

**Congress of the United States**  
Washington, DC 20515

June 15, 2021

The Honorable Antony Blinken  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We write to urge a firm and swift U.S. Government response to Nicaragua's rapid descent toward consolidating a one-party dictatorship. As you know, in little over a week the Ortega regime has unlawfully arrested seven opposition leaders and several other individuals affiliated with the political opposition or non-governmental organizations. All are facing meritless legal charges, devoid of substantial evidence, as part of a concerted effort to criminalize dissent. Under international law, these arrests are considered serious human rights violations and arbitrary detentions. Given the rapid pace of repression, we expect the situation to escalate and the emboldened regime will continue targeting vulnerable civil society actors including youth activists, journalists, and religious leaders in the coming days and weeks.

The proximity to Nicaragua's elections is not a coincidence. Ortega intends to silence his challengers and prevent a free and fair electoral process. Any hope for a legitimate electoral process is rapidly deteriorating with this state-sanctioned campaign to eliminate the political opposition.

The actions of the Ortega-Murillo regime merit an unequivocal and immediate response. We appreciate and fully support the June 9<sup>th</sup> sanctions on four members of Ortega's inner circle. We urge you to continue working with the Treasury Department to apply further targeted measures against individuals in the military, police, and justice ministry who have ordered and carried out these human rights violations. Every effort should be made to coordinate sanctions with Canada, the European Union, and regional partners in Latin America and the Caribbean. We also ask that you exercise U.S. leadership within the Organization of American States' (OAS) Permanent Council to review consequences for Nicaragua's violations of the Inter-American Democratic Charter and its prolonged failure to comply with OAS-mandated electoral reforms.

The U.S. and international partners must apply targeted diplomatic and economic pressure on the Ortega regime's inner circle while minimizing residual consequences for the Nicaraguan people. Prior to two recent, devastating hurricanes and the poorly managed pandemic, Nicaragua was already the second-poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. We are taking all of this into consideration as we call for individual sanctions against officials who undermine democracy,

commit human rights abuses, or engage in acts of corruption, which do not target the broader population.

We join your call for the immediate and unconditional release of Cristiana Chamorro, Juan Sebastián Chamorro, Félix Maradiaga, Arturo Cruz, Violeta Granera, Mario Arana, Jose Adan Aguerri, and the more than 120 political prisoners currently being held in Nicaragua. We stand ready to work with you in support of the Nicaraguan people's effort to reclaim their democracy.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,



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Albio Sires  
Chairman  
Western Hemisphere Subcommittee



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Gregory Meeks  
Chairman  
House Foreign Affairs Committee



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Mark Green  
Ranking Member  
Western Hemisphere Subcommittee



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Michael McCaul  
Ranking Member  
House Foreign Affairs Committee



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Ted Deutch  
Member of Congress



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Maria Salazar  
Member of Congress



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Stephanie Murphy  
Member of Congress



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August Pfluger  
Member of Congress

Joaquin Castro

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Joaquin Castro  
Member of Congress

*Darren Soto*

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Darren Soto  
Member of Congress

*Karen Bass*

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Karen Bass  
Member of Congress

*Adam Schiff*

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Adam Schiff  
Member of Congress

*Vicente Gonzalez*

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Vicente Gonzalez  
Member of Congress

*Young Kim*

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Young Kim  
Member of Congress

*Adam Kinzinger*

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Adam Kinzinger  
Member of Congress

*Juan Vargas*

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Juan Vargas  
Member of Congress

*Debbie Wasserman Schultz*

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Debbie Wasserman Schultz  
Member of Congress