



STATEMENT

WE CONDEMN THE WAVE OF KIDNAPPINGS OF PRIESTS PERPETRATED BY THE DICTATOR DANIEL ORTEGA IN NICARAGUA

In Nicaragua, religious freedom is flagrantly violated and persecution against the Catholic Church is growing. In the last three weeks, the dictatorship of Daniel Ortega has unjustly kidnapped and imprisoned at least 14 priests who were carrying out pastoral and worship functions typical of the Christmas period.

In total there are 18 Catholic religious imprisoned: 2 bishops (Rolando Álvarez, from Matagalpa and Isidoro Mora, from Siuna), 13 priests and 3 seminarians. Added to this number are the deportation of 12 other priests in October 2023, the expulsion of the nuncio Waldemar Stanislaw Sommertag and the Sisters of Charity in 2022; and the forced exile of Silvio Báez, auxiliary bishop of Managua, in 2019.

Over the past five years, the Sandinista dictatorship has committed over 740 attacks against Catholics, including kidnappings, imprisonments, forced exiles, church and radio station closures, death threats, desecrations of churches, and bans on public acts of faith. In 2023 alone, 275 such attacks were executed, marking it as the most violent year against the Church within the five-year timeframe. These actions transpired solely because the Church does not yield to the regime.

Furthermore, as it's evident, for years there has been no political freedom in Nicaragua, and human rights are systematically violated: elections are fraudulent, dozens of opposition members are imprisoned, hundreds are exiled and stripped of their citizenship, over 3,000 civic organizations are shut down, more than 200 journalists live in exile, numerous media outlets are closed, and over five hundred people have died due to repression since 2018. We stand in solidarity with all the families of the victims.

We call on the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights for Central America, and the Organization of American States and its Human Rights System for a stronger stance and a more effective articulation to stop this persecution. Finally, we extend our unwavering support to the members of our network in Nicaragua, as well as to all our friends and allies courageously defending fundamental freedoms on the front lines during this challenging period for their country.

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