

via fax: 011 505 266 1222

Sr. Presidente Daniel Ortega
President of Nicaragua

March 23, 2017

Dear Sir:

We are very disturbed about the threats to indigenous rights defender **Lottie Cunningham Wren**, lawyer and founder of the Center for Justice and Human Rights of the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua (CEJUDHCAN).

On February 28 she received threatening messages from an unknown person posted on CEJUDHCAN's Facebook page. The individual demanded that the organization cease its activities or it would "have war, and war means blood." On March 17 messages posted on CEJUDHCAN's Facebook page demanded that she and other human rights defenders cease their work "against the government and people of Nicaragua" and that they should be "treated as the trash they are." The threat included pictures of Lottie Cunningham Wren and other human rights defenders, including Vilma Nuñez de Escorcía and Francisca Ramírez.

Lottie Cunningham Wren is working in 124 remote communities to help indigenous peoples exercise their legal rights to protect natural resources. In 2001 she was an expert witness in the *Awás Tingni vs. Nicaragua* case before the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, which resulted in an outstanding land rights victory for indigenous peoples throughout the Americas. Her work endeavors to implement that decision and help communities on the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua determine their land boundaries and obtain their land titles. In May 2015 she suffered a kidnapping attempt and her colleagues received threatening phone calls warning them against speaking out. In 2016 the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), issued a precautionary measure in favor of CEJUDHCAN members because of the violence against them. The Government has failed to properly implement the measure.

This is further evidence of harassment, threats, and intimidation of women human rights defenders. On March 8, women Ministers and Vice-Ministers of the Nicaraguan government issued a letter in which refuting the eligibility of **Vilma Nuñez de Escorcía** to receive the International Women of Courage Award, for which she was nominated at the US Embassy's celebration of International Women's Day. Vilma Nuñez de Escorcía, the Founder and President of the Nicaraguan Centre for Human Rights (CENIDH), has worked for more than 56 years for the implementation of human rights, including the abolition of torture, mediation of conflicts, and liberation of political prisoners.

We believe these threats are attempts to silence the voices of human rights defenders. We therefore **strongly urge** that you

- carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the threats against CEJUDHCAN's staff and other human rights defenders, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- ensure that government officials or other public figures refrain from making statements or declarations stigmatizing the legitimate work of Vilma Nuñez de Escorcía and other human rights defenders;
- take all necessary measures, to guarantee the security of Lottie Christopher Wren, Vilma Nuñez de Escorcía, and the staff of CEJUDHCAN
- immediately implement the IACHR precautionary measure in favor of CEJUDHCAN

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Co-Coordinator

copies: Francisco Obadiah Campbell Hooker, Ambassador of Nicaragua to the US ~ via fax: 202.232.8643
Laura Farnsworth Dogu, US Ambassador to Nicaragua ~ via fax 011-505--266-3861
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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
Margarette May Macaulay, Rapporteur for the Rights of Women, 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: