

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 8, 2018

The Honorable Steven Mnuchin
Secretary of the Treasury
U.S. Department of the Treasury
1500 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20220

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

Dear Secretary Mnuchin and Secretary Pompeo:

We write in regard to the Department of the Treasury's December 2017 sanctions designation against Mr. Roberto Rivas, the current President of Nicaragua's Supreme Electoral Council, and to express our concern about the Nicaraguan police using excessive force against civilians during the ongoing protests in the country.

Under the *Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act*, the Treasury Department identified Mr. Rivas as an individual who has systematically undermined Nicaraguan democracy, perpetrating electoral fraud while amassing sizable personal wealth at the expense of Nicaragua's citizens.

As President of the Supreme Electoral Council for more than 22 years, Mr. Rivas embodies the government malfeasance and corruption that Nicaraguans have demonstrated against in recent weeks. He has wielded complete control of an electoral system that has been defined by serious, troubling irregularities. A recent report by the Organization of American States noted the need for a comprehensive reform of the Nicaraguan electoral system in order to ensure that political actors and citizens can have confidence in their elections.

While Nicaraguans recently initiated nationwide protests against government attempts to cut public pensions and approximately 30 percent of the Nicaragua's people lived on less than \$2 a day as of 2015, press reports indicate that Mr. Rivas has amassed a private fortune during his time in office. His assets include an expansive estate valued at more than \$11 million in Spain, a series of mansions in Costa Rica, and several private jets.

Not surprisingly, the Nicaraguan Government has largely remained silent about the sanctions designation against Mr. Rivas. In February of this year, the National Assembly of Nicaragua adopted reforms to the country's electoral law that appear to shield Mr. Rivas from prosecution and allow him to remain in an influential position, while reassigning his authorities to another official on the Supreme Electoral Council. These actions reaffirm the perception that institutions and the rule of law in Nicaragua are subject to political manipulation by those in power.

On January 11, Costa Rica's Attorney General's Office and Financial Crimes Unit launched an official investigation into Mr. Rivas' assets and his potential involvement in money laundering. Consequently, we urge you to work with the U.S. Embassy in San Jose to provide all necessary technical cooperation and assistance to your Costa Rican counterparts in their

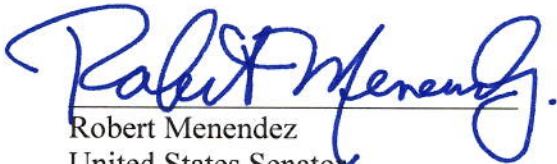
investigation. We also encourage you to raise this matter with your counterparts in the Spanish Government, given reports of Mr. Rivas' extensive assets and real estate holdings there.


As the Administration continues to hold Mr. Rivas accountable for his efforts to weaken Nicaraguan democracy, we are deeply troubled by reports that the Nicaraguan police killed more than 40 people and arrested dozens more during ongoing protests. We are also concerned by the Nicaraguan government's efforts to suppress freedom of the press and suspend the broadcasts of five television stations. These events are emblematic of the impunity and arbitrary abuse of power present in Nicaragua, and reinforce protesters' demands for a national dialogue that includes reforms to ensure the independence of political and judicial institutions.


We encourage the State Department to work with the Organization of American States and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights to advance a credible investigation of recent events and to support protesters' demands for a transparent and credible national dialogue.


In closing, we look forward to your response and urge you to continue to utilize the *Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act* as a tool to uphold the rule of law and address serious human rights abuses in Nicaragua and around the world.

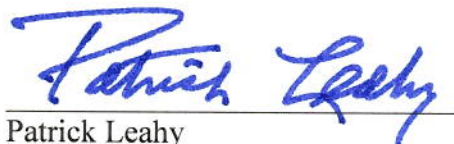
Sincerely,

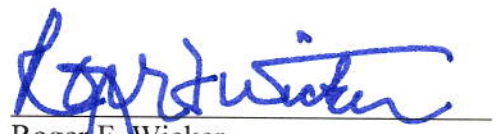

Robert Menendez
United States Senator


Marco Rubio
United States Senator

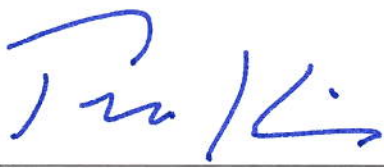

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