

Daniel Ortega
 President of Nicaragua
*via fax, in care of Nicaraguan Embassy in
 Washington, DC: 202.939.6545*

Dionisio Marengo
 Mayor of Managua, Nicaragua
*via fax, in care of Nicaraguan Embassy in
 Washington, DC: 202.939.6545*

April 13, 2008

Dear Sirs:

We are appalled at the situation of the more than **1600 workers** who earn their living by scavenging for recyclable material in **Managua's municipal garbage dump "La Chureca."** The streets of Managua are full of garbage as a result of their blocking the entrance to the site to protest against the local authorities who extract the most valuable materials from the garbage trucks' loads before they reach "La Chureca." Authorities at the Health Ministry and National Disaster Prevention System have issued a health alert against possible epidemics.

Gustavo Porras, leader of the National Workers Front (FNT), with which the workers are affiliated, has suggested that the city government offer its low paid garbage collectors a bonus and other benefits in compensation for not extracting the best quality recyclable material. But dumping better quality waste is NOT a solution.

According to a study by the Two Generations Center, a non-profit agency that works to support the workers, over 500 of the "Chureca" workers are between the ages of 7 and 18. Furthermore, according to the findings of an investigation by the National Autonomous University of Nicaragua (UNAN), over 30% of the children who work in the garbage dump to help scavenge for materials that they can sell and for discarded food scraps to feed their families, are contaminated with lead, mercury and DDT. We agree with Walter Calderon of the Two Generations Center that the protest reflects the "very tip of the iceberg of a profound social problem. . ." It pits the miserably poor municipal garbage collectors against the desperately poor scavengers of "La Chureca."

We urge that you act quickly to

- find ways to move the scavenger workers out of "La Chureca" and train them so that they can be employed in productive and healthy endeavors;
- implement the city government agreement signed earlier this month with Spain's International Cooperation Agency (AECI) to finance a project to close the dump.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this tragic conflict in which all sides are right and the only ultimate solution is to eliminate the need for people to survive by living and "mining" a toxic garbage dump.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Coordinator

cc: Paul Trivelli, US Ambassador to Nicaragua; via fax: 011-505-266-3861
 Arturo Cruz, Nicaraguan Ambassador to the US, via fax: 202.939.6545
 Nicaragua Desk at the US State Dept; fax: 202-647-2597
 Paolo Carozza US member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights~ via fax: (202)458-3992
 US Senators Brown & Voinovich and US Representatives Kaptur, Kucinich, Latta, LaTourette, Regula, Ryan, Tubbs Jones ~ via email

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The following people hereby urge you to take action on this matter as indicated in this letter: