



## **Nicaragua: Stop the violence against peaceful protesters**

Global civil society alliance CIVICUS and the Nicaraguan civil society network - Coordination Civil call on the government of Nicaragua to stop the violence against peaceful protesters and respect their rights to assemble freely. After 54 days of protests, 135 people have been killed, more than 1000 have been wounded and above 400 detained.

Widespread protests [began](#) in Nicaragua on 18 April 2018, after the government proposed amendments to the social security system that would have seen an increase in contributions made by workers and employers and a reduction in pensions paid to retired workers. President Ortega later revoked the amendments on 22 April following protests but labelled the demonstrators violent, criminals and vampires demanding blood. The protests continued as protesters called for justice for all those killed since the start of the demonstrations.

Since the start of the protests, the authorities have also curtailed freedom of expression and targeted media houses to limit the release of information on the violence. At least one journalist has been killed and several others wounded while reporting on the protests. Media outlets have been pulled off air and others set alight to prevent them from broadcasting information and images about the demonstrations.

On 31 May 2018, 16 protesters were killed and at least 200 wounded in the deadliest day since the protests began as protesters commemorated Mother's Day by raising awareness of all those killed since the demonstrations began. The perpetrators of these renewed attacks are security forces and members of pro-government groups - the Sandinista mobs. The attack came a day after the government [agreed](#) to a proposal made by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) to create an international mechanism-the Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts to investigate the violent events that have taken place in the country since 18 April. However, in the light of the most recent repression, this action appears hypocritical, and at best is an empty gesture.

“The use of lethal force against peaceful protesters can never be justified under any circumstances. President Ortega’s government must take full responsibilities for atrocities committed since the protests began and ensure that perpetrators are held accountable for these heinous acts.” Said Marianna Belalba Barreto, CIVICUS Civic Space Research Officer.

The use of excessive force by the state to repress protests in Nicaragua is a common strategy used by the government to intimidate protesters and restrict freedom of expression. In the past, CIVICUS has [documented](#) several cases in which the government brutally repressed protests,

particularly those led by the Anti-Canal movement, which demanded the government to halt construction of the Interoceanic Canal, a Chinese-backed megaproject to connect the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.

CIVICUS and Coordination Civil call on the government of Nicaragua to immediately stop using violence to repress peaceful protests and fully comply with the Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts to investigate the human rights violations and ensure that perpetrators are held accountable for their actions.

Civic space in Nicaragua is rated as [obstructed](#) by the CIVICUS Monitor, a tool that tracks threats to civil society in all countries.