

STATEMENT OF THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES BY COMMISSIONER JULISSA MANTILLA, PRESIDENT OF THE INTER-AMERICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS (IACHR)

**High-Level Segment
49th Session of the UN Human Rights Council**

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Mr. President
Distinguished Delegates,

1. I have the honor to address the UN Human Rights Council on behalf of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, a principal, autonomous body of the Organization of American States.
2. Two years after the declaration of the pandemic, it seems impossible to avoid commenting on the affliction that it has represented and its severe and ongoing impacts on human rights, not only in the Americas but throughout the world.
3. The Commission has made significant contributions to Inter-American human rights standards by adopting Resolutions No. 1/2020 and 4/2020 on "Pandemic and Human Rights in the Americas" and the "Inter-American Guidelines on the Human Rights of Persons with COVID-19". In addition, the monitoring of the situation has been made public through several press releases highlighting the impacts of the pandemic on the lives of various groups of people in vulnerable situations in the Americas.
4. In this context, the Commission has reinforced its permanent spaces of dialogue with the different users of the Inter-American system, promoting periodic meetings with States and civil society organizations.
5. In addition to the challenges brought by the pandemic, we have found the persistence of discrimination and violence against women, LGBTI people, Afro-descendants and

indigenous people, children and adolescents, particularly against human rights defenders, journalists, and social leaders.

6. As we also take a moment to remember the current situation unfolding in the Ukrainian territory that has generated the forced displacement of hundreds of thousands of people and other severe humanitarian crises around the globe, we recall that this situation adds to more than 84 million displaced people in the world. This is an era of forced displacement. And some of these humanitarian and human mobility challenges take place in the Americas. Furthermore, in these contexts, poverty, increased repression, the disproportionate use of force, acts of violence, and economic and political turmoil fuel forced displacement and further human rights vulnerabilities.
7. The region has made progress in its democratic development, but anti-democratic inertia persists in our societies. In particular, the Commission has seen the obstacles and setbacks in protecting human rights, the separation of powers, and spaces for democratic participation, forced displacement in Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela, for example.
8. Concerning Cuba, the Commission recognizes severe violation of the fundamental elements and institutions of representative democracy, which are essential for realizing human rights. In particular, the Commission has followed up on the repression of activists, human rights defenders, and regime opponents, such as arbitrary restrictions on political rights and the right to freedom of expression.
9. Regarding Nicaragua, in 2021, the Commission noted the intensification of a new stage of repression in the country. Repressive measures took the shape of a series of State actions that put an end to the opposition's participation in the general elections held on November 7. In particular, the Commission observed the cancellation of the legal status of opposition parties; the detention and criminalization of leaders, including pre-candidates for the presidency, through the approval and use of criminal laws that arbitrarily restricted the political rights of the Nicaraguan population. Dozens of thousands of people have already fled the country since the political repression cycles of 2018.
10. Likewise, the Commission published the Report "Concentration of Power and Weakening of the Rule of Law," in October 2021. In this report, the Commission stated that the climate of repression and the closing of democratic spaces showed the Nicaraguan government's will to perpetuate itself indefinitely in power. Thus, maintaining its privileges and immunities in a context of corruption, electoral fraud, and structural impunity.
11. About the current crisis in Venezuela, the Commission has continuously monitored the country's situation. In different stances, the IACHR noted the inexistence of the rule of law due to a series of factors such as: 1. the absence of a system of checks and balances;

2. the lack of independence of the different branches of government; and 3. the high concentration of power in the head of the executive branch. This circumstance has facilitated the perpetration of serious human rights violations and the deterioration of the general population's living conditions, impacting the displacement of 6 million people since 2015.
12. It's also important to highlight that, last year, the Commission concluded the works of the Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts (GIEI) in Bolivia, created to investigate acts of violence and human rights violations that occurred in that country between September 1 and December 31, 2019.
 13. The report concluded on acts of violence unacceptable in a democratic society and human rights violations committed by state agents, violence, and abuses that had racial and gender dimensions in many cases. The report analyzes the State's responsibility for these acts under international human rights law. Finally, it points the way forward for Bolivia towards the establishment of indisputable truth, the prosecution of those responsible at all levels, the application of appropriate sanctions within the framework of due process and fair trial standards, compensation for the damages suffered by the victims, and the adoption, in broad democratic consensus, of public policies for the non-repetition of these crimes.
 14. Undoubtedly, the structural human rights violations faced in the region, alongside the COVID-19 pandemic, will continue to challenge the Americas. In this context, it will be imperial to continue focusing on strengthening democratic and human rights institutions in the Americas, aiming to promote State responses focused on respect for human rights.
 15. I want to reaffirm the Commission's willingness and readiness to provide technical assistance to States, regional bodies, civil society organizations, and other institutions for institutional strengthening and the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of public policies to prevent and tackle human rights violations in the Americas.
 16. The UN Human Rights Council can count on the Commission's commitment to strengthening the respect, promotion, and defense of human rights in the Americas. And doing this, by putting the victims and their families at the center of its priorities; listening to the concerns of civil society organizations, and deepening the dialogue with the States of the region and all stakeholders, aiming for the construction of positive work agendas.