

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 28, 2016

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

Dear Secretary Kerry,

We write to express our deep concerns regarding Nicaragua's upcoming elections, and the comments regarding corruption in Nicaragua in the State Department's Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2015.

The Presidential elections in Nicaragua are scheduled to take place on November 6, 2016. We believe strongly that the United States has an opportunity to advocate for stronger monitoring and observation of this election. We are concerned with the systemic actions taken by Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega to circumvent the Constitution and the legislature to rule in favor of his unlawful actions by naming his wife as his running mate. Advocacy and civil society groups in our states have expressed their growing concern over the Ortegas' assault on even the most basic democratic principles.

Bilateral relations between the United States and Nicaragua have also been affected. Just this year, Nicaraguan authorities have denied entry, detained, and expelled U.S citizens including three U.S. government officials.

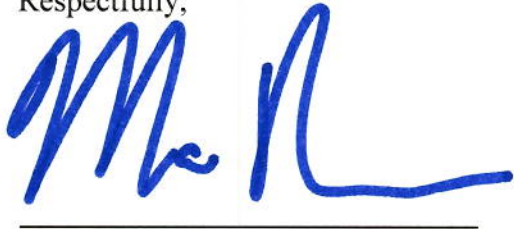
According to the State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, Country reports on Human Rights for 2015, in Nicaragua "there was also widespread corruption including in the police, Supreme Court Justice (CSJ) and other government organs." One of the instruments for democracy is the Inter-American Democratic Charter. In article 2, the charter mentions that "Essential elements of representative democracy include, inter alia, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, access to and the exercise of power in accordance with the rule of law, the holding of periodic, free, and fair elections based on secret balloting and universal suffrage as an expression of the sovereignty of the people." In article 4 the charter expresses the importance of "Transparency in government activities, probity, responsible public administration on the part of governments, respect for social rights, and freedom of expression." According to both of these articles, it is clear that Nicaragua is violating the provisions in the charter.

We urge you to press the Nicaraguan government to respect the electoral process, its citizens' rights to freely choose their leaders, and to be transparent and allow international observers to

monitor the upcoming elections. Also, we ask that you respond in writing with what steps the State Department has taken to address the rampant corruption among senior Nicaraguan government officials that is having such a corrosive effect on good governance and economic growth for all Nicaraguans.

Thank you for your attention to these important matters.

Respectfully,



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Marco Rubio  
United States Senator



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Ted Cruz  
United States Senator