



Communique **Committee of Experts**

Committee of Experts expresses concern over reports of political violence against women in opposition and the repercussions of the message that inhibits the participation of women in political life in Nicaragua

Washington, DC, August 6, 2021. The Committee of Experts of the Follow-up Mechanism of the Convention of Belém do Pará (MESECVI) expresses its concern about the political violence suffered by a group of women opposed to the government and defenders of the rights of women in Nicaragua.

According to the information received, on June 2 the Nicaraguan State initiated a wave of arrests, which have been denounced as arbitrary, against opposition leaders and, as a result of these actions, a group of human rights defenders, feminist activists and political leaders, would find themselves deprived of liberty, like other people, all known to be from opposition parties or who are running as candidates in the next presidential elections.

Likewise, the Committee of Experts has received complaints about alleged acts of surveillance and harassment, violations of freedom of expression, assembly and movement, threats and persecution also against women defenders and opposition leaders. The complaints would point out as the main alleged perpetrators of these attacks State security officials, agents of the police special operations department and armed persons dressed in civilian clothes.

Within these cases, the Committee learned of the alleged detention of Tamara Dávila, Violeta Granera, Dora María Téllez, Ana Margarita Vigil and Suyén Barahona, social leaders, feminists and defenders of women's human rights, all of them with prominent participation in the social and political life of the country and identified as opponents of the government. The arrests were made through raids on their homes and on charges of terrorism, treason, an attack on national sovereignty and promoting the application of sanctions to members or close associates of the government.

The Committee has also received information according to which the right to defense, due process and access to justice are being affected in these cases. Additionally, the complaints indicate that the right of access to the lawyers of the leaders has been prevented or limited, as well as visits from family members, thereby also affecting the integrity of the detained persons.

The Committee recalls that due legal process, in accordance with the Convention of Belém do Pará, includes, among others, the duty of due diligence, guaranteeing in an expeditious manner that all the rights established in international human rights protection treaties are guaranteed and in a special way, any action that causes harm, physical, psychological or sexual suffering to women is investigated and prevented.

In this sense, Article 3 of the Inter-American Model Law to Prevent, Punish and Eradicate Violence against Women in Political Life defines violence against women in political life as “any action, conduct or omission, carried out directly or through third parties who, based on their gender, cause harm or suffering to one or more women, and whose purpose or result is to impair or nullify the recognition, enjoyment or exercise of their political rights”, and that, in accordance with Article 6 of the same instrument, one of the manifestations of such violence is that actions are carried out that “threaten, frighten or intimidate in any way one or more women and / or their families, and that have the purpose or result of nullifying their political rights, including the resignation of the position or function that they exercise or postulate”.

The Committee considers that these actions could constitute intimidation, threats, harassment, and violence against women in the political sphere, thereby contravening the right to live free from violence and discrimination and to exercise their political rights, generating alarm and distrust, and issuing a statement. inhibiting message of women's participation in Nicaraguan political life.

For all the above, the Committee:

1. Expresses its deep concern for the integrity and security of all detained persons, especially women leaders and defenders of women's human rights, as well as those of their families;
 2. It demands that the State of Nicaragua respect and guarantee the rights of detained persons and the constitutional mandates, due process, the presumption of innocence, the right to defense, and the publicity of the cases;
 3. Requests the immediate release of the detained persons, and the cessation of attacks on public liberties, and particularly, on the exercise of political rights in the country, especially those of women;
 4. Urges the State to guarantee to women that the rights of association, freedom of expression and political participation can be exercised free from violence and harassment;
 5. Requests that a transparent investigation be carried out on the facts denounced;
 6. Inform this Committee about the status of the detainees.
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7. Take the context into account and urge the international community to remain vigilant about the difficult situation of women leaders and defenders of women's human rights in Nicaragua.

The Committee of Experts is the technical body of the MESECVI, responsible for the analysis and evaluation of the process of implementation of the Convention of Belém do Pará. It is composed of independent experts, appointed by each State Party from among its nationals, who serve in their personal capacity.