

URGENT ACTION

ACTIVISTS RELEASED STILL FACE ACCUSATIONS

Sixteen Nicaraguan activists detained in November 2019 for giving water to a group of people on hunger strike were released on 30 December 2019, but still face charges. The trial of the “Aguadores”, as they are known, was scheduled for 30 January, but got postponed. According to local organizations, 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,
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Dear President Ortega,

I write to express my concern about the continued harassment 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 16 activists arrested on 14 November 2019 for giving water to a group of people on hunger strike haven't been dismissed and they continue to face charges.

I urge you to uphold these persons right 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 injured. Moreover, civil society figures establish that more than 700 have been arrested. Besides, 300 health professionals were dismissed; 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 them are seeking refuge in Costa Rica until 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 were arrested for participating in the 2018 protests. On 14 November 2019, the Nicaraguan police detained and imprisoned 16 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 that started on 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 16 activists arrested on 14 November 2019 and other people detained in the aftermath of the April 2018 crisis. A hearing was scheduled for 30 January 2020, but it did not take place. According to local organizations, they weren't formally notified about the suspension of this hearing.

In the report "*Instilling terror*", Amnesty International concluded that one of the central plank of the Nicaraguan government repressive policy was the 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, demanding substantial change to the status quo continued. One year and a half after the beginning of the crackdown on protests, Amnesty International still receives 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.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Spanish

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 17 March 2020

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

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: 16 activists (They, them, theirs); 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/amr43/1652/2020/en/>