. However, new cases of repression have been reported ever since then. On 16 May 2019, Eddy Montes (57), a Nicaraguan and U.S. citizen, was shot dead at La Modelo prison in Managua. He and others who were injured had been arrested for participating in the 2018 protests. On 14 November 2019, the Nicaraguan police detained and imprisoned at least 13 activists while leaving the San Miguel Parish Church in Masaya (Nicaragua). The activists were giving water to a group of people on hunger strike to demand the release of their relatives, who were detained for participating in the protests of 18 April 2018.

On 30 December 2019, according to the government of Nicaragua, 91 people were released as a gesture of "national reconciliation". Among them were 13 activists arrested on 14 November 2019 and other people detained in the aftermath of the April 2018 crisis. For instance, María Guadalupe Ruiz Briceño (22), student and activist, who, according to the Nicaraguan Initiative of Women Human Rights Defenders (Iniciativa Nicaraguense de Defensoras de Derechos Humanos) and the Legal Defence Unite (Unidad de Defensa Jurídica), was arbitrarily detained with violence by the police on July 2019.

In the report "[Instilling terror](#)", Amnesty International concluded that one of the central planks of this repressive policy was the Nicaraguan state's persistent efforts to criminalize opponents, referring to anyone who protested against the government as "terrorists" or "coup plotters" to justify its own violent actions. Since then, protests have continued demanding substantial change to the status quo. One year and a half after the beginning of the crackdown on protests, Amnesty International continues to receive reports of arbitrary detentions and torture of persons deprived of their liberty. Civil society organizations whose legal status was cancelled by the government (including the Nicaraguan Centre for Human Rights - CENIDH) remain unable to freely carry out their work in the country, and the harassment of journalists and human rights defenders continues. Attacks against freedom of expression and peaceful assembly indicate an ongoing strategy to suppress dissenting voices.

**PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET:** Spanish

You can also write in your own language.

**PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL:** 30 January 2020

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

**NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN:** People in jail after more than a year and a half since the beginning of the crisis (They, them, theirs)

**LINK TO PREVIOUS UA:** <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr43/1423/2019/en/>