

via email [presidencia@presidencia.gob.ni](mailto:presidencia@presidencia.gob.ni) and US mail  
**Sr. Presidente Daniel Ortega**  
President of Nicaragua

via email [presidencia@presidencia.gob.ni](mailto:presidencia@presidencia.gob.ni) and US mail  
**Rosario Murillo Zambrana**  
Vice-President of Nicaragua

January 13, 2019

Dear President Ortega and Vic-President Murillo Zambrana:

We are deeply alarmed by the raid on December 21 of independent television news channel *100% Noticias* in Managua and the arrest of two of its journalists: **Miguel Mora Barberena**, the station's owner and director, and **Lucía Pineda Ubau**, the station's news director. The channel has been banned from broadcasting.

The two journalists were rushed through court appearances with no access to legal representation. They are accused of crimes including "inciting violence and hate" and "promoting terrorism." To date, the government has not presented any evidence to support the charges against these journalists who have taken a lead role in their channel's reporting of protests occurring in the country since April. They remain in pre-trial detention.

The raid at *100% Noticias* is the latest of many hostile attacks on media during 2018. On April 20 there was an arson attack on *Radio Dario* in León. On April 21 reporter Angel Eduardo Gahona was shot and killed on camera while reporting on protests in Bluefields (cf our letter of April 30, 2018). On December 13 riot police ransacked the Managua offices of the independent news website *Confidencial* and two affiliated television programs, confiscating equipment and documents. On December 19, the government expelled two independent monitoring bodies set up by the Organization of American States' Mechanism of Special Monitoring for Nicaragua (MESENI) just one day before the scheduled release of their report on human rights violations during protests last spring.

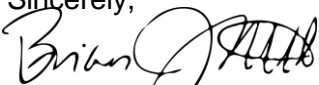
We are aware that many news organizations in Nicaragua are backed by right-wing interests; some receive funding from outside Nicaragua, including the US government's National Endowment for Democracy (NED). We are aware that the NED has spent millions of US taxpayers' dollars to fund dozens of conservative groups in your country, many of which are calling for you to leave office.

While we are skeptical of many of the reports of human violations occurring in Nicaragua, we, nonetheless, call on your government to stop attacking news outlets and criminalizing journalists, regardless of who is backing their efforts. Freedom of the press must remain intact, especially during this period of political crisis.

Because we believe that a free and independent media is vital to the functioning of a healthy democratic society, we **strongly urge** that you

- immediately release Miguel Mora Barberena and Lucia Pineda Ubau;
- put an end to actions designed to intimidate and shut down independent media;
- stop police raids on newsrooms, return all seized equipment and documents, and allow news outlets to work without fear of violent reprisal, interference, or arrest.

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  
Kevin Sullivan, US Ambassador to Nicaragua ~ via fax 011-505-266-3861  
Rafael Díaz, 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, Gonzalez, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Ryan ~ via email

Jan 7\_CPJ\_Nicaragua

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