

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 20, 2019

The Honorable Michael Pompeo  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20520

The Honorable Steven Mnuchin  
Secretary of the Treasury  
U.S. Department of the Treasury  
1500 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable Mark Green  
Administrator  
U.S. Agency for International Development  
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Secretary Pompeo, Secretary Mnuchin, and Administrator Green:

We are writing to express our grave concerns regarding the political and humanitarian crisis that continues to unfold in Nicaragua. A year and a half after state-sanctioned violence against protestors opposed to the authoritarianism of Daniel Ortega's government left 325 people dead, the country remains in a de facto state of siege. We would like to request more information regarding the Administration's policy on further efforts to hold individuals responsible for human rights violations and efforts to restore democracy to Nicaragua through a negotiated settlement.

In March 2019, negotiations between the opposition Civic Alliance and the Nicaraguan government resulted in two agreements: the release of all political prisoners and the restoration of all civil liberties, including the reinstatement of media outlets. However, President Ortega has willfully failed to fulfill both agreements and has refused to negotiate further. His government has continued to kidnap and arrest citizens—including political prisoners it previously released under the agreement. As of December 2019, there are reportedly 161 political prisoners who are subjected to inhumane conditions, including physical and psychological abuse. The list of detainees includes thirteen members of the Unidad Nacional Azul y Blanco—leading human rights activists—who, last month, were illegally detained and falsely charged for reportedly trying to bring water to family members of political prisoners.

The government has also been completely unwilling to respect civil liberties. Cities remain militarized, with a significant presence of police and paramilitary forces preventing marches and other expressions of civic protest, and other repressive actions including intrusive surveillance, intimidation, persecution, threats, kidnappings and arrests.

In response to these human rights violations, the Treasury Department imposed targeted sanctions on nine high-ranking Nicaraguan government officials earlier this year for their role in

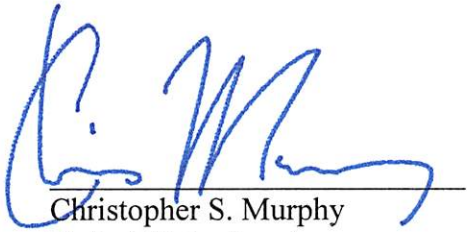
subverting fundamental freedoms of Nicaraguan citizens. These sanctions sent a powerful message that the U.S. prioritizes accountability for those who commit human rights abuses in Nicaragua. They also demonstrate to President Ortega that there are consequences for refusing to negotiate in good faith with the opposition.

We respectfully request:

1. A briefing to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee by the Treasury Department regarding:
  - a. The Administration's strategy and plans to sanction other members of Ortega's "inner circle" who are responsible for human rights violations or undermining the negotiations process, as well as the conditions for sanctions to be lifted;
  - b. An update on the Treasury Department's actions to comply with the requirement in the *Nicaragua Human Rights and Anticorruption Act of 2018* (Public Law No. 115-335) that the Secretary of Treasury instruct the U.S. executive directors to the international financial institutions to vote against loans to the Government of Nicaragua except to address basic human needs or to promote democracy, and on the status of work with other donor countries to develop policies to advance human rights in Nicaragua.
2. A briefing to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee by the State Department and USAID regarding:
  - a. The Administration's efforts to coordinate next steps with the European Union, especially implementation of the framework the EU adopted in October to allow targeted sanctions, including travel bans and asset freezes, against Nicaraguan individuals to push the government back towards substantive negotiations and to deter repressive conduct going forward;
  - b. The Administration's plan to build international pressure, particularly at the United Nations and the Organization of American States, on the Nicaraguan government to honor the agreements it struck with the Civic Alliance in March, and to resume talks with a focus not only on electoral reforms, but also on a plan to address the country's recurrent cycles of violence and to conduct impartial investigations into last year's events, including alleged state-sanctioned killings;
  - c. Efforts to assist the over 80,000 Nicaraguans who have fled to Costa Rica, and whether the Administration is engaging with, or providing support to, the displaced Nicaraguan community in Costa Rica, as well as any plans to assist overwhelmed Costa Rican migration authorities and provide financial support to humanitarian organizations working to alleviate the grim living conditions for Nicaraguan refugees and Costa Rican host communities;
  - d. The status of efforts by the State Department and USAID to engage with civil society groups in Nicaragua.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



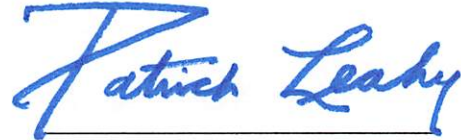
Christopher S. Murphy  
United States Senator



Ted Cruz  
United States Senator



Benjamin L. Cardin  
United States Senator



Patrick Leahy  
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator