

Sr. Presidente Daniel Ortega
 Palacio Nacional
 4 Calle Noroeste
 Managua, Nicaragua, 11001

September 23, 2018

Dear President Ortega:

We are concerned about the criminalization of student leaders and activists in Nicaragua.

On September 10, twenty masked members of paramilitary groups and police officers arrested student leader **Amaya Eva Coppens**, age 23, and **Sergio Midence Delgadillo**, age 30. Police detained them in a house in Leon and then moved them to El Chipote prison. Their family and lawyers were only notified of their detention the next day. The police stated in media reports that they are responsible for acts of “terrorism,” “arson,” “assaults,” and “illegal possession of firearms.” During the first 48 hours of their detention, they had not been formally presented before a court (as required by law) and communication with their families was not permitted.

Amaya Coppens, a Nicaragua-Belgian medical student, and a leader of the 19th of April Student Movement, has previously been attacked, intimidated, insulted and beaten by government supporters and police forces during protests. Because of death threats on social media she was forced to move out of her house for three months.


We are aware that many student organizations that have been organizing demonstrations in Nicaragua since April are being backed by right-wing interests, many receiving funding from the US government. The National Endowment for Democracy (NED), a private nonprofit organization funded by US taxpayers, is known to be promoting regime-change in your country. The NED funds right-wing advocacy groups like Freedom House, which has paid for student leaders from Nicaragua to fly to Washington, DC, to meet with right-wing legislators in the US Congress. We are aware that the NED is spending millions of US taxpayers’ dollars to fund dozens of conservative groups in your country, many of which are calling for you to leave office, even some that claim to be independent human rights organizations.

We are appalled by the US government’s meddling in your internal affairs. We are skeptical of many of the reports of human violations occurring in Nicaragua. Nonetheless, we call on your government to restrain from attacking and criminalizing protesters, regardless of who is backing their efforts.

We **urge** that you

- respect the due process rights of student leaders, activists, and other protestors detained, including their timely presentation in courts, and access to their families and lawyers of their choosing
- end the strategy of persecuting, detaining and criminalizing students and other activists who are exercising their legitimate right to freedom of expression

Sincerely,


 Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Co-Coordinator


 Christine Stonebraker-Martinez

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
 Sarah Rupert, Nicaragua Desk, US State Dept ~ via email
 Inter-American Commission on Human Rights: Antonia Urrejola (Nicaragua), Edison Lanza (Freedom of Expression) ~ via email
 US Senators Brown & Portman and US Representatives Beatty, 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: