

Consolidation of a Dictatorship in Nicaragua and the Impact on U.S. National Security

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Nicaragua's Political Crisis: Ortega's Assault on Democracy
Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere, Transnational Crime, Civilian
Security, Democracy, Human Rights, & Global Women's Issues
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Chairman Curtis, Ranking Member Kaine, and members of the Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere, Transnational Crime, Civilian Security, Democracy, Human Rights, & Global Women's Issues, thank you for this opportunity to address the Subcommittee as part of this hearing on "Nicaragua's Political Crisis: Ortega's Assault on Democracy."

I have spent 30 years working to strengthen democracy and human rights in Latin America and the Caribbean, including living and working for approximately 12 years in Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, and Nicaragua. I have worked in Nicaragua for nearly seven years and have been engaged in electoral and coalition-building processes in the country since 2005, giving me practical experience with the country's political and human rights landscape.

The organization I represent—the National Democratic Institute (NDI)—is a non-profit, non-partisan, non-governmental organization that believes a world rooted in freedom—where people have a say in how they're governed and with leaders who are accountable to the people—fosters more stability, security, and prosperity for everyone. NDI envisions a world where democracy and freedom prevail, with dignity for all. We are privileged to work with exceptional individuals whose tireless efforts for freedom make the world a safer, more secure and prosperous place.

NDI has worked in Latin America and the Caribbean for more than 40 years, supported by several international assistance organizations, including the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), the State Department, and private foundations. Today, NDI has two subregional offices in Colombia and Guatemala. The Institute regularly engages other countries in regional programs on strengthening election integrity, representative political parties, responsive and accountable democratic governance, organized and peaceful citizen participation, and resilience to kleptocracy and foreign authoritarian influence. NDI's work with civic activists, reform-minded government officials and legislators, and political parties across the democratic political spectrum at national and local levels gives us a unique perspective on the region's challenges. Our work and partnerships span senior political leaders to grassroots activists and inform the observations that follow.

State of Democracy in Latin America

As Madeleine Albright, the late Secretary of State and former Chairman of NDI for two decades, said, "I believe in democracy because democracy is the only system that believes in us." We know that when people have the choice, they choose democracy. By canceling elections, purging and expelling political opponents, and brutally repressing dissent across international borders, the Nicaraguan regime is attempting to ensure that its citizens no longer have that choice.

The 2026 Latin American Public Opinion Project at Vanderbilt University's survey found that despite improved perceptions of economic and security conditions, Latin Americans remain deeply disappointed with the performance of their governments.¹ Indeed, democracies in the Americas continue to be challenged by corruption, the infiltration of state institutions by criminal organizations, the consolidation of power and related closing

¹ <https://www.vanderbilt.edu/cgd/resource/2026-americasbarometer/>

of political space by populist and authoritarian leaders, and China's growing political and economic influence.

Nowhere in the Western Hemisphere has democracy deteriorated more dramatically than in Nicaragua. The Central American country is the only one in the world governed by a husband and wife acting as joint presidents. This move followed sweeping constitutional changes that came into effect in early 2025 and elevated First Lady and Vice President Rosario Murillo to the position of co-president alongside her husband, President Daniel Ortega.² Eight of the nine children hold key official and administrative positions within the family dynasty, with Laureano taking on the relationships with China and Russia.³ The only exception is Zoilamérica, the eldest daughter of Rosario Murillo, who lives in exile after denouncing her stepfather, Daniel Ortega, for sexual abuse.

On July 19, 2026, President Daniel Ortega—the longest-serving president in the Western Hemisphere—announced the elimination of elections, brazenly confirming that he has no intention of maintaining even the pretense of a representative democracy.⁴ It is no surprise that Nicaragua is now ranked among the least free countries in the world.⁵ According to the 2026 *Freedom in the World* report, the country has experienced the second-largest decline in political and civil liberties of any country, losing 49 points over the past two decades.⁶

Why Nicaragua Matters

I want to thank the Subcommittee for holding this hearing, which brings much-needed attention to President Ortega and his wife and Co-President Rosario Murillo's assault on democracy in Nicaragua. Supporting freedom and democracy in Nicaragua reflects our nation's most cherished values. It is both a moral call to action and a matter of strategic importance.

Nicaragua has increasingly aligned itself with China, Russia, and other adversarial authoritarian governments. These alliances raise serious concerns about those who seek to undermine U.S. interests by having a platform for their operations—less than 2,000 miles from our southern border. Furthermore, the Ortega-Murillo regime's expanding kleptocratic network, together with the growth of transnational criminal activity, poses significant regional challenges. Promoting democracy and freedom in Nicaragua is not merely a matter of sound U.S. foreign policy consideration; it also has important national security implications.

² https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/nicaraguan-congress-passes-ortega-backed-reform-excluding-opposition-elections-2026-09-02/?st_source=ai_overview

³ <https://english.elpais.com/usa/2021-04-20/nicaraguas-political-dynasty-heirs-in-a-golden-cage.html>

⁴ <https://www.npr.org/2026/07/24/nx-s1-5903259/nicaraguas-president-ortega-says-there-will-be-no-more-elections-extending-his-rule>

⁵ https://v-dem.net/documents/54/v-dem_dr_2025_lowres_v1.pdf

⁶ <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2026/growing-shadow-autocracy>

Authoritarian Influences

Authoritarian leaders learn from each other and are adept at finding alternative international partners, such as China and Russia, that help them overcome isolation from democratic countries. Nicaragua broke its diplomatic ties with Taiwan in December 2021 after the Organization of American States (OAS), along with the European Union and democracies across the globe, declared that Nicaragua's presidential elections were not legitimate.⁷ In early 2026, the National Assembly authorized the presence of foreign military troops in Nicaragua, paving the way to greatly expand military presence by both China and Russia.⁸ At the 81st session of the United Nations General Assembly, Nicaragua's foreign minister said, "We take up the statements, principles and values expressed by the People's Republic of China...We share and support the struggle against fascism and the right to peace of the Russian Federation."⁹

China-Nicaragua relations

Since the People's Republic of China (PRC) and Nicaragua resumed diplomatic relations, the two countries have signed free trade and infrastructure agreements.¹⁰ Chinese companies are building infrastructure projects, including the expansion of the Punta Huete airport and the Corinto Port logistics center,¹¹ and are increasingly involved in Nicaragua's telecommunications sector.¹² As has occurred in other countries where authoritarian governments have consolidated power, Nicaragua has contracted Chinese companies to develop digital infrastructure that can enable expanded state surveillance and social control.¹³

According to a *Financial Times* analysis of Nicaraguan government data, 16 Chinese companies—mostly small and medium-sized—have won 80 mining concessions since 2023, more new concessions than all other miners combined. Together they cover 1.4 million hectares, or 11 percent of Nicaragua's territory.¹⁴ Nicaragua is expected to increase its gold exports this year by some 33 percent, from 600,000 to 800,000 ounces, boosting revenue for the regime.¹⁵ In Nicaragua's gold sector, the Ortega-Murillo regime has evaded sanctions by working with newly established Chinese firms and other corporate enablers to facilitate the opaque transfer of gold-mining concessions formerly held by sanctioned entities.

Many of the concessions overlap rainforest and Indigenous lands, where communities continue to face violent attacks, threats to their land, and the displacement of legitimate Indigenous authorities. A Nicaraguan civil society organization has documented concessions to 21 Chinese-operated mining companies, with 62 lots overlapping 18

⁷ <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/R48294>

⁸ <https://www.laprensani.com/2026/07/08/english/3734457-chinese-military-presence-in-nicaragua-draws-warnings-over-secrecy>

⁹ <https://gadebate.un.org/en/81/nicaragua>

¹⁰ <https://www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/nicaragua-trade-agreements>

¹¹ <https://www.expedientepublico.org/china-construye-un-aeropuerto-en-medio-de-la-nada/>

¹² <https://www.csis.org/analysis/nicaraguas-dictatorship-deepens-what-can-international-community-do>

¹³ <https://expedienteabierto.org/chinas-advance-in-nicaragua-an-update/>

¹⁴ <https://www.ft.com/content/452648fd-90d6-450f-9739-073f5b6a0d18>

¹⁵ <https://confidencial.digital/opinion/las-sanciones-de-estados-unidos-frente-a-la-cleptocracia-y-la-represion-de-la-dictadura/>

Indigenous and Afro-descendant areas, affecting roughly 25.5 percent of their communal lands and more than 160 rivers and 80 streams.¹⁶ The concessions have occurred without meaningful prior, free, and informed consultation and extend into protected areas, including the Bosawás Biosphere Reserve and Indio Maíz Biological Reserve, compounding threats to Indigenous rights, community security, and Nicaragua's remaining forests and water resources.¹⁷

Russia-Nicaragua relations

Nicaragua has had long ties with Russia, mostly centered on security alliances. It was emblematic that pro-regime thugs used the Russian Dragunov sniper rifle against civilians during the 2018 civil protests.¹⁸ The countries also maintain warm government-to-government relations, with the president of the Russian Duma visiting Nicaragua the day after Russia invaded Ukraine. In addition, the Russians have built a police training center, further enabling the regime's repression.¹⁹ Likewise, they have installed a land-based satellite station in Managua, which has reportedly been used for internal surveillance.²⁰

Consolidation of a Dictatorship in Nicaragua

A dark turning point

April 2018 seemed to herald a democratic watershed in Nicaragua's history. Widespread grassroots protests rose spontaneously over poor government handling of fires on Indigenous community land reserves and later over social security policy changes affecting the elderly. The moment turned dark, however, as a threatened Nicaraguan government responded to the peaceful mobilizations with an onslaught of repression that took more than 355 lives.²¹ The victims were mostly young men and women who perished at the hands of the police and pro-regime thugs, as documented in numerous human rights reports. Violent repression against anyone perceived to exhibit a flicker of opposition or resistance to the Ortega-Murillo authoritarian regime continues today.

In late 2020, the regime approved draconian laws that undermined fundamental freedoms and further eroded Nicaragua's rule of law. Ortega and Murillo used the legal system to shutter civic, religious, and educational institutions. More than 5,500 national and international civil society organizations, independent media outlets, charities, trade associations, and universities were deregistered and forced to close, including the organization I represent, the National Democratic Institute, which had an office registered in Nicaragua since 2006.²²

¹⁶ <https://www.infobae.com/nicaragua/2026/09/08/la-dictadura-nicaraguense-cede-26-mil-hectareas-mas-a-intereses-chinos/>

¹⁷ <https://fundaciondelrio-atlas-mineria.vercel.app/atlas/index.html>

¹⁸ <https://www.univision.com/univision-news/latin-america/russian-made-dragunov-sniper-rifle-instills-fear-in-nicaragua>

¹⁹ <https://www.csis.org/analysis/nicaraguas-dictatorship-deepens-what-can-international-community-do>

²⁰ <https://www.csis.org/analysis/nicaraguas-dictatorship-deepens-what-can-international-community-do>

²¹ Serious human rights violations persist in Nicaragua's drawn-out crisis, https://www.oas.org/en/iachr/jsForm/?File=/en/iachr/media_center/preleases/2026/064.asp&utm_content=country-nic&utm_term=class-mon,

<https://www.csis.org/analysis/nicaraguas-dictatorship-deepens-what-can-international-community-do>

²² <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2026/09/report-total-dismantling-democracy-nicaragua>

Sham elections

In November 2021 and 2022, illegitimate presidential, legislative, and municipal elections took place after opposition candidates were summarily arrested and jailed. Furthermore, in the lead-up to the March 2024 regional elections, the regime revoked the YATAMA (*Yapti Tasba Masraka Nanih Aslatakanka*, "Children of Mother Earth United") party's legal status, bringing to an end a 36-year-old Indigenous movement that had served as the only political force in the Caribbean coastal region.²³ Combined, the three sham elections completed the country's descent into a one-party state.²⁴ The Sandinista National Liberation Front (*Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional*, FSLN) party currently controls the executive, judicial and legislative branches; the military; all 153 municipalities; and both councils in the still-autonomous regions of the Caribbean coast.

Dismantling once-democratic institutions

Over the past couple of years, the regime has taken even more ominous steps to dismantle every check on executive power and permanently close the door to change through elections. The 2025 constitutional change abolished the separation of powers and provided authorities with a legal basis for revoking the nationality of individuals deemed responsible for "treason," a practice that began in 2023. On July 19, 2026, Ortega announced Nicaragua would not be holding elections.²⁵ Then, on September 1, the rubber-stamp National Assembly voted to amend the constitution again, this time to enshrine the concept of "co-presidency" and institutionalize their dynastic rule.²⁶ The expected constitutional changes in January 2027 would extend the presidential term from six to seven years, postponing the elections until 2028. The constitutional amendment also expands the Supreme Electoral Council's powers to outlaw political parties, effectively eliminating any real political competition.²⁷ Article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights recognizes the right to vote and to be elected in genuine, periodic elections; Nicaragua remains bound to this treaty.²⁸

Persecution of dissent

On February 9, 2023, President Biden secured the release of 222 Nicaraguan political prisoners to the United States.²⁹ This action likely resulted from high-level U.S. diplomacy, sanctions against Ortega-Murillo's family and their inner circle, and international pressure. The release of the political prisoners initially gave Nicaraguans hope that it might open the door to U.S.-Nicaragua dialogue about the country's democratic future.

That hope was quickly dashed. The National Assembly subsequently stripped the former political prisoners of their citizenship and assets.³⁰ After refusing to get on the flight to the United States, Catholic Bishop Rolando Álvarez was sentenced to 26 years at *La Modelo*, a

²³ <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/528267-NICARAGUA-2023-HUMAN-RIGHTS-REPORT.pdf>

²⁴ <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/R48294#fn4>, https://www.oacnudh.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/informe8_unhr_noviembre_en.pdf

²⁵ <https://www.npr.org/2026/07/24/nx-sl-5903259/nicaraguas-president-ortega-says-there-will-be-no-more-elections-extending-his-rule>

²⁶ <https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/nicaraguan-congress-passes-ortega-backed-reform-excluding-opposition-elections-2026-09-02>

²⁷ <https://hrf.org/latest/nicaragua-bans-opposition-and-extends-dictatorship/>

²⁸ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights>

²⁹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/02/09/world/americas/nicaragua-prisoner-release.html>

³⁰ <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/528267-NICARAGUA-2023-HUMAN-RIGHTS-REPORT.pdf>

maximum-security prison, until he was forced into exile in January 2024 with 18 other priests.³¹ In February 2023, the Ortega-controlled Supreme Court stripped an additional 94 Nicaraguans of their citizenship, declared them traitors, and ordered their social benefits cut and assets confiscated.³² Together, these actions violate Article 15 of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights³³ and Article 20 of the Inter-American Human Rights Convention.³⁴ The revocation of citizenship represents a profound violation of fundamental freedoms and demonstrates the regime's willingness to go to extraordinary lengths to quell dissent and purge the country of any political opposition and dissent.

The cycle of political imprisonment and forced exile continues. In September 2024, President Biden secured the release of an additional 135 political prisoners to Guatemala. The regime removed all of those prisoners' citizenship, bringing the number of Nicaraguans stripped of their nationality to 452.³⁵ Yet, at least 46 political prisoners reportedly remain detained within the country, including Bishop Abelardo Mata, who has not been seen since his arrest on June 29, 2026.³⁶ For those who oppose Ortega and Murillo, the choices are increasingly stark: remain silent or face imprisonment or even death; flee or be forced into exile and risk being stripped of citizenship.

Crimes against humanity and transnational repression

Families of the remaining prisoners are deeply concerned about the fate of their loved ones. On May 30, 2026, Brooklyn Rivera, a Miskitu indigenous person, YATAMA's leader, and a regional legislator, died while in the Ortega-Murillo regime's custody.³⁷ His death is a stark reminder of the danger facing anyone the regime perceives as a threat. With Brooklyn Rivera's death, at least eight political prisoners have died at the hands of the Nicaraguan State since 2019.³⁸

Increasingly, Nicaragua's repression has extended beyond its borders, creating urgent security and sovereignty concerns for countries across Central America. On June 19, 2025, retired Nicaraguan Army Major Roberto Samcam was murdered in San José, Costa Rica. Samcam was a vocal critic of the Nicaraguan Army's role in the repression and killing of unarmed citizens during the 2018 protests.³⁹ Costa Rica's Attorney General has called the murder a "political crime."⁴⁰

³¹ <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/bishop-alvarez-and-18-priests-released-from-prison-handed-to-vatican-nicaragua-says>

³² <https://2021-2025.state.gov/nicaraguas-move-to-strip-citizenship-from-94-political-opponents/>

³³ <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>

³⁴ https://www.oas.org/dil/treaties_b-32_american_convention_on_human_rights.htm

³⁵ <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/R48294#fn4>, <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2026/country-chapters/nicaragua>

³⁶ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/country-reports/ahrc6358-human-rights-situation-nicaragua-report-united-nations-high>, <https://www.aciprensa.com/noticias/127077/alto-comisionado-onu-nicaragua-el-obispo-mata>

³⁷ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2026/06/nicaragua-un-group-experts-appalled-brooklyn-riveras-death-demands>

³⁸ <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/61/56>

³⁹ <https://confidencial.digital/en/nation/four-arrested-in-the-murder-of-roberto-samcam/>

⁴⁰ <https://confidencial.digital/en/nation/politically-motivated-order-is-the-leading-motive-in-samcams-murder/>, <https://www.nacion.com/sucesos/fiscal-general-se-refiere-al-homicidio-de-roberto/X4AE6IRHUREO5HD4WOLP25HGZA/story/>

The most recent attack came on September 14, 2026, when gunmen shot Reinaldo Picado Miranda three times in San José.⁴¹ Picado Miranda, a former Contra commander and founder of the exiled peasant movement *Resistencia Campesina Azul y Blanco*; he had survived a previous attempt on his life in late June. The Nicaraguan government had been seeking his extradition. Picado was granted precautionary measures by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in 2024 and subsequently received refugee status by the Costa Rican government.⁴²

The 2026 UN Group of Human Rights Experts on Nicaragua (GHREN) report demonstrated these cases are not isolated incidents, documenting a broader pattern of repression beyond the country's borders. The GHREN report also states that “violations investigated since 2018 amount, *prima facie*, to the crimes against humanity of murder, imprisonment, torture, deportation, enforced disappearance, and persecution on political grounds.”⁴³

Opportunities to Advance Democracy

The incremental end of democracy in Nicaragua has not received the attention it deserves. Ortega's recent announcement makes it clear that the regime no longer believes it needs to maintain the façade of electoral democracy. Yet the apparent autocratic arrogance should not be mistaken for stability. As the Ortega-Murillo duo continues to hollow out institutions, consolidate a family dynasty that echoes the Somoza era, and dismantle democracy, it is essential to continue calling out the ongoing crimes against humanity and violations of fundamental freedoms endured by Nicaraguans—particularly those who worked to defend democracy at tremendous personal cost. This includes the 452 Nicaraguans stripped of their citizenship; a countless number of exiles who are *de facto* stateless, having been barred from returning to their country;⁴⁴ the remaining political prisoners, including Bishop Mata, and all of their family members who suffer reprisals.

Ortega's eventual succession may represent a moment of vulnerability. Nicaraguan analyst Manuel Orozco recently told NDI that canceling elections “appears to reflect a deeper tension between Daniel Ortega and Rosario Murillo over her continued authority within the Nicaraguan State.” He shared that “even though Murillo appears to exercise extensive day-to-day control over the political machinery and has placed individuals loyal to her, the durability of her power is less certain.” This suggests that Murillo is concerned not only about securing formal rule on her own, particularly against the backdrop of U.S. sanctions against her, but also about whether some sectors of the regime will remain loyal to her and accept her succession to Ortega.

Given these dynamics, now is the time to act. NDI applauds the Senate's bipartisan efforts to address the assault on democracy in Nicaragua and the actions taken by successive U.S. administrations to increase pressure on the regime. Likewise, the upcoming OAS consultation of foreign ministers to examine the situation in Nicaragua will cast a regional

⁴¹ <https://confidencial.digital/en/english/nicaraguan-opposition-figure-reinaldo-picado-shot-in-costa-rica/>

⁴² https://www.oas.org/en/iachr/decisions/mc/2025/res_68-25_mc_330-24%20_cr_en.pdf

⁴³ <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/61/56>

⁴⁴ <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/immigration/article311808438.html>

spotlight on the country's deteriorating political situation; it constitutes a welcome and important step toward building greater regional momentum in support of democratic change.

The United States and the international community should consider the following actions to more effectively address Nicaragua's ongoing democratic crisis.

- **Support democratic resilience against foreign authoritarian influences.** The United States should help civic activists and independent journalists in monitoring and exposing the growing influence of authoritarian powers in Nicaragua. This includes increasing scrutiny of foreign-backed military and security infrastructure, such as China's expansion of ports and increased involvement in telecommunications and Russia's satellite facilities in Managua, as well as police training by both countries. Congress can advance these efforts by investigating these activities and assessing their implications for regional security. Ultimately, reaffirming democratic values and backing that with actions will be key as illiberal countries such as China and Russia seek to expand their negative economic, political, and security role in Nicaragua.
- **Increase sanctions effectiveness by targeting intermediaries.** The U.S. Government has diplomatic and economic tools to ensure that international funding and trade are not propping up the Ortega-Murillo regime. In this regard, NDI applauds the bipartisan REFORMAR ACT (S. 5369) legislation to reauthorize and amend the 2018 Nicaraguan Investment Conditionality Act (NICA Act) and 2021 Reinforcing Nicaragua's Adherence to Conditions for Electoral Reform Act (RENACER Act) to "enhance sanctions on sectors of the Nicaraguan economy that generate revenue for the Ortega family." As Congress considers additional sanctions authority, it should address the Ortega-Murillo regime's sanctions evasion network by targeting the intermediaries that enable them to continue enriching themselves at the expense of the Nicaraguan people. In particular, there is a critical need to address sanctions evasion in the gold sector by ramping up monitoring of international supply chains and exposing corporate enablers. This includes gold refineries, financial institutions, and intermediaries involved in the gold trade. By improving traceability of Nicaraguan gold and identifying key transactions, the United States can address the regime's sanctions evasion schemes while protecting Indigenous land rights and addressing environmental harms associated with mining.
- **Leverage multilateral institutions to increase pressure on the regime.** The October 2 consultation of foreign ministers at the OAS represents an important opportunity to advance coordinated actions on Nicaragua consistent with the OAS and Inter-American Democratic Charter. The international community should work together to restore the political and civil rights of the Nicaraguan people, including their right to participate in choosing their government through democratic elections. Any regional diplomatic engagement, trade agreements, or economic support should be conditioned on concrete, verifiable steps to restore democracy and guarantee fundamental freedoms.
- **Provide accountability and justice for crimes against humanity.** In their report to the UN Human Rights Council, the Group of Human Rights Experts on Nicaragua (GHREN) stated that the Nicaraguan State's use of enforced disappearances, torture,

and arbitrary detention against political opponents amounted to crimes against humanity. Ongoing investigations and public reporting by the GHREN remain crucial to maintaining international scrutiny and encouraging UN member states to pursue accountability and justice for victims of these atrocities. Nicaragua's brutal human rights violations cannot continue with impunity.

- **Increase support for democratic actors so they are ready to govern.** NDI also highlights the efforts of Nicaraguans—both in the country and in exile—to find common ground on a path for peaceful change when a political opening occurs. The recent release of two blueprints for democratic change by opposition members in exile and inside of the country is an important starting point for these groups to organize themselves and prepare to govern. These efforts can be bolstered by renewing U.S. democracy assistance that supports independent journalists, civic, environmental, human rights, and youth activists, and the democratic opposition. This includes mobilizing to: 1) shine a light on the crimes against humanity being perpetrated by the Nicaraguan regime; 2) monitor international financial investment and bank loans; 3) generate a consensus roadmap that leads toward a democratic transition; and 4) train a new generation of leadership. Ultimately, given the immense and unrelenting regime repression to date, a return to democracy will likely require sustained international support that backs up Nicaraguan efforts.

Chairman Curtis, Ranking Member Kaine and members of the Subcommittee, thank you again for the opportunity to testify, and I look forward to your questions.