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Federica Mogherini

High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission

Brussels, 11 January 2019

Dear Ms. Mogherini,

The undersigned Members of European Parliament write to express our appreciation for your continued interest in the evolving situation in Nicaragua. Your public statements on Nicaragua earlier this year were tremendously welcome. Today, we ask you in your capacity as a senior leader of the European Commission to take immediate action on the deteriorating situation in Nicaragua. Over the past few weeks, President Daniel Ortega's government has launched a targeted campaign against non-governmental organizations working on human rights issues and has taken additional measures to silence independent media outlets. This political crisis has continued to put the lives of innocent civilians at stake and threatens the stability of an already uncertain region. We urge you to act for the protection Nicaraguan civil society and independent media against the government's repressive measures.

Since the initial student-led protests began in April 2018, the government has launched an offensive against civilians and all independent institutions in the country. Peaceful protesters were met with disproportionate violence by the anti-riot police and government sanctioned vigilante groups. According to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), since the protests broke out, 325 people have been killed, more than 300 arbitrarily detained, and thousands injured. Following these events, we welcomed your confirmation that the EU would support the National Dialogue to help restore rule of law to the country.

Unfortunately, the Ortega government has targeted those who would represent the public interest in such negotiations. Civil society activists, rural community leaders, religious leaders, and journalists are being systematically targeted with arrests and violence. On December 12, the Ortega-controlled parliament stripped the legal registration of five prominent civil society organizations and Confidential, one of the few independent media outlets left in Nicaragua. Even more troubling, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Bachelet announced on December 21 that the Ortega government has expelled the two IACHR monitoring missions which "means there are now virtually no functioning independent human rights bodies left in Nicaragua."



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We believe that all dissident voices in Nicaragua are under immediate and tremendous danger. Just before Christmas, two journalists Lucía Pineda Ubau and Miguel Mora were reportedly detained in the infamous jail, El Chipote. Among many independent journalists who have been targets of the government's recent repression, Carlos Fernando Chamorro, director of Confidential, and Sofia Montenegro, a veteran journalist and Confidential contributor - fear they are at immediate risk of arrest or assassination by the Ortega government. We urge you to use all available EU mechanisms to safeguard their safety and lives as soon as possible.

In recent history, our European Union has taken a vested interest in Central America, including Nicaragua, through development initiatives. Through EuropeAid, we have been proud to support a substantial portfolio of EU thematic projects in Nicaragua which amount to over €35 million for the 2014-2020 period. This portfolio largely includes projects focused on human rights, gender equality, food security, and support to local and non-governmental organizations. In the seven years prior to that, EuropeAid allocated €214 million towards many of the same priorities. The actions of the Ortega government today directly undermine European efforts to aid democracy and human rights in Nicaragua. As you are aware, thousands have been forced to flee the country as a result. Already, neighboring Costa Rica has reported receiving over 24,000 asylum applications. Therefore, solving the crisis in Nicaragua is an important interest of the region and Europe.

In the face of escalating repression, it is clear that the government does not intend to engage in, or even permit the presence of, "dialogue on justice and democracy," as you implored it to undertake in your July letter to the Foreign Minister of Nicaragua. Further action must be taken. We request that you publically and categorically demand that President Ortega cease the repression of civil society organizations and individuals, return the legal status and items confiscated from the raided organizations, and rescind the expulsion of the IACHR observation missions. The lives and dignity of thousands of people, as well as the defense of citizenship, civil society, and democratic institutions, not only of Nicaragua, but of the entire region, depend on this.

Best regards,

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Beatriz Becerra Basterrechea (ALDE)

Michal Boni (EPP)

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