



INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS NETWORK

OF ACADEMIES AND SCHOLARLY SOCIETIES

June 18, 2018

The International Human Rights Network of Academies and Scholarly Societies (H.R. Network) is an alliance of more than 80 national academies and scholarly societies that defends the fundamental rights of fellow academics and health professionals worldwide and supports academic and medical institutions that are under threat. We, the members of the H.R. Network's Executive Committee, are deeply concerned about recent well-documented reports of widespread rights abuses in Nicaragua. These abuses have been associated with attacks on institutions of research and higher education and interference with the work of health care personnel.

Since mid-April 2018, violence connected to social protests has reportedly led to the death of over 100 individuals, mostly students and other young people, and resulted in the injury and arbitrary detention of hundreds more. According to the preliminary observations of an Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) working visit to Nicaragua (May 17-21), the situation has been characterized by the use of excessive force by State security forces and armed third persons with the aim of "dissolving the protests and inhibiting citizen participation". Several UN human rights experts have also highlighted violence and harassment by the government against protestors. These actions are inconsistent with Nicaragua's binding obligations under the American Convention on Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which guarantee the rights to life, liberty, freedom of speech, and freedom of assembly.

Many of the brutal attacks that have occurred since April have taken place on or around university campuses, and university personnel who have spoken out about such attacks have been the target of threats and harassment. The erosion of safety and security in Nicaragua's universities has already had a negative impact on the state of research and education in the country, and it threatens to have broader adverse consequences for Nicaraguan society.

We are also alarmed by reports that the above-mentioned incidents of violent repression have been compounded by interference with the principle of unhindered access to medical care and treatment of individuals in need, and that some public hospitals have refused emergency care to individuals injured in demonstrations. In the case of demonstrators who have died, some public hospitals have also reportedly refrained from arranging autopsies to document the cause of death.

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Academies in the Network support and promote the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, assist unjustly incarcerated nonviolent professional colleagues, address grave science-related human rights issues, and advocate for member institutions whose independence is threatened.

(The U.S. National Academies, non-profit, non-governmental honorary societies, host the Network secretariat.)

www.nas.edu.hnetwork

We therefore call upon Nicaraguan authorities, in line with the country's international legal obligations, to guarantee the exercise of the rights to freedom of expression and assembly and to put an end to the violence, arbitrary detention, threats and harassment used to inhibit individuals from expressing their views on social issues. We also request that Nicaraguan authorities take immediate steps to prevent interference with access to health care by individuals in need, as well as interference with cause-of-death documentation.

We strongly urge all individuals in the country to abstain from attacks on research and higher educational institutions in the country, to allow teachers and students to pursue their work in safety.

Finally, we ask that Nicaraguan authorities provide for an independent, transparent investigation into human rights abuses in the country and hold accountable those found to be responsible.

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