

via fax: 011 505 266 1222
Sr. Presidente Daniel Ortega
President of Nicaragua

via email: agranera@policia.gob.ni
Sra. Aminta Elena Granera Sacasa
Director General of the National Police of Nicaragua

January 1, 2017

Dear President Ortega and Director General Granera Sacasa:

We are concerned about the use of police violence against the movement of people organizing resistance to the Grand Inter-oceanic Canal project.

Eleven people were injured on November 29, 2016, after clashes broke out with riot police acting against demonstrators in Nueva Guinea, a municipality in the South Caribbean Coast Autonomous Region (RAAS). Francisco Díaz, deputy director of the federal police, said riot police used tear gas and rubber bullets.

Francisca Ramírez, Coordinator of the Council for the Defense of Our Land, Lake and Sovereignty, said that other protests were postponed because of the violent repression by police in Nueva Guinea. "We decided not to go on with it because we want to show that we love peace, that we are not violent."

Protests across Nicaragua are increasing as it becomes more apparent that construction on the canal is about to begin. In the Pacific coastal city of Brito, engineers have been conducting geological surveys and marking up the area. Farmers have been paid \$3,000 to allow surveys of their land. More than 500 acres have been purchased by the Chinese developer HKND for road-widening.

Thousands of landowners along the 178-mile route have been rallying against the appropriation of their property. Meanwhile, police have been harassing opposition leaders (cf our letter Dec 11, 2016).

"We believe the canal law creates a state within a state. It allows the expropriation of land to launder ill-gotten funds on projects that are outside the jurisdiction of the authorities," said Violeta Granera, whose civil society group, Movement for Nicaragua, has supported the opposition movement and demanded greater transparency.

We strongly urge that you

- listen to the concerns being expressed by Nicaraguans about the environmental destruction and human displacement that will result from the construction of the Grand Inter-oceanic Canal
- respect the right of Nicaraguans to organize and demonstrate their opposition to the canal
- do not use violence, harassment, or acts of reprisal against opposition movement leaders

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Co-Coordinator

copies: Francisco Obadiiah Campbell Hooker, Ambassador of Nicaragua to the US ~ via fax: 202.232.8643
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Esmeralda Arosemena de Troitiño, Rapporteur for Nicaragua, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202 939 6542
Francisco José Eguiguren Praeli, Rapporteur for the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202 458. 3650
US Senators Brown & Portman and US Representatives Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Renacci, Ryan ~ via email

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