



JÉSUITES
du Canada

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21 November 2019

The Honourable François-Philippe Champagne
Minister of Foreign Affairs
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6
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Dear Minister Champagne,

First of all, I would like to congratulate you on your appointment as Minister of Foreign Affairs. We look forward to working with you. As you may know the Jesuits are an international religious organization of Roman Catholic priests with presence in many countries. We are often called by our fellow Jesuits and all those who collaborate with them, especially those working in situations of conflict, to bring particular issues to the attention of the Government of Canada so that it may continue to play its internationally recognized role in upholding human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

I am writing at this time to express my deep concern about the violence and repression taking place in Nicaragua since April 2018. We have received information directly from our fellow Jesuits in Latin America, who have issued the statement which I attach. They are denouncing the actions of the Government of Nicaragua and calling for international solidarity in halting the continued erosion of the democratic system in the country.

In addition to the attacks on the population at large, they mention the attacks made on Church personnel as well as expressing concern for the welfare of the mothers who are conducting a hunger strike to secure the release of their incarcerated children. We have also been made aware of the recent arrest of 13 activists for simply bringing water to those on strike.

We acknowledge the support that the Government of Canada has shown to the people of Nicaragua by: 1) enacting the Special Economic Measures Act (SEMA) against the current government; 2) releasing a statement calling for peace and justice in the country and condemning the violence and atrocities that have been committed; and 3) supporting an investigation into the violence in the country by the Organization of American States (OAS).

On November 19, 2019, the OAS High-Level Commission on Nicaragua released its findings and stated, *“that actions taken or permitted by the Government of Nicaragua are inconsistent with the rights and guarantees protected in the Nicaragua 1987 Constitution and that these are giving rise to an alteration of the constitutional regime that seriously impairs the democratic order in Nicaragua, as outlined in Article 20 of the Inter-American Democratic Charter.”*

We call on the Government of Canada to take action by calling on the government of Nicaragua to immediately respect the civil rights of the people of Nicaragua as enshrined in their constitution, by denouncing the continued atrocities of the current government against its people, by issuing a statement of support for the findings of the independent investigation conducted by the OAS, and by urging a peaceful resolution to the current political crisis in Nicaragua.

Of particular concern is the role of Canadian mining companies that operate in Nicaragua. We urge the Canadian government to review the role of these companies which not only do business with a government that systematically abuses human rights, but also provide foreign currency which helps to sustain the current regime.

Canada needs to speak out strongly and unequivocally against all violations of human rights in Nicaragua.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent situation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "E. Oland SJ". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Fr Erik Oland SJ
Provincial Superior/Supérieur provincial
Jesuits of Canada/Les jésuites du Canada

Cc: The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada (justin.trudeau@parl.gc.ca)
Ambassador James Hill, Canadian Ambassador to Nicaragua (James.Hill@international.gc.ca)