

NICARAGUA



Since 2018, massive anti-government protests against Nicaragua's Ortega regime have resulted in widespread, systematic attacks against civilians and human rights defenders—sliding the country toward a humanitarian crisis as physical and economic insecurity and supply shortages increase.

Country Context

After taking office in 2007, the Ortega family has consolidated power and, increasingly, engaged in acts of corruption and impunity. In April 2018, student protests broke out in response to social security pension reforms. Following excessive repression by the government, similar protests quickly erupted across the country. National police and parapolice groups respond to anti-government protests with excessive force, using live ammunition against crowds of demonstrators. Despite efforts to promote a National Dialogue, the situation is deteriorating.

How is the U.S. Involved?

Congress passed the bipartisan Nicaragua Human Rights and Anticorruption Act in 2017, which supports democratic governance measures and applies targeted sanctions against members of the Ortega family and regime. In 2019, the U.S. and Canada announced joint sanctions, which helped bring Ortega back to negotiations.

On-the-Ground Perspective

- The Ortega family has called protesters “terrorists” and used anti-terrorism laws to crack down on protestors and civil society organizations. In 2018, the government stripped nine organizations of their registration, effectively forcing these organizations to close. The government has shuttered independent media outlets, detained their property and equipment, and imprisoned journalists.
- The government bans marches and protests organized by the opposition, impeding rights to peaceful assembly, while National Police and state-sponsored paramilitary troops continue to kidnap and arrest citizens arbitrarily. On average, five to ten people are detained weekly.

Responses and Actions

- CARE, in partnership with Cargill, is building food and nutrition security and climate change resilience through the She Feeds the World program. The program works with women, while engaging men and boys, to strengthen their skills and confidence in sustainable agriculture, financial inclusion, and market engagement.
- PCI has collaborated with the U.S. Department of Agriculture and a local NGO since 2013 to implement the Food for Education program, which improves student literacy and health by providing daily breakfast, teacher training, and materials. It reaches 77,000 students and nearly 1,000 schools each day.

References available at [interaction.org/2020globalsituationreport](https://www.interaction.org/2020globalsituationreport).

Key Figures



Over 80,000

Nicaraguans have fled the country since April 2018



Almost 30%

of the population lives in poverty



328

people have been killed in protests



Over 130

political prisoners remain in detention



7%-11%

projected economic decline in 2019

