

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

January 24, 2020

Dear President Ortega:

We, members of the InterReligious Task Force, are deeply distressed over the shooting and attempted kidnapping of the son and nephew of women's rights defender **Reyna Isabel Rodríguez Palacios**.

On January 5, in Ciudad Sandino, Managua, at approximately 7pm, **Álvaro Antonio Báez Rodríguez** (age 33, son of Reyna Rodríguez Palacios) and **Andison Francisco Chávez Rodríguez** (age 27, her nephew), were intercepted by armed paramilitary agents in a gray Toyota Hilux, who tried to kidnap them. As the victims ran to escape, their assailants chased them and fired gunshots at them several times. One was wounded with a shot in his left heel; the other was grazed by a bullet on his scalp. They sought emergency treatment.


Reyna Isabel Rodríguez Palacios is an active member of MAM (Movimiento Autónomo de Mujeres de Nicaragua). MAM has historically been independent of any political party alignment; nonetheless, Reyna Isabel Rodríguez Palacios is active in the Blue and White National Unity Party and was recently elected to the party's Political Council. She has experienced harassment at home. Police and paramilitary forces have been surrounding and surveilling her home. The surveillance activity and the attack against her son and nephew appear to be in retaliation for her political party activity in opposition to the Sandinista government.

We are aware that many organizations in Nicaragua that are opposed to your government have been 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. 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 (like MAM) that claim to be independent human rights organizations. Between 2014 and 2017, the NED sent \$4.2 million to opposition groups in Nicaragua for the purpose of "democracy promotion" (i.e., "regime change").

We are concerned about violence targeted against human rights defenders, including those politically opposed to your government. We condemn the attack on Álvaro Antonio Báez Rodríguez and Andison Francisco Chávez Rodríguez. We strongly urge you to take the following actions:

- conduct an independent, effective and impartial investigation into the attack on Álvaro Antonio Báez Rodríguez and Andison Francisco Chávez Rodríguez, publish the results, and bring the perpetrators to justice
- end the surveillance and any harassment of Reyna Rodríguez Palacios
- consult with Reyna Rodríguez Palacios (who was granted precautionary measures by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in September of 2018) to create measures to protect her physical and psychological integrity

Sincerely,


 Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Co-Coordinator


 Christine Stonebraker-Martinez

copies: H.E. Denis Ronaldo Moncada Colindres, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Nicaragua, Permanent Ambassador to the Organization of American States ~ via email
 Francisco Obadiah Campbell Hooker, Ambassador of Nicaragua to the US ~ via email
 Kevin Sullivan, US Ambassador to Nicaragua ~ via US mail
 Rafael Díaz, Nicaragua Desk, US State Dept ~ via email
 Margarete May Macaulay, Rapporteur on the Rights of Women, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email
 Antonia Urrejola, Rapporteur for Nicaragua, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email
 US Senators Brown & Portman
 US Representatives Beatty, Fudge, Gibbs, González, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Ryan ~ via email

01/08/20_IMDefensoras_Nicaragua

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