

Embassy of Nicaragua  
Ambassador H.E. César Augusto Castañeda Lacayo  
Wolvendaellaan 55  
1180 Ukkel  
BELGIUM

Your Excellency,

I am writing to express my concern about the situation for freedom of religion and belief (FoRB) in Nicaragua.

Human rights organizations report that members and leaders of religious or belief communities have been unlawfully imprisoned without a trial and subjected to exile or prevented from re-entering the country. Contrary to Nicaraguan law, religious institutions have been subjected to collection of property taxes and some have had their bank accounts frozen. In contravention of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), signed and ratified by Nicaragua in 1980, church members reportedly avoid attending church services, fearing to become a target of the authorities. The freedom of religious expression has been unrightfully limited, following the prohibition of displaying religious symbols in public.

Furthermore, it is of great concern that international human rights bodies such as the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) have been expelled from Nicaragua.

Your Excellency, I am aware that the Constitution of the Republic of Nicaragua stipulates in Article 69 of Chapter III on Social Rights, in Title IV: Rights, Duties and Guarantees of the Nicaraguan People, that all people, individually or collectively, have the right to express their religious beliefs in public or private, including through worship, practices, and teaching. According to this article, “No one may evade the obedience to this law, or impede others from exercising their rights and fulfilling their duties by invoking religious beliefs or dispositions”.

I therefore humbly call on Your Excellency’s intervention, to ensure that the Republic of Nicaragua will:

- Release without condition imprisoned religious leaders and all political prisoners unjustly detained, and restore Nicaraguan citizenship to all those from whom it has been arbitrarily removed;
- Reinstatement of the legal status of all civil society organizations that have been arbitrarily made illegal; and unfreeze the bank accounts of universities, non-governmental organizations, and religious groups throughout the country; and cease the illegal collection of taxes from religious institutions, exempt under Article 5 of Executive Decree 3-95 on Real Estate Tax;
- Allow international human rights bodies, including the IACHR, the OHCHR, the UN Group of Experts, and relevant Special Procedures, unhindered access to the country;
- Uphold, in law and practice, guarantees of fundamental human rights, including FoRB, for the Nicaraguan people in line with the Nicaraguan constitution and the ICCPR to which the State is a signatory.

Sincerely,