

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 21, 2019

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave N.W.,
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump:

We write to express our deep concern over the dire human rights crisis in Nicaragua and your administration's coordination with Nicaragua's oppressive Ortega regime to facilitate the deportation of Nicaraguan nationals from the United States. We urge you to expeditiously extend Temporary Protected Status for Nicaraguans living in the U.S. and to cease working with the Ortega regime in deporting individuals to Nicaragua.

Since anti-Ortega demonstrations began in April 2018, the Ortega regime has responded to the protests with violence, repression, and persecution of those involved in peaceful protests against the government. Pro-government paramilitaries are known to harass, kidnap, torture, and kill those who oppose the regime, particularly in rural areas. Between April 2018 and April 2019, over 60,000 Nicaraguans fled their homes in search of safety, most seeking refuge in Costa Rica and the United States.¹

To make matters worse, as of April 2018, Nicaragua is a participating partner in the ICE/ERO electronic Travel Document (eTD) system, which provides biographic and biometric information to help identify and deport Nicaraguan nationals who enter the U.S. This system allows for the streamlined and expedited deportation of Nicaraguans. It also relays personal information about deportees to the Nicaraguan government, putting these individuals at serious risk when they are forcibly returned to Nicaragua.

The coordination between the Nicaraguan government and Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has led to dangerous consequences for the countless Nicaraguans who have been deported since April 2018. According to reporting in the Nicaraguan newspaper *La Prensa*, deportees face imprisonment, torture, and execution, and many are forced into hiding. Recent reports have documented deplorable atrocities, including reports that 20 deportees are now

¹ "Nicaragua crisis: One year in, more than 60,000 have fled, seeking refuge," UN News, April 16, 2019, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/04/1036711>.

missing after their delivery to Ortega regime authorities.² For Nicaraguans, deportation from the United States can be akin to a death sentence.

Given this grave state of affairs, we strongly urge the end of expedited deportations from the United States to Nicaragua and the further extension of temporary protected status (“TPS”) for Nicaraguan nationals. Further extending TPS for Nicaraguans would provide safety for families that have fled persecution by their own government.

The United States has a duty to protect these vulnerable communities. We urge you to end Nicaragua’s partnership in the eTD system and further extend TPS for Nicaraguans.

Thank you for your consideration of this urgent matter.

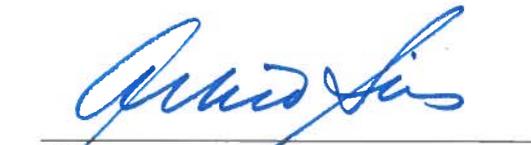
Sincerely,



Donna E. Shalala
Member of Congress



Eliot L. Engel
Member of Congress



Albio Sires
Member of Congress

² Martha Vazquez Larios, “Al menos 20 exiliados nicaragüenses que fueron deportados de EE.UU. están desaparecidos,” La Prensa, January 1, 2019, <https://www.laprensa.com.ni/2019/01/06/nacionales/2510893-al-menos-20-exiliados-nicaraguenses-que-fueron-deportados-de-ee-uu-estan-desaparecidos>).