

# **NICARAGUA:** **REPRESSION** **THROUGH A** **GENDER LENS**

**WOMEN AND**  
**HUMAN RIGHTS**  
**VIOLATIONS**

18 june 2026



**GROUP OF HUMAN**  
**RIGHTS EXPERTS**  
**ON NICARAGUA**

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# **“Nicaragua: repression through a gender lens”**

**Women and human rights violations**

**Group of Human Rights Experts on Nicaragua**

*18 June 2026*

## Executive summary

In Nicaragua, the State repression unleashed since 2018 has used gender as an instrument of control, humiliation and silencing. Hundreds of women human rights defenders, feminists, journalists and LGBTIQ+ women, as well as political, community, *campesina*, Indigenous and Afrodescendant women leaders, and women relatives of opponents, have suffered discrimination, assaults and political persecution fuelled by gender stereotypes and the manipulation of caregiving roles, and compounded by social prejudice.

This document prepared by the Group of Human Rights Experts on Nicaragua brings to light the profound contradiction between the official discourse proclaiming gender equality and an unequal reality. Although the Government highlights its progress in women's political representation, such participation takes place within centralized and controlled structures, with little real autonomy. The authorities promote a traditional model of womanhood associated with motherhood, family and obedience, while stigmatizing dissident women as a threat to the social order. This narrative has served to justify attacks against women who exercise public leadership or defend human rights.

From 2018, women have been the target of State violence. Many of them led protests, organized support networks, documented violations, provided medical assistance and supported demands for justice. Many stood out for their ability to mobilize people. As a result, women defenders, feminist activists, journalists, female student, community, *campesina*, Indigenous and Afrodescendant leaders, among other women, were repressed and subjected to arbitrary detention, physical violence and even torture. Women relatives of opponents and/or of victims of human rights violations were also subjected to proxy punishment.

The cancellation of nearly 300 women and LGBTIQ+ organizations eliminated essential spaces for protection, support and reporting. Many of these organizations provided legal, psychosocial, community and sexual and reproductive health services. Their closure has disproportionately affected women, girls and LGBTIQ+ persons, particularly those who depended on such services in the face of gender-based violence, poverty, exclusion or territorial dispossession. The cancellation of these organizations destroyed the caregiving and assistance networks that sustained the daily lives of many communities.

Among the serious human rights violations that have been documented, the Group emphasizes that arbitrary detentions and enforced disappearances have had specific impacts on women. The Group documented the arbitrary detention of real or perceived women opponents who were subjected to legal proceedings without guarantees, incommunicado detention, unfounded charges and stigmatization based on gender roles. Some of them were subjected to enforced disappearance for weeks, months or more than a year. These violations interrupted career paths, disrupted families and separated mothers from their children. They also affected women searching for detained or disappeared relatives, visiting detention centres or demanding justice. These women were harassed, surveilled and threatened.

Torture and ill-treatment in places of detention included clear forms of sexual and gender-based violence, including rape. Women detainees frequently reported that they were subjected to sexist insults, rape threats, forced nudity, sexual harassment, solitary confinement, restrictions on family visits and deprivation of adequate medical care. These practices sought to humiliate and punish them for their political engagement and because they had departed from traditional roles. Sexual violence and threats directed at their motherhood or the custody of their children deepened their psychological suffering. Female relatives visiting persons deprived of liberty were also subjected to abusive searches and degrading treatment.

In addition, constant surveillance, harassment and smear campaigns have served to isolate and silence a large number of women inside and outside Nicaragua. Many were called “bad mothers”, “abortionists”, “traitors” or “enemies of the family”. LGBTIQ+ women also faced homophobic and stigmatizing attacks; meanwhile Indigenous and Afrodescendant women leaders also suffered from racism, as well as the violence and impunity associated with this form of discrimination.

The ban on entering their own country, the denial of passports, expulsions, the arbitrary deprivation of nationality and the confiscation of property have also left many women uprooted, economically precarious, separated from their families and, in several cases, de jure or de facto stateless.

For the Group, several of these violations constitute, prima facie, the crimes against humanity of imprisonment, torture, enforced disappearance, deportation and persecution on political grounds. Although the principal persecution motive is political, the victims’ gender has influenced their selection by the perpetrators, the repressive methods used and the impacts suffered.

The Group concludes that the serious human rights violations and abuses committed in Nicaragua since April 2018 have had clear and systematic gender dimensions. Through these violations, the State has not only disproportionately affected women, girls and LGBTIQ+ persons, but has also perpetuated, exploited and exacerbated pre-existing structural inequalities and gender stereotypes to punish, discipline and silence the victims and to destroy networks of support, organization and resistance. The impacts have been profound, cumulative and intergenerational.

The Group calls upon the Government to end the repression, release persons arbitrarily detained, investigate violations, restore rights and guarantee a safe environment for feminist and human rights organizations. It also urges the international community to continue monitoring, support accountability and protect Nicaraguan women in exile.

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## I. Introduction

### A. Background

1. Since its establishment in March 2022, the Group of Human Rights Experts on Nicaragua has published four reports<sup>1</sup> and eight supplementary documents<sup>2</sup> containing the findings and conclusions of its investigations. The Group is composed of Jan-Michael Simon (Chair), Ariela Peralta Distéfano and Reed Brody.

2. In those documents, the Group found that there were reasonable grounds to believe that, since April 2018, State and non-State actors had committed serious human rights violations and abuses against an ever-expanding group of real or perceived opponents and their relatives, in a systematic and widespread manner. The Group also concluded that some of those violations constituted, *prima facie*, the crimes against humanity of murder, imprisonment, torture, enforced disappearance, deportation and persecution on political grounds, under customary international law.<sup>3</sup>

3. The Group has identified and analysed a variety of victim profiles and has concluded that all were subjected to State repression on political grounds. The Group has observed that, in many cases, this political repression intersects with other grounds of discrimination, such as gender, ethnic origin, age, sexual orientation or social origin, which further harm vulnerable populations and may aggravate the consequences of the violations suffered.

4. In its first report, the Group concluded that some of the human rights violations and abuses documented had clear gender dimensions and had produced differentiated impacts based on the gender and sexual orientation of the victims. The Group highlighted, in particular, the use of different forms of sexual and gender-based violence as a method of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment in detention centres or as punishment against relatives of victims, most of them women. It also highlighted stigmatization campaigns against women and LGBTIQ+ organizations and the arbitrary closure of organizations led by women or whose work focused on issues relevant to women.<sup>4</sup>

5. In the present document, the Group examines in greater depth the gender dimensions of the repression exercised by the State of Nicaragua against its population and how these have shaped the experiences of women and girls.<sup>5</sup> It documents how human rights violations and abuses in Nicaragua have reproduced and exploited structural inequalities, social norms and gender stereotypes to deter, punish and silence real or perceived women opponents through specific acts of victimization. It also considers factors such as age, sexual orientation, ethnicity and socioeconomic status in its intersectional analysis of human rights violations and abuses and of victim profiles. In this way, the Group seeks to render visible the thousands of women victims of the repression and persecution carried out by the Government of Daniel Ortega and Rosario Murillo, whose life projects have been brutally altered or interrupted, sometimes permanently.

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<sup>1</sup> A/HRC/52/63, A/HRC/55/27, A/HRC/58/26 y A/HRC/61/56.

<sup>2</sup> All documents are available at: [www.ohchr.org/ghrenicaragua](http://www.ohchr.org/ghrenicaragua).

<sup>3</sup> A/HRC/52/63, paras. 109, 110 and 123-125; A/HRC/55/27, paras. 3, 80-87 and 107-116; A/HRC/58/26, paras. 2, 85-91 and 106-110; and A/HRC/61/56, paras. 2, 77-82 and 96-99.

<sup>4</sup> A/HRC/52/63, paras. 40, 43, 67, 79, 82, 83, 85, 91, 94, 103 and 114; and A/HRC/52/CRP.5 paras. 874-930.

<sup>5</sup> This document fleshes out the considerations and findings of the Group on the gender dimensions of the repression contained in report A/HRC/61/56 (see paragraphs 13-18, 44 and 45).

## B. Mandate and methodology

6. The Human Rights Council established the Group of Human Rights Experts on Nicaragua in 2022 to investigate all alleged human rights violations and abuses committed in the country since April 2018, including their possible gender dimensions and their structural root causes. The Council also requested to ensure a victim-centred approach, addressing the impact of multiple and intersectional forms of discrimination.<sup>6</sup>

7. In the fulfilment of its mandate, the Group integrated this gender perspective — intersectional and victim-centred — into its investigative work, particularly information gathering and analysis (see the definition of the concept of gender adopted by the Group in the box). This perspective allows to show how gender-based norms, roles and power relations influence both the commission of human rights violations and their effects.

8. The intersectional<sup>7</sup> approach adopted by the Group allows to identify how different factors and identities, such as age, sexual orientation,<sup>8</sup> gender identity,<sup>9</sup> ethnic origin and socioeconomic status, among others, may influence the specific forms of violations and abuses to which victims are subjected, as well as the impacts of those violations and abuses. Sexual orientation and gender identity, in particular, have been recognized as prohibited grounds of discrimination under international human rights law, at both the international and regional levels.<sup>10</sup> The intersectional approach recognizes that such factors and identities interact and overlap, resulting in multiple forms of discrimination and vulnerability.

9. With regards to victims, the Group has prioritized strict respect for the principles of safety, confidentiality, informed consent and “do no harm” in the conduct of its investigations, especially in relation to acts of sexual and gender-based violence. In this context, the Group recognizes that many acts of sexual and gender-based violence remain unreported owing to the stigma associated with them, the social and cultural barriers faced by victims and their justified

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Throughout its investigative work, and in this document in particular, the Group has adopted the following definition of the term gender: “The term ‘gender’ refers to socially constructed identities, attributes and roles for women and men and society’s social and cultural meaning for these biological differences resulting in hierarchical relationships between women and men and in the distribution of power and rights favouring men and disadvantaging women. This social positioning of women and men is affected by political, economic, cultural, social, religious, ideological and environmental factors and can be changed by culture, society and community.”

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, General recommendation No. 28, CEDAW/C/GC/28, 2010 (para. 5)

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<sup>6</sup> Resolution A/HRC/RES/49/3, paras. 14(a) y 14(c).

<sup>7</sup> For more details on the concept of intersectionality in human rights investigations, see: Justice Rapid Response, “Intersectionality in Investigations of Serious Human Rights Violations and International Crimes: Guidance and Practice Tool”, January 2026, available at: [Intersectionality, Guidance and Practice Tool 2026](#).

<sup>8</sup> The Group understands sexual orientation “to refer to each person’s capacity for profound emotional, affectional and sexual attraction to, and intimate and sexual relations with, individuals of a different gender or the same gender or more than one gender” (Yogyakarta Principles: Principles on the application of international human rights law in relation to sexual orientation and gender identity, March 2007, p. 6).

<sup>9</sup> The Group understands gender identity “to refer to each person’s deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond with the sex assigned at birth, including the personal sense of the body (which may involve, if freely chosen, modification of bodily appearance or function by medical, surgical or other means) and other expressions of gender, including dress, speech and mannerisms” (Yogyakarta Principles, p. 6).

<sup>10</sup> See, for instance: Committee against Torture, General comment No. 2 (CAT/C/GC/2), 2007, para. 21; Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, General comment No. 20 (E/C.12/GC/20), 2009, para. 32; Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, General Recommendation No. 28 (CEDAW/C/GC/28), 2010, para. 18; and Inter-American Court of Human Rights, Advisory Opinion OC-24/17, 24 November 2017.

fear of reprisals, among other reasons. The Group has taken these factors into account in its analysis.

10. To prepare this document, the Group examined and analysed the relevant information and evidence contained in interviews conducted with women victims, witnesses, women experts, State employees and former Sandinistas with direct knowledge of the facts documented, and other sources, as well as in the documents collected since the beginning of its mandate. Between August 2025 and March 2026, the Group conducted a further 70 interviews and 21 meetings, specifically focused on the gender dimensions of the repression, and gathered an additional 208 documents to complement and corroborate the information already available.<sup>11</sup> The Group recalls that all its findings are based on information provided by direct sources, especially the victims and witnesses interviewed, which is duly corroborated with other direct and indirect sources and documentary evidence. The Group expresses its appreciation to the persons interviewed, as well as to civil society organizations, for their contribution despite the high risks of reprisals they face.

11. The Group conducts its investigations by applying the standard of proof of “reasonable grounds to believe”, as well as the methodologies and legal framework detailed in its previous reports.<sup>12</sup> The standard of proof of “reasonable grounds to believe” is met when, on the basis of the verified body of factual information, an objective and reasonably prudent observer would have reasonable grounds to conclude that the facts occurred as described and, in formulating legal conclusions, that those facts meet all the elements of a violation or abuse.

## **II. Feminism and its leading figures in the Government’s crosshairs**

### **A. Historical context**

12. For decades, the feminist movement has played a central role in social, political and community transformation in Nicaragua. Both the Sandinista National Liberation Front (hereinafter FSLN) in the 1960s, and the *Asociación de Mujeres ante la Problemática Nacional* (AMPRONAC) created in 1977, were organizations that emerged in response to the repression of the Somoza regime. At the end of the 1970s, AMPRONAC was the largest Nicaraguan women’s organization.<sup>13</sup> Following the 1979 Revolution, it was formally integrated into the revolutionary project and renamed the *Asociación de Mujeres Nicaragüenses Luisa Amanda Espinoza* (AMNLAE).<sup>14</sup> During the Sandinista Revolution and, subsequently, the armed conflict with the counter-revolutionary forces (1982-1990), many women actively contributed to social reorganization and the construction of new forms of citizen participation.<sup>15</sup> Many of them also played a key role as combatants, military leaders, underground operatives and community organizers. The revolutionary project broadened women’s political participation and promoted certain legal advances, such as gender parity in family law, the recognition of de

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<sup>11</sup> All interviews, meetings and documents have been codified and preserved in the confidential archives of the Group.

<sup>12</sup> A/HRC/52/63, paras. 6-11; A/HRC/55/27, paras. 7-12; A/HRC/58/26, para. 6; and the relevant sections of the supplementary documents, especially: A/HRC/52/CRP.5, paras. 35-74; and “Nicaragua: Persecution beyond borders – Exile and transnational human rights violations”, 23 September 2025, pp. 6 and 7.

<sup>13</sup> Vilma Nuñez de Escorcia, “Lucha de las mujeres en Nicaragua más allá de sus derechos específicos”, 29 August 2014, available at: <https://www.cenidh.org/noticias/681/>.

<sup>14</sup> Gema D. Palazón Sáez, “Antes, durante, después de la revolución... La lucha continúa. Movimiento feminista en Nicaragua”, in *Lectora: revista de dones i textualitat*, No. 13, 2007, pp. 121-126.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

facto unions and unilateral no-fault divorce.<sup>16</sup> The legal interpretation of access to therapeutic abortion was also broadened, although the law was not amended.<sup>17</sup>

13. However, the context of the armed conflict lent credence to the idea that the Revolution had to take precedence over the rights claimed by women, and their role was redefined primarily in terms of motherhood and the family. The Junta of National Reconstruction (1979–1985) and, subsequently, the first Government of President Ortega (1985–1990) disregarded several specific demands relating to gender equality, especially those concerning the fight against gender-based violence, sexual and reproductive rights, the sexual division of labour and occupational segregation, considering them secondary, divisive or simply contrary to the political, military and economic priorities of the Revolution.<sup>18</sup> At the same time, Sandinista leaders adopted an anti-feminist discourse that silenced efforts to combat gender discrimination, sexual harassment and homophobia within the FSLN, thereby forcing many Sandinista women to choose between their revolutionary identity and feminist convictions.<sup>19</sup>

14. At the end of the 1980s, the feminist movement strengthened and diversified outside the organizational framework of AMNLAE, which many activists perceived as an organization constrained by its lack of political autonomy, and, during the 1990s, the movement definitively separated from the FSLN.<sup>20</sup> This process gave rise to the formation of an autonomous feminist movement, with a broad presence and networks throughout the Nicaraguan territory, and one that was critical of the Government, the FSLN and other political parties. Several women's collectives and networks were formed, including the *Red de Mujeres contra la Violencia*, the *Movimiento Autónomo de Mujeres*, the *Movimiento Feminista*, the *Red de Mujeres de Matagalpa* and the *Red de Mujeres del Norte*. In both urban and rural areas, independent caregiving centres and clinics were also created, focusing on popular education, community work and the provision of legal, psychological and health services for women and girls.<sup>21</sup>

15. In 1998, Zoilamérica Narváez Murillo, daughter of Rosario Murillo, publicly accused her stepfather, Daniel Ortega, of sexual abuse. Numerous organizations and feminist networks brought visibility to her allegations and supported her pursuit of justice. According to several sources, that support marked a milestone in the relationship between the Nicaraguan feminist movement and the FSLN, initiating an open confrontation.<sup>22</sup>

16. The governments that followed the Sandinista period (1990-2007) did not take up the defence of women or LGBTIQ+ rights. No major political party in Nicaragua has consistently defended them. In 1992, during the administration of Violeta Barrios de Chamorro (1990–

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<sup>16</sup> For example, the Act Governing Relations between Mother, Father and Children introduced important reforms to modernize Nicaraguan family law from an equality perspective and recognize more rights for both women and children (Decree No. 1065, published in *La Gaceta No. 155* of 3 July 1982).

<sup>17</sup> Silke Heumann, "Gender, Sexuality, and Politics: Rethinking the Relationship Between Feminism and Sandinismo in Nicaragua", in *Social Politics*, 2014, pp. 290 and 291.

<sup>18</sup> Silke Heumann, "Gender, Sexuality, and Politics", pp. 295-301; Pamela Neumann, "Gender-based violence and the patrimonial state in Nicaragua: The rise and fall of Ley 779", in *Cahiers des Amériques latines*, 2018, pp. 69-90; and Sofia Montenegro, "¿Es revolucionario el FSLN?", in *Montañas con recuerdos de mujer – Una mirada feminista a la participación de las mujeres en los conflictos armados en Centroamérica y Chiapas*, Clara Murguialday (ed.), San Salvador, 1996, pp. 31-41.

<sup>19</sup> Silke Heumann, "Gender, Sexuality, and Politics", pp. 295-301; and Pamela Neumann, "Gender-based violence and the patrimonial state in Nicaragua", pp. 69-90.

<sup>20</sup> Gema D. Palazón Sáez, "Antes, durante, después de la revolución...", pp. 12 and 13; Sofia Montenegro, "¿Es revolucionario el FSLN?", pp. 31-41; and Luz Marina Torres, "Women in Nicaragua: The Revolution on Hold", in *Revista Envío*, June 1991, available at: <https://www.revistaenvio.org/articulo/2912>.

<sup>21</sup> Karen Kampwirth, *Latin America's New Left and the Politics of Gender: Lessons from Nicaragua*, Springer, 2011, pp. 5-12; and Elvira Cuadra Lira y Juanita Jiménez Martínez, *El movimiento de mujeres y la lucha por sus derechos en Nicaragua: Movimientos sociales y ciudadanía en Centroamérica*, CINCO, 2010, pp. 19-27.

<sup>22</sup> Karen Kampwirth, *Latin America's New Left and the Politics of Gender*, pp. 24-28; and Pamela Neumann, "Gender-based violence and the patrimonial state in Nicaragua", pp. 69-90.

1997), the National Assembly amended the offence of sodomy by passing article 204 of the Criminal Code, which extended the criminalization of same-sex sexual relations and retained prison sentences of one to three years.<sup>23</sup> During the administrations of Arnoldo Alemán (1997–2002) and Enrique Bolaños (2002–2007), the Catholic hierarchy and evangelical leaders consolidated an alliance with the dominant political forces against sexual and reproductive rights, including the right to therapeutic abortion, which had been in force since 1893. On 26 October 2006, in the midst of the presidential campaign, the National Assembly approved a reform of the Criminal Code,<sup>24</sup> supported by a majority of parties and President Bolaños, which resulted in the total prohibition of abortion,<sup>25</sup> with prison sentences of up to two years for women and up to six years for health professionals who perform abortions with the woman’s consent. Both presidential candidate Daniel Ortega and his campaign chief Rosario Murillo had publicly expressed their support for such prohibition.<sup>26</sup> Numerous constitutional challenges have been filed against this reform, but, to date, the Supreme Court of Justice has not ruled on them.

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In January 2025, the Human Rights Committee found that the absolute prohibition of abortion in the cases of two girls, who had been raped and did not have access to reproductive and sexual health services, constituted forced motherhood. The Committee stated that the State of Nicaragua was responsible for the violation of the right to life and the prohibition of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, among other rights protected by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Human Rights Committee, *Lucía v. Nicaragua*, CCPR/C/142/D/3627/2019 (paras. 8.6 and 8.11), and *Susana v. Nicaragua*, CCPR/C/142/D/3626/2019 (paras. 8.6 and 8.11)

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17. With the return of the FSLN to power in 2007, institutional harassment of feminist and women’s organizations began. This media, administrative and judicial harassment, involving the Ministry of the Interior, the judiciary, pro-government media outlets and party structures, included smear campaigns against the organizations and their leaders, as well as the criminalization of the latter, who were accused of money-laundering and subversion of the constitutional order for allegedly having financed organizations that supported women’s access to therapeutic abortion. Although these charges failed before the courts, they had an intimidating effect, confirming that the feminist movement was under the permanent surveillance of the governing authorities.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Act Amending the Criminal Code (Act No. 150), published in *La Gaceta No. 174* of 9 September 1992.

<sup>24</sup> Act Repealing Article 165 of the Current Criminal Code (Act No. 603), published in *La Gaceta No. 224* of 17 November 2006.

<sup>25</sup> Before this reform, the Criminal Code provided for the possibility of therapeutic abortion as an exception to the criminalization of abortion. In Latin America and the Caribbean, apart from Nicaragua, El Salvador, Haiti, Honduras, the Dominican Republic and Suriname maintain a total ban on abortion, which is criminalized under their respective Criminal Code.

<sup>26</sup> See, for instance, Radio la Primerísima, “FSLN: No al aborto”, 18 August 2006, available at: <https://noticiaslatam.lat/20060926/54271859.html>.

<sup>27</sup> In January 2009, criminal proceedings were brought against the *Centro de Investigación de la Comunicación* (CINCO), the *Movimiento Autónomo de Mujeres* (MAM) and the *Grupo Venancia* (linked to the *Red de Mujeres del Norte* and the *Red de Matagalpa*), accusing them of money laundering and alleged subversion of the “constitutional order” for funding organizations that supported women’s access to abortion. Although the charges lacked evidence and were dismissed in September 2010, they served to criminalize organizations perceived as critical, with the feminist movement being one of the first to experience this kind of reprisal (see: Equipo Nítalpan-Envío, “Las reglas del juego”, in *Revista Envío*, No. 319, October 2008, available at: <https://www.revistaenvio.org/articulo/3869>; “Noticias del mes”, in *Revista Envío*, No. 320, November 2008, available at: <https://www.revistaenvio.org/articulo/3891>; José María Castán, “Las ONG internacionales no vamos a renunciar a nuestro trabajo ni a nuestra razón de ser”, in *Revista Envío*, No. 320, November 2008, available at: <https://www.revistaenvio.org/articulo/3893>; and Salvador Martí i Puig, “Nicaragua 2008: polarización y pactos”, in *Revista de ciencia política (Santiago)*, Vol. 29, No. 2, 2009, pp. 515-531).

18. In 2012, the Comprehensive Act against Violence against Women entered into force, representing a significant advance for the human rights of women, in particular their access to justice. This Act proposed “to take action against violence against women, with the aim of protecting women’s human rights and guaranteeing them a life free from violence.”<sup>28</sup> However, in 2014, that purpose was reformulated through an executive regulation that prioritized the strengthening of the family, the recovery of traditional values and complementarity between women and men, replacing the original objective of protecting women’s rights.<sup>29</sup>

19. A reform to the Comprehensive Act that entered into force in 2013 introduced mandatory mediation for certain offences considered less serious, including physical violence causing minor injuries, psychological violence, intimidation or threats against women and violence against women in the context of the exercise of public functions.<sup>30</sup> This reform weakened guarantees for the protection of victims of gender-based violence by exposing them to pressure to reconcile with the perpetrator.

20. One achievement of the Comprehensive Act had been the inclusion of the crime of femicide in the Criminal Code. However, a reform adopted in 2017 narrowed the scope of the criminal offence of femicide from “unequal power relations between men and women” to “interpersonal couple relationships.”<sup>31</sup> This means that, in the case of relationships that are not those between a couple, only discrimination on the grounds of sex and/or sexual orientation may be considered as an aggravating circumstance of the offence, as established in the Criminal Code (arts. 36 (4) and 140 bis).

21. The Government responded to criticism and complaints from various women’s organizations concerning the regressive nature of those reforms with a campaign to discredit the content and nature of the Comprehensive Act, presenting it as a threat to traditional family values.<sup>32</sup>

## **B. Gender equality: official discourse against regressive reality**

22. Since its return to power in 2007, the Government of Daniel Ortega has highlighted gender equity and equality in the enjoyment and exercise of human rights as a central axis of its political agenda and has declared its commitment to women’s right to live free from violence and to participate fully in the political, social, economic and cultural life of the country.<sup>33</sup> In

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<sup>28</sup> Comprehensive Act on Violence against Women and Amendments to Act No. 641, Criminal Code (Act No. 779), published in *La Gaceta No. 35* of 22 February 2012, art. 1.

<sup>29</sup> Regulations under Act No. 779, Comprehensive Act against Violence against Women, amending Act No. 641, Criminal Code (Executive Decree No. 42-2014), published in *La Gaceta No. 143* of 31 July 2014.

<sup>30</sup> Act amending Article 46 and adding provisions to Articles 30, 31 and 37 of Act No. 779, Comprehensive Act against Violence against Women, and amending Act No. 641, Criminal Code (Act No. 846), published in *La Gaceta No. 185* of 1 October 2013, art. 46.

<sup>31</sup> Act amending Act No. 641, Criminal Code, Act No. 779, Comprehensive Act against Violence against Women and amending Act No. 641, Criminal Code, and Act No. 406, Code of Criminal Procedure (Act No. 952), published in *La Gaceta No. 126* of 7 May 2017, art. 3.

<sup>32</sup> CLADEM Nicaragua, “Informe alterno a la evaluación del segundo informe hemisférico del MESECVI”, 15 March 2012, pp. 1 and 2, available at: <https://cladem.org/biblioteca/informe-alterno-a-la-evaluacion-del-segundo-informe-hemisferico-del-mese cvi>; CLADEM, “Informe alterno a la evaluación del Segundo Informe Hemisférico del Comité de Expertas (CEVI) del Mecanismo de Seguimiento a la Convención del Belem do Pará (MESECVI)”, pp. 1 and 2, available at: <https://www.oas.org/es/mese cvi/docs/Round2-FollowUp-CLADEM-Regional.pdf>; Pamela Neumann, “Women’s Rights in Retrograde: Understanding the Contentious Politics of Gender Violence Law in Nicaragua”, 24 March 2017, available at: <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/humanrights/2017/03/24/womens-rights-in-retrograde-understanding-the-contentious-politics-of-gender-violence-law-in-nicaragua>, and “Gender-based violence and the patrimonial state in Nicaragua”, pp. 69-90.

<sup>33</sup> See, for instance: “Informe Nacional sobre el Avance en la Aplicación de la Estrategia de Montevideo para la Implementación de la Agenda Regional de Género en el marco del Desarrollo Sostenible hacia 2030 - Nicaragua”, May 2019, pp. 5-11, available at: [https://www.cepal.org/sites/default/files/nicaragua\\_em\\_2019.pdf](https://www.cepal.org/sites/default/files/nicaragua_em_2019.pdf); “Informe Nacional sobre los progresos alcanzados en la aplicación de la Declaración y Plataforma de Acción De Beijing (1995)”, 2019, pp. 6-11, available at: <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/CSW/64/National->

particular, the authorities have repeatedly emphasized, before international forums and organizations, their achievements in the political representation of women, especially their progress in the field of political parity through the adoption of constitutional reforms and electoral laws.

23. This State narrative has been widely questioned by feminist and women human rights experts, who have pointed out it was merely declaratory in nature. In reality, many women who hold positions under the political parity scheme (known as “50/50”) do so within highly centralized and hierarchical structures, with little autonomy to influence the formulation of public policies that promote substantive gender equality or to question decisions that directly affect women’s rights.<sup>34</sup>

24. With regard to gender-based violence, the Government has highlighted the development of what it calls a “Christian, Socialist and Solidarity Model” that “prioritizes the prevention of and response to gender-based violence, from an approach based on values, changes in attitudes, behaviours and power relations, implementing laws and public policies supported by the construction of new sociocultural patterns for gender claims and the comprehensive protection of women”, as well as the development of a legal and institutional framework oriented towards the comprehensive protection of women.<sup>35</sup>

25. However, key public institutions, such as the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of the Family, Adolescence and Childhood, the Supreme Court of Justice and the Institute of Forensic Medicine, have ceased publishing data on gender-based violence, femicides and sexual offences since 2023. The absence of official data creates an information gap that prevents accurate analysis of these offences and hampers policies and practices that would contribute to their prevention. This lack of registration also demonstrates the Government’s lack of commitment to combating gender-based violence.

26. In this regard, UN-Women reported that, as of December 2020, only 37.7 per cent of the indicators needed to monitor the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals from a gender perspective were available for Nicaragua. UN-Women noted significant information gaps in areas such as the labour market, unpaid domestic and caregiving work and women’s

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For example, in 2025 the authorities underscored that Nicaragua ranked third in the world as regards women’s representation in parliament. They also emphasized that Nicaragua ranked fifth on the World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Index (in fact, according to that Global Index, in 2024 Nicaragua ranked sixth and in 2025 it fell to eighteenth place).

Nicaragua’s statement before the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly, general debate, 3-9 October 2025

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do so within highly centralized and hierarchical structures, with little autonomy to influence the formulation of public policies that promote

*“Decisions were not made at the institution’s level; they came as ‘guidance’ from the party and Rosario Murillo. Women in management positions could not dissent, even when the orders entailed violence or repression. When I refused to send staff to the streets following the order ‘let’s go all out’ in 2018, I was stripped of my responsibilities, isolated, threatened and ultimately dismissed.”*

Ligia Ivette Gómez, former political secretary of the Central Bank’s Sandinista Leadership Committee

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reviews/Nicaragua.pdf; and “Informe del Estado de Nicaragua: Restitución de los Derechos de las Mujeres y Niñas en Nicaragua, en la Implementación de la Agenda 2030, ODS y la Declaración y Plataforma de Acción de Beijing +30”, 19 April 2024, pp. 3-6, available at: [https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-09/b30\\_report\\_nicaragua\\_es.pdf](https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-09/b30_report_nicaragua_es.pdf).

<sup>34</sup> CENIDH, “Derechos Humanos en Nicaragua – Informe 2015”, 25 February 2016, p. 36, y “Derechos Humanos en Nicaragua – Informe 2016”, 5 May 2017, p. 121, available at: <https://www.cenidh.org/recursos/documentos/>.

<sup>35</sup> “Informe Nacional sobre el Avance en la Aplicación de la Estrategia de Montevideo para la Implementación de la Agenda Regional de Género en el marco del Desarrollo Sostenible hacia 2030 - Nicaragua”, pp. 9 and 10. See also: “Informe del Estado de Nicaragua: Restitución de los Derechos de las Mujeres y Niñas en Nicaragua, en la Implementación de la Agenda 2030, ODS y la Declaración y Plataforma de Acción de Beijing +30”, pp. 9 a 13.

participation in local governments. It also indicated that Nicaragua lacked comparable methodologies for periodic monitoring in other areas, such as gender and poverty, sexual harassment, women's access to productive assets (including land), and gender and the environment.<sup>36</sup>

27. According to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), in 2023 Nicaragua reported to the Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean only cases corresponding to the indicator of intimate femicide, that is, those committed by a partner or former partner.<sup>37</sup> In 2025, Nicaragua did not report any information on femicides.<sup>38</sup> By contrast, the non-governmental organization Observatory of Catholics for the Right to Decide documented 52 femicides in 2023, 57 in 2024 and 53 in 2025.<sup>39</sup>

28. Since 2007, the authorities, in particular Rosario Murillo, have promoted a model of “ideal woman” associated with motherhood and the traditional family order in their discourse.<sup>40</sup> For example, on 7 March 2019, the then Vice-President stated that the achievements attained for the benefit of women “are achievements that do not separate us [women] from the responsibility that we also have and that we proudly assume: our families, our sons and our daughters. It is a culture of family and community, and we women do not detach ourselves, we do not neglect, we do not distance ourselves from our responsibilities in the home, in the family, as a force of love, as a force of understanding, because at home as well, when there are difficulties, disagreements, we women are a force of understanding, we are a force of love and faith, one of our great victories”.<sup>41</sup>

29. The highest authorities have also repeatedly denigrated, stigmatized and defamed the feminist movement and its figures, regularly portraying them as enemies of the people. In an article from 2008, Rosario Murillo wrote about “garbage feminism” and “false feminism” that “beats the drums of war against all human values”. She compared it to a “counter-revolution” and its figures to “the darkest and most fearsome figures of the criminal Somoza Guard”.<sup>42</sup> In another example, she stated: “We [women] feel indignant at the trafficking and prostitution of women's rights, in the mouths of coup-mongers and criminals who wield contempt and hatred against the people, and against us, the humble, simple, brave and heroic Nicaraguan women.”<sup>43</sup>

30. The model of ideal woman praised in the official discourse contravenes the standard set out in article 5 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (hereinafter CEDAW), by reinforcing traditional roles based on stereotypes about what the role of men and women in the family and in society should be. This discourse seeks to delegitimize and stigmatize women who exercise political leadership or express critical views regarding government policies and actions.

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<sup>36</sup> See: <https://data.unwomen.org/country/nicaragua>.

<sup>37</sup> ECLAC, “Violencia feminicida en cifras: América Latina y el Caribe”, boletín núm. 2, November 2023, p. 4.

<sup>38</sup> ECLAC, “Violencia feminicida en cifras: América Latina y el Caribe”, boletín núm. 4, November 2025, p. 5.

<sup>39</sup> For this tally, the organization adopted the definition of the crime of femicide as set out in article 9 of Act No. 779 before the 2017 reform.

<sup>40</sup> The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women also noted with concern the prevalence of gender stereotypes in the public discourse (CEDAW/C/NIC/CO/7-10, para. 25).

<sup>41</sup> Discurso reproducido en 19 Digital, “Compañera Rosario: En Nicaragua las mujeres somos fuerza de victorias”, 7 de marzo de 2019, disponible en: <https://www.el19digital.com/articulos/ver/titulo:88056-companera-rosario-en-nicaragua-las-mujeres-somos-fuerza-de-victorias>.

<sup>42</sup> Rosario Murillo, “El feminismo chatarra y las guerras de baja intensidad”, 2008, reproduced at: <https://tortillaconsal.com/tortilla/node/10242>.

<sup>43</sup> 19 Digital, “Proclama en el día de lucha contra la violencia de género”, 23 November 2018, available at: <https://www.el19digital.com/articulos/ver/titulo:84297-proclama-en-el-dia-de-lucha-contra-la-violencia-de-genero>.

31. Although the Nicaraguan Constitution and the Family Code recognize the absolute equality between women and men,<sup>44</sup> traditional concepts about gender roles and relations, in particular the concept of the traditional family, persist in Nicaraguan legislation. The Constitution itself establishes that the Nicaraguan family is composed of men and women of different ages,<sup>45</sup> and the Family Code states that the family is united by the marriage or stable de facto union between a man and a woman.<sup>46</sup>

32. The progress on gender equality promoted by the Government was questioned by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in its concluding observations on the combined seventh to tenth periodic reports of Nicaragua in 2024.<sup>47</sup> The Committee expressed concern regarding a long list of shortcomings, breaches and setbacks in guaranteeing women's rights in several areas, among these access to justice and health care, including reproductive and sexual health care.

### C. Cancellation of the legal status of women and LGBTIQ+ organizations

33. Since the beginning of its investigation and until August 2025, the Group has documented the arbitrary cancellation of the legal status of over 5,400 non-profit organizations. In most cases, the property, premises and archives of these organizations were also arbitrarily confiscated.<sup>48</sup> These mass cancellations were facilitated by a restrictive regulatory framework designed, interpreted and applied in such a way as to grant the authorities broad discretionary powers of control, sanction and dissolution over such organizations.<sup>49</sup>

34. Human rights organizations, including those dedicated to the promotion and protection of the rights of women, girls, LGBTIQ+ persons, and Indigenous and Afrodescendant Peoples, as well as humanitarian organizations, are among those most affected by these cancellations.<sup>50</sup> These organizations were punished for documenting human rights violations, supporting victims, fostering critical citizenship, defending sexual, reproductive, environmental and territorial rights, and denouncing the repression before national and international bodies. The *Centro de Información y Servicios de Asesoría en Salud*, dedicated to the promotion of sexual and reproductive rights, was the first organization whose legal status was forcibly cancelled in December 2018.

35. A significant number of these organizations were led by women with a high public profile. In fact, five of the first nine organizations whose legal status was cancelled in

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<sup>44</sup> Political Constitution, as amended by the Act on the Partial Amendment of the Constitution of Nicaragua (Act No. 1234), published in *La Gaceta No. 32* of 18 February 2025, arts. 28, 44 and 66; and the Family Code (Act No. 870), published in *La Gaceta No. 190* of 8 October 2024, art. 2(g).

<sup>45</sup> Political Constitution, arts. 4 y 66.

<sup>46</sup> Family Code, art. 37. Nicaragua is not the only country in Latin America that restricts the concept of family in this way; the constitutions of El Salvador, Honduras, Paraguay and the Dominican Republic contain similar provisions.

<sup>47</sup> CEDAW/C/NIC/CO/7-10.

<sup>48</sup> A/HRC/58/26, paras. 65-68; and A/HRC/58/CRP.8, paras. 698-724.

<sup>49</sup> This framework includes, among other instruments, the Foreign Agents Regulation Act (Act No. 1040), published in *La Gaceta No. 192* of 19 October 2020, the General Act on the Regulation and Control of Non-Profit Organizations (Act No. 1115), published in *La Gaceta No. 66* of 6 April 2022, and the Act on Amendments and Additions to Act No. 1115, General Act on the Regulation and Control of Non-Profit Organisations, and Amendments to Act No. 522, General Act on Sport, Physical Education and Physical Recreation (Act No. 1127), published in *La Gaceta No. 152* of 16 August 2022 (A/HRC/58/CRP.8, paras. 707-724; and A/HRC/52/CRP.5, paras. 690-719).

<sup>50</sup> A/HRC/58/CRP.8, paras. 701-706; A/HRC/57/20, para. 15; A/HRC/52/CRP.5, paras. 721, 916 and 917; La Lupa, "Personas LGBTIQ+ en Nicaragua y en el exilio exigen respeto a sus derechos humanos", 28 June 2022, available at: <https://lalupa.press/personas-lgbtqi-en-nicaragua-y-en-el-exilio-exigen-respeto-a-sus-derechos-humanos/>; and IACHR, Boletín MESENI, "Organizaciones de la sociedad civil canceladas en Nicaragua", 2025, available at: [https://www.oas.org/es/cidh/MESENI/Boletines/boletin-meseni-2025\\_04.html](https://www.oas.org/es/cidh/MESENI/Boletines/boletin-meseni-2025_04.html).

December 2018 were headed by women.<sup>51</sup> These women defenders had assumed a public role in denouncing human rights violations, accompanying victims and questioning Government policies and the official narrative. They occupied positions of political influence and international prominence that had historically been reserved for men. The activism of these women represented a challenge to State authoritarianism and to social gender mandates, which kept women away from public life. For that reason, the persecution to which they were subjected at the hands of the State was directed not only against the organizations they led but also against them because of the transgression their public participation represented.

36. In many cases, these organizations and their leaders were victims of smear and stigmatization campaigns on social media and in pro-government media outlets.<sup>52</sup> Both their leaders and work teams, which included many women, were also victims of surveillance, harassment, threats, arbitrary detention, criminalization, confiscation of property, deprivation of their nationality and/or expulsion from the country, among other violations.<sup>53</sup> Many persons were thus forced into exile, while others had to constantly modify their working methods and security measures, including frequent changes in their location, place of operation and means of communication.

37. According to the *Iniciativa Mesoamericana de Mujeres Defensoras de Derechos Humanos*, between November 2018 and September 2025, the authorities cancelled the legal status of at least 282 non-profit organizations working to defend the rights of women, children and LGBTIQ+ persons.<sup>54</sup> These cancellations, and the consequent forced closure of the organizations, have disproportionately affected women, girls and LGBTIQ+ persons who depended on them for protection and access to essential services. In particular, they dismantled structures that provided essential services to victims of gender-based violence, including sexual and reproductive health services, psychosocial support and legal counselling.

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Among these 282 organizations, 27 focused on defending the rights of Indigenous and Afrodescendant women and girls. For example, in March 2022, the National Assembly cancelled the legal status of the *Centro de Justicia y Derechos Humanos de la Costa Atlántica de Nicaragua* (CEJUDHCAN) – see Decree No. 8793, published in *La Gaceta No. 56* of 23 March 2022. This arbitrary measure has seriously affected the support received by 97 Indigenous communities that are beneficiaries of protection measures of the Inter-American human rights system.

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38. In addition, the closure of organizations providing humanitarian support, such as community, religious and social assistance associations, eliminated services essential for daily survival, such as soup kitchens, community childcare or emergency programmes, rendering caregiving tasks, which are performed mostly by women, even more difficult.

39. In summary, the mass and arbitrary cancellation of the legal status of women's and LGBTIQ+ organizations eliminated most of the safe spaces for articulation, visibility and protection that these organizations provided. The work of organizations led by women and/or focused on the defence of the rights of women and girls challenged the Government's discourse

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<sup>51</sup> The *Centro de Información y Servicios de Asesoría en Salud* (CISAS), the *Centro Nicaragüense de Derechos Humanos* (CENIDH), the *Instituto de Liderazgos de la Segovia* (ILLS), the *Centro de Investigación de la Comunicación* (CINCO), and the *Fundación para la Promoción y el Desarrollo Municipal Popol Na* (see A/HRC/52/CRP.5, paras. 723-725 and 916).

<sup>52</sup> A/HRC/52/CRP.5, paras. 724, 725, 748, 754, 911-913 and 920.

<sup>53</sup> A/HRC/58/CRP.8, para. 698.

<sup>54</sup> *Iniciativa Mesoamericana de Defensoras*, "Persecución política por motivo de género en Nicaragua: ni silencio ni olvido", February 2026, available at: <https://im-defensoras.org/2026/02/persecucion-por-razon-de-genero-caso-nicaragua/#metodologia>.

on the human rights situation and gender equality in the country; for that reason, they became a target of the repression.

#### **D. Profiles of women victims of the repression**

40. The Group has documented serious human rights violations perpetrated by State and non-State actors against an ever-growing number of victims since 2018. The Government has progressively expanded its patterns of victimization to consolidate its control through four phases of repression.<sup>55</sup>

41. All the victims were targeted because of their real or perceived political identity or their connection with persons considered to be opponents. The repression has taken place within the framework of a discriminatory policy aimed at systematically persecuting and silencing dissent, as well as closing the spaces from which criticism, protest or resistance could emerge. The Government focused part of its repressive strategy on persecuting and repressing women and feminist movements because of their long history of autonomous political leadership, including their leading role in community, student and *campesino* organization and their demands for social justice and equality.

42. The first phase of repression (2018–2020) was characterized by the violent and disproportionate repression of legitimate and widespread protests. Many women participated in these protests, several of them taking on leadership roles, providing medical or logistical assistance, or documenting what was happening. Certain women stood out as leaders of the self-convened protest movement, organizing the peaceful mobilization, building support networks and coordinating civic actions, including female students, activists, feminists, women human rights defenders and *campesinas*. The feminist movement put its organizational structures at the service of social mobilization.

43. In this context, hundreds of women, in particular human rights defenders, students, community leaders, feminists and LGBTIQ+ activists, were among the first victims of repression, facing harassment, stigmatization, threats, gender-based violence, including sexual violence, arbitrary detention and criminalization, among other violations.<sup>56</sup> During this phase, women were directly selected on account of their political opposition.

44. As the repression became more systematic, the authorities began to repress women and LGBTIQ+ persons who had played leadership roles in the protests and in the criticism of the Government, as well as women political leaders, community activists, journalists, academics, lawyers and former Sandinistas. The forms of repression were shaped by their gender and included, in particular, sexualized physical and psychological violence, and smear and stigmatization campaigns focused on gender roles, in which the victims were branded “bad mothers” and accused of posing a danger to the traditional family. They were also subjected to humiliating treatment, including insults based on gender and/or sexual orientation.

45. The second phase of repression (2021) was characterized, in particular, by the intensification of selective repression to neutralize the political opposition and ensure the re-election of President Daniel Ortega. In this context, women political leaders were repressed in a particularly relentless manner. The authorities detained women opposition figures, including feminist women, under vague accusations such as treason, conspiracy and terrorism, during disproportionate police operations and searches without legal grounds. The treatment of

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<sup>55</sup> A/HRC/61/56, paras. 5-12; and A/HRC/58/26, paras. 7-10.

<sup>56</sup> A/HRC/52/CRP.5, paras. 871, 872, 902 and 905 ss.

women deprived of their liberty combined discrimination on political grounds with discrimination based on gender and sexual orientation.

46. The third phase of repression (2022) saw an increase in efforts to eliminate the remaining political opposition, the intensification of repression against the Catholic and other Christian churches and the accelerated dismantling of civic space and civil society. The authorities arbitrarily cancelled the legal status of thousands of non-profit organizations, including at least 280 non-governmental organizations working to defend the rights of women, children and LGBTIQ+ persons, as described in the previous section. Over time, victimization extended to a broad and diverse range of women and LGBTIQ+ persons, including businesswomen, artists, journalists, as well as *campesino*, Indigenous and Afrodescendant women leaders, and women linked to the Catholic and other Christian churches.

47. The authorities also continued to criminalize women human rights defenders and political activists, among other women, branding them “foreign agents”, “traitors to the homeland” and “enemies of the family”. Digital surveillance and sexualized smear campaigns also increased. The authorities also continued to stigmatize “false feminism” and “garbage feminism”, which, in their view, promote a “foreign culture”, “family disintegration”, rejection of God and hatred of men, and mock other women and mothers.<sup>57</sup>

48. The fourth phase (2023 to the present) has been characterized by violations aimed at eliminating all remaining criticism and preventing any movement of resistance. The purpose has been to ensure that the Co-Presidents maintain absolute control over all State entities and the population, including persons in exile through the expansion of transnational human rights violations. Many women opponents and defenders, as well as women relatives of opponents, have been stripped of their nationality, expelled, prohibited from re-entering their country, surveilled, or denied the issuance of their passport and other official documents, among other transnational violations. During this phase, the authorities have also expanded victimization within the State apparatus and the Sandinista ranks, attacking persons perceived as a threat to the consolidation of Co-President Murillo’s power, in particular women members of the judiciary and women public officials.

49. Dozens of women relatives or associates of real or perceived opponents, in particular women with caregiving responsibilities, have also been victims of “proxy punishment” (that is, violations that affect them solely because of their family ties or friendships), both inside the country and in exile. From a gender perspective, proxy punishment is significant insofar as it shows that the authorities have instrumentalized family ties, caregiving roles and social relations to repress, thereby significantly expanding the universe of victims and deepening the gender-differentiated impacts of the violations.

50. The patterns of violations and the profiles of victims documented by the Group reveal a clear objective: the determination of the Co-Presidents to control all State institutions and the population, both inside and outside the country, in order to prevent any change of Government, especially one initiated from within their own ranks.<sup>58</sup> The gender dimensions analyzed reflect a calculated strategy to neutralize actors whose historical legitimacy and organizational capacity constituted an obstacle to the Government’s objective of total control.

51. Many women, such as human rights defenders, feminists, activists, political leaders, journalists and Indigenous, Afrodescendant and *campesino* women leaders, have been selected by the authorities as targets of State repression because of their public role criticizing the

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<sup>57</sup> Rosario Murillo, “El feminismo chatarra y las guerras de baja intensidad”.

<sup>58</sup> A/HRC/61/56, paras. 5-12.

Government and because they subvert gender norms and challenge traditional roles by exercising political leadership, claiming their bodily autonomy and advancing feminist activism and demands. Certain groups of women, such as Indigenous, Afrodescendant and *campesino* women, have faced multiple forms of discrimination owing to the combination of political repression with the imposition of discriminatory sociocultural norms and patterns, racism, classism, territorial dispossession and the politicization of collective identities. In the case of women affected by proxy punishment measures, the authorities have instrumentalized gender roles, such as motherhood and other caregiving responsibilities, to amplify the social impact of the violations.

### III. Gender dimensions of human rights violations

#### A. Extrajudicial executions in the context of the 2018 protests

52. The response of the authorities to the mass protests of 2018, which were mostly peaceful, was violent and disproportionate. The Group determined that the police, the army and pro-government armed groups acted in a coordinated manner, using excessive and lethal force to suppress demonstrations, neutralize their leaders and dismantle the barricades, especially during the so-called “Operation Clean-Up”,<sup>59</sup> as part of a well-organized strategy to retain power at any cost.<sup>60</sup> These systematic and deliberate actions caused hundreds of deaths and injuries among demonstrators, in violation of the victims’ right to life and physical integrity.

53. To date, there is no definitive figure for the number of persons who died during the 2018 protests. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (hereinafter IACHR), including the Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts on Nicaragua, and civil society organizations estimated that at least 300 persons died.<sup>61</sup> According to IACHR, 15 of those victims were reportedly women, including two minors and two police officers.<sup>62</sup> According to a report by *La Mesa Nacional LGBTIQ+*, eight of the persons who died were reportedly LGBTIQ+ persons (seven gay men and one lesbian woman). This figure may underestimate the reality owing to a lack of records and the stigma associated with the victims’ sexual orientation or gender identity.

54. The Group documented 40 cases of men who died in the context of the 2018 protests, based on direct and secondary information. It determined that these 40 cases constituted extrajudicial executions and were representative of systematic and widespread patterns of conduct, consistently replicated over several months and across different parts of the country. The Group was able to corroborate these patterns through the analysis of 75 additional cases of persons who died during the protests (73 men and 2 women).<sup>63</sup>

55. Most of the fatalities were men, which can be explained by the convergence of several factors. Men who participated in the demonstrations, especially young men, frequently occupied the front lines of marches, directly exposing themselves to the violent response of State agents and pro-government armed groups. These men protected other demonstrators, especially children, women and older persons, from that violence. In addition, security forces

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<sup>59</sup> A series of violent security operations aimed at dismantling barricades and quell the protests across the country (A/HRC/61/56, para. 70; A/HRC/58/26, para. 31; A/HRC/58/CRP.8, paras. 350 y 365; A/HRC/52/63, paras. 27-29; and A/HRC/52/CRP.5, paras. 292-295).

<sup>60</sup> A/HRC/58/26, paras. 22-27; and A/HRC/58/CRP.8, paras. 383-386, 399-410 and 413-433.

<sup>61</sup> A/HRC/52/63, para. 17.

<sup>62</sup> A/HRC/52/CRP.5, paras. 340 and 887; and IACHR, Special Monitoring Mechanism for Nicaragua, “Registro de víctimas fatales”, available at: <https://www.oas.org/es/CIDH/jsForm/?File=/es/cidh/meseni/registro.asp>.

<sup>63</sup> A/HRC/58/CRP.8, para. 384; and A/HRC/52/CRP.5, paras. 328 and 329.

generally consider men, especially young men, to be more dangerous because of their physical condition.

56. The lack of information on the 15 women who died did not allow the Group to determine the precise circumstances of their deaths. Although women played a fundamental role in the 2018 protests, the lesser availability of information on their victimization has contributed, to some extent, to rendering their role and the violations to which they were subjected in the context of the demonstrations invisible. Similarly, the lack of systematically disaggregated information on the sexual orientation and/or gender identity of the victims, as well as their ethnic origin, among other factors, does not allow for an intersectional analysis of the profile of victims of extrajudicial executions.

57. According to several civil society organizations, support networks for victims of violations and their relatives and demands for justice have been sustained primarily by women, be it mothers, sisters or daughters of victims of violations.<sup>64</sup> Many women were subjected to surveillance, harassment and intimidation, among other violations, for demanding justice for members of their families. Mari Cruz Bermudez Serrano, the mother of Richard Pavón, the first teenager to be killed because of State repression on 19 April 2018 in Managua, and a member of the *Asociación de Madres de Abril*, was arrested in May 2023 and charged with undermining national integrity, spreading false news and conspiracy. After her release a few hours later, she was subjected to control measures, including the obligation to report daily to a police station in Managua.<sup>65</sup>

58. The repression against mothers and other female relatives of victims has prevented them from being able to grieve in dignified conditions. As a result, many of them suffer from depression, sadness and anxiety. Practices that are essential to the grieving process, such as visits to the cemetery, collectively sharing pain or freely remembering their sons, have been restricted by the persistent context of repression, surveillance and harassment.

## **B. Arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance**

59. The Group established that the arbitrary detention and unfair trial of real or perceived opponents, including women, constitute a pattern of violations used by the authorities to punish and silence critical voices during all phases of repression. The Group also determined that, since 2023, enforced disappearance has become a pattern of violations to which the authorities have resorted in order to punish and silence critical voices and instil fear among their relatives and the population at large.<sup>66</sup>

60. According to civil society monitoring, between April 2018 and April 2026, over 5,000 persons were reportedly arbitrarily detained, including at least 988 women.<sup>67</sup> The latter figure includes women of all ages, from urban and rural areas, Indigenous, Afrodescendant and *campesino* women, professionals and women engaged in domestic work, as well as LGBTIQ+

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<sup>64</sup> Unidad de Defensa Jurídica, Colectivo de Derechos Humanos Nicaragua Nunca Más, Instituto sobre Raza, Igualdad y Derechos Humanos, Movimiento Autónomo de Mujeres, IM-Defensoras, “¿Dónde más busco? Vidas suspendidas, desapariciones forzadas en Nicaragua y la resistencia de quienes les buscan”, August 2025, pp. 10-14; and Unidad de Defensa Jurídica, “Estudio sobre el impacto socioeconómico y psicosocial de la prisión política en Nicaragua”, October 2023, pp. 8, 9 and 17-19.

<sup>65</sup> 100% Noticias, “Policía golpea y detiene a madre del joven asesinado Richard Pavón, en Tipitapa”, 3 May 2023, available at: <https://100noticias.tv/politica/123606-policia-detiene-madre-richard-pavon-tipitapa/>.

<sup>66</sup> A/HRC/58/26, paras. 28-37; and A/HRC/58/CRP.8, paras. 441-496.

<sup>67</sup> Figure from the organization *Monitoreo Azul y Blanco*.

women. At least 233 of them were human rights defenders, activists, feminists, journalists, political and student leaders, academics and cultural promoters at the time of their arrest.<sup>68</sup>

61. The Group documented the arbitrary detention of 62 real or perceived women opponents (including human rights defenders, activists and feminists). Consistent with its previous findings, these women were victims of a pattern of systematic violations of their right to due process and a fair trial, including arrest without a warrant, incommunicado detention, denial of legal representation and the imposition of unfounded or disproportionate charges, or charges based on false evidence.<sup>69</sup> The Group also observed the use of gender stereotypes to criminalize and stigmatize them, as well as the failure of the judicial authorities to respond to allegations of torture and other ill-treatment, including sexual violence.

62. The Group documented the enforced disappearance of 15 women among these 62 cases. Several of the victims had been involved in the 2018 protests and/or were linked to political activism or Christian churches. Five of them were forcibly disappeared until their release, two or three weeks after their arrest. Ten of them remained in a situation of enforced disappearance for several months and up to over a year. At the end of April 2026, three of them remained disappeared. Among them were Angelica Patricia Chavarría Altamirano (39), the partner of Humberto Ortega Saavedra, military leader of the Sandinista Revolution and brother of Daniel Ortega, and Salvadora del Socorro Martínez Aburto (69), the partner of Carlos Ramón Brenes Sánchez, a retired army colonel who was also detained and forcibly disappeared.<sup>70</sup> The Group recalls that there is no minimum time for a disappearance to qualify as enforced disappearance.<sup>71</sup>

63. The arbitrary detention of women, and in certain cases their enforced disappearance, interrupted their career paths and affected their economic situation. It has also disrupted their caregiving roles, separating them from their children and dislocating family dynamics. These separations have had multiple adverse consequences for their immediate family, as well as on their living conditions.

64. As mentioned above, women have been the main organizers of support networks for victims of violations and their relatives, as well as of actions and demands for justice. In general, it is women who visit detained relatives, search for them in detention centres and police stations when their

*“I haven’t seen my son for five years. The last time I saw him, was two or three weeks before I was expelled from the country, during a visit at La Esperanza [prison]. He is now 16. He lives with his grandmother. My son has become distrustful and rebellious; he no longer wants to study. The headteacher at the school where he was studying told me she couldn’t keep admitting him because she didn’t want any trouble with the Government. I tried to enrol him at another school, but the teachers spoke badly of me. They said that I was one of those people who had ‘stalled the country’ and that ‘thank God I was gone’. As a result of these changes, my son lost two years of schooling and decided to give up his studies for good.”*

Woman interviewed by the Group

<sup>68</sup> Record from the organization *Iniciativa Mesoamericana de Defensoras* updated to September 2025, cited in: Centro Guernica para la Justicia Internacional and *Iniciativa Mesoamericana de Mujeres Defensoras de Derechos Humanos (IM-Defensoras)*, “Persecución política por motivo de género en nicaragua: ni silencio ni olvido”, February 2026, available at: <https://im-defensoras.org/2026/02/persecucion-por-razon-de-genero-caso-nicaragua/#metodologia>.

<sup>69</sup> A/HRC/52/CRP.5, para. 577.

<sup>70</sup> A/HRC/55/CRP.7, paras. 267-270.

<sup>71</sup> Committee on Enforced Disappearances and Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, “Joint statement on so-called ‘short-term enforced disappearances’”, CED/C/11, 31 October 2024, para. 1.

whereabouts are unknown and demand justice, while subjected to harassment and threats, among other violations. One illustrative case is that of Marta del Socorro Ubilla, who was harassed, arbitrarily detained in 2023 and expelled from the country on 9 February 2023 for demanding the release of her two sons, who had been arbitrarily detained in the context of the State repression of 2018.<sup>72</sup>

*“They (the women) are the ones who queue up [at prisons] and miss a day’s work to deliver one or two parcels a month, when they allow them. They are the ones who go from police station to police station looking for their imprisoned loved ones. They are the ones who are subjected to police harassment, with officers turning up at their front door.”*

Woman interviewed by the Group

65. The Government’s strategy of arbitrarily detaining women during the different phases of repression aimed, among its objectives, at delegitimizing female leadership, which had been recognized and validated by their communities, and at portraying it as contrary to morality and the family. This was intended to discourage women’s participation in public life and in protests and resistance against the Government. In this way, it succeeded in weakening women’s support and social organization networks, affecting not only the direct victims but also the entire social fabric.

### C. Torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment

66. The Group documented that, since April 2018, personnel of the National Police and the National Prison Service and members of pro-government armed groups have committed acts constituting cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and torture against real or perceived opponents arbitrarily deprived of their liberty, including dozens – probably hundreds – of women. These acts have taken place in the facilities of the Legal Cooperation Directorate (*El Chipote*, then *El Nuevo Chipote*), police stations and secret detention places, as well as, subsequently, in penitentiary centres throughout the country.<sup>73</sup> The Group concluded that the acts of torture and ill-treatment which were documented do not constitute isolated events or conduct, but rather respond to a State policy of systematic repression aimed at humiliating, intimidating, punishing and, ultimately, neutralizing real or perceived opponents.<sup>74</sup>

67. The Group further observed that both men and women detained for political reasons have been subjected to various forms of gender-based and sexual violence, including individual and gang rape, as well as other forms of sexual abuse, including repeated threats of rape, forced nudity and insults of a sexual nature or based on the victim’s gender.<sup>75</sup> These forms of violence were not only used against

*“I entered a room in District III [police station], where they took my photo and asked me to take my clothes off. I refused and told them I wasn’t wearing any underwear. I asked for somewhere to get changed. But they said I had to do it in front of them. They were four older men in uniform. I started crying. They made me turn towards the wall, take my clothes off and do seven squats in front of them. Some said to me: ‘Who told you to go on spouting all that crap you shouldn’t be saying?’ and ‘There’s no point in crying.’ Another said: ‘Make that bitch work harder,’ and everyone laughed.”*

Woman interviewed by the Group

<sup>72</sup> La Lupa, “Martha Ubilla: ‘Todavía me siento presa porque el sufrimiento no ha parado’”, 24 February 2023, available at: <https://lalupa.press/martha-ubilla-todavia-me-siento-presa-porque-el-sufrimiento-no-ha-parado/>.

<sup>73</sup> A/HRC/58/26, paras. 41-47; A/HRC/CRP.8, paras. 523-569; and A/HRC/52/CRP.5, paras. 652-674.

<sup>74</sup> A/HRC/58/CRP.8, paras. 555-569.

<sup>75</sup> A/HRC/58/CRP.8, para. 535; CENIDH, “623 Días de represión y resistencia; situación de los derechos humanos en Nicaragua, 18 abril de 2018 - 31 diciembre 2019”, pp. 23-40, available at: [https://www.cenidh.org/media/documents/docfile/Informe\\_2018-2019\\_v.final.pdf](https://www.cenidh.org/media/documents/docfile/Informe_2018-2019_v.final.pdf); Human Rights Watch, “Brutal represión, torturas, tratos crueles y juicios fraudulentos contra manifestantes y opositores en Nicaragua”, 2019, available at: [https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report\\_pdf/nicaragua0619sp\\_web3.pdf](https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/nicaragua0619sp_web3.pdf); Fundación Arias para la Paz y el Progreso

the victims on the basis of their sex, but were also grounded in social constructions of gender and sexuality that reproduce unequal power relations, domination and the objectification of bodies.

68. From an intersectional perspective, the sexual orientation, gender identity, age and ethnic origin of victims, in particular, have contributed as additional elements of discrimination in the application of torture and other ill-treatment, which has had a disproportionate impact on young people, LGBTIQ+ persons and Indigenous and Afrodescendant persons.

69. According to the first-hand information gathered and corroborated by the Group, women in particular have been victims of degrading and sexist insults, as well as constant threats of rape. Police and prison personnel frequently called detained women “whores”, “bad mothers” or “lazy women”. They used language aimed at humiliating and discrediting them not only for their political or social participation, but also for departing from traditional gender roles, directing their attacks at the victims’ dignity, sexuality, motherhood and legitimacy as women in the public sphere.

*“Police and paramilitaries used to call me ‘slut’, ‘whore’, and other insults, in the streets, during my detention and later. When I was arrested, it was along with a group of men. They touched my breasts during the body search. They threatened me with sexual abuse and rape. My greatest fear in prison or at police stations was to be sexually assaulted.”*

Women interviewed by the Group

70. Sexual violence was more frequent in 2018 and has varied during the subsequent phases of repression. Certain prohibited practices, such as forced nudity and sexual harassment, have been used consistently over time to denigrate, punish and coerce victims, leaving them completely defenceless. The Group identified both male and female police officers as direct perpetrators of these acts of ill-treatment and torture. Several persons interviewed by the Group reported the participation of hooded persons or persons dressed in civilian clothing, to conceal their identity, in the commission of such acts. Acts of sexual violence took place, generally, in the facilities of the Legal Cooperation Directorate (*El Chipote* and, later, *El Nuevo Chipote*), at police stations located in various regions across the country, as well as in secret detention places, particularly in 2018.<sup>76</sup>

*“During the interrogations, they told me what a terrible mother I was for teaching my daughter bad things. They always brought up the subject of motherhood. They asked me why I didn’t think about my family when I was getting up to ‘all this bad stuff’. When I asked for the Bible, they asked me why I hadn’t thought of that when I was getting myself into such trouble. I was questioned by both men and women. Men and women repeated the same thing.”*

Woman interviewed by the Group

71. In the various penitentiary centres, the authorities have implemented a policy of discriminatory treatment of persons imprisoned on political grounds.<sup>77</sup> As part of that discriminatory treatment, these persons have been subjected to confinement measures and have been prohibited from receiving visits from relatives, including their minor children, and legal representatives, in addition to being deprived of their rights to recreation, exercise and adequate food and medical care. These measures, carried out arbitrarily, constitute cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment which, in some cases, reaches the threshold of torture.

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Humano, “Tribunal de conciencia, La violencia sexual como crimen de lesa humanidad bajo el régimen Ortega Murillo, Nicaragua 2018”, available at: <https://arias.or.cr/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/TRIBUNAL-DE-CONCIENCIA.pdf>.

<sup>76</sup> A/HRC/58/CRP.8, paras. 528-535; and A/HRC/52/CRP.5, paras. 652-678.

<sup>77</sup> A/HRC/58/CRP.8, paras. 561-563.

According to victims interviewed, they were applied in a particularly systematic manner against women detained on political grounds. This discriminatory treatment was intended to punish political dissent by increasing the psychological suffering of victims and their relatives, as well as to instil fear and guilt in order to break their resistance.<sup>78</sup>

*“A lieutenant came to see me. I asked her if I could call my children. Instead, they took me to a room where there were two officials from the Legal Cooperation Directorate. There, they told me that my statement contained inconsistencies, demanded that I ‘tell the truth’, and pressured me into signing a statement in which I admitted to the charge of money laundering. I told them I couldn’t do it. So, they started insulting me. They told me I was a foolish, ignorant woman and threatened to take my children away from me. To take them from my mum’s house and bring them to the Ministry of Family Affairs. They laughed as they claimed to have authority over my life. They called me a ‘weak woman’, a ‘cry-baby’ and a ‘bad mother’, accusing me of caring more about ‘the gringos’ than my own children. I pleaded constantly to see them. For nine months I had no news about my children.”*

Woman interviewed by the Group (mother of two minor children, one a few months old, at the time of her arrest)

72. From 2021 onwards, the authorities intensified these discriminatory practices: they increased the

use of prolonged solitary confinement, incommunicado detention and enforced disappearance of persons detained on political grounds, including women.<sup>79</sup> These violations were committed with particular cruelty against women political leaders detained in the facilities of the Legal Cooperation Directorate (*El Nuevo Chipote*) between 2021 and 2023 and women human rights defenders held in maximum-security cells at the comprehensive women’s prison La Esperanza.

*“The only people who were held in solitary confinement were the women, all four of whom belonged to the same political party. They were put in solitary confinement because they were members of UNAMOS and because they were defiant women. The aim is to crush you. They want to feel as though they own you. The instructions came from La Chayo [Rosario Murillo] and Daniel Ortega. The prison guards themselves said that the instructions came from above.”*

Dora María Tellez Argüello (on the ill-treatment suffered by women members of the opposition party UNAMOS)

73. Police and prison authorities have also subjected relatives of arbitrarily detained persons to acts that constitute cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, including acts

of sexual violence, when they come to visit their family members, especially during excessive body searches.<sup>80</sup> Women have been disproportionately affected by these practices, as they have largely taken on the responsibility of visiting detained relatives, as well as of seeking information about detained and/or missing relatives, and providing medicines, food and other essential supplies to their loved ones in detention centres.

74. Rape, insults, threats of rape, forced nudity and other acts of a sexualized nature have had serious and lasting effects on the physical and psychological integrity of victims. These practices have resulted in a significant deterioration in mental health which, according to the testimonies of women victims and experts gathered by the Group, has manifested itself in anxiety, depression, insomnia, recurrent distressing memories and nightmares, panic attacks, and tendencies towards self-harm and suicide. Victims identified additional problems such as difficulties in relating to other people and in creating relationships of trust, bouts of anger and

<sup>78</sup> A/HRC/52/CRP.5, paras. 903-905.

<sup>79</sup> A/HRC/58/CRP.8, paras. 536-538; and A/HRC/52/CRP.5, paras. 637-646.

<sup>80</sup> A/HRC/52/CRP.5, paras. 650, 651, 655 and 675-678.

sadness, and isolation.<sup>81</sup> In addition, restrictions on contact with their children and threats related to their custody have deepened these impacts; caregiving roles were used as a mechanism of coercion.

#### **D. Surveillance, threats and harassment**

75. Since April 2018, and with greater intensity since 2023, both State and non-State actors have subjected real or perceived opponents in Nicaragua and in exile, as well as their relatives, including children, to in-person and digital surveillance, threats and harassment.<sup>82</sup> Victims have been followed, photographed, harassed and threatened, and forced to report their movements, activities and contacts, either by police officers and members of pro-government armed groups in Nicaragua, or by undercover agents and informants in exile. They have also been digitally tracked, monitored and harassed through the monitoring of their social media, the hacking of their accounts, the use of spyware and the interception of their communications, including telephone communications. In addition, many of them have been targeted by doxing,<sup>83</sup> death threats and defamation campaigns orchestrated by troll farms and bot networks<sup>84</sup> linked to the Sandinista Youth 19 July, the FSLN and the Nicaraguan Telecommunications and Postal Institute (hereinafter TELCOR).

76. The Group has documented the existence of a broad and complex surveillance and intelligence network inside and outside the country that coordinates and commits these violations.<sup>85</sup> This structure of repression and persecution, which responds to the orders of the Co-Presidents, is made up of both State institutions and actors, such as the army, the police and TELCOR, and private actors such as persons affiliated with the FSLN and informants.

77. The Group documented stigmatization and defamation campaigns against women – designed and implemented by State authorities and their supporters – on social media, in pro-government media outlets or both.<sup>86</sup> These campaigns have included attacks of a sexual nature and based on gender. Victims have been called “abortionists” and “bad mothers”, among other terms, and have also been slandered and accused of attacks against life or the traditional family model. In the case of LGBTIQ+ women activists and defenders, gender norms and stereotypes have been manipulated, generating additional discrimination on the ground of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity and exacerbating the harassment they suffered. The Group documented, for example, the recurrent use of homophobic, denigrating and stigmatizing language, such as the word *cochona* (dyke), and other pejorative terms in the case of LGBTIQ+ victims who were real or perceived opponents.<sup>87</sup> The use of these terms has contributed to reinforcing pre-existing stigma and discrimination against LGBTIQ+ women.

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<sup>81</sup> A/HRC/52/CRP.5, paras. 679-682.

<sup>82</sup> A/HRC/61/56, paras. 25-27; A/HRC/58/26, paras. 69-74; A/HRC/58/CRP.8, paras. 725-774; and “Nicaragua: Persecution beyond borders”, pp. 21-23.

<sup>83</sup> Doxing is the practice of searching for, revealing and publicly disseminating a person’s personal information online without their consent, usually with the intention of intimidating, harassing, threatening or exposing them.

<sup>84</sup> Bot networks are groups of automated, or partially automated, accounts that operate in a coordinated manner on the internet and social media to amplify messages, manipulate conversations or influence public opinion.

<sup>85</sup> A/HRC/61/56, paras. 25-27; A/HRC/58/26, paras. 21 and 70-72; A/HRC/58/CRP.8, paras. 66-68 and 727-756; and “Nicaragua: Persecution beyond borders”, p. 21.

<sup>86</sup> A/HRC/52/CRP.5, paras. 748, 754 and 911; and CEJIL and IM-Defensoras, “Perseguidas por defender y resistir: Criminalización de mujeres defensoras de derechos humanos en Honduras, México y Nicaragua (Capítulo Nicaragua)”, 2022, p. 52.

<sup>87</sup> A/HRC/52/CRP.5, para. 897; and Karen Kampwirth, *LGBTQ Politics in Nicaragua: Revolution, Dictatorship, and Social Movements*, University of Arizona Press, 2022, p. 6.

78. These campaigns have seriously affected the working conditions and/or employment opportunities of many victims. Several of them, especially professionals who worked in public institutions, such as the judiciary, were arbitrarily dismissed from their jobs and were unable to find employment again. They have also restricted the legitimate work of women lawyers, human rights defenders and journalists, among other women, seriously affecting the defence of human rights in the country.

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Yonarqui Martínez was the first lawyer and notary public to be permanently disbarred following a ruling by the Supreme Court of Justice in May 2023. Ms. Martínez had been one of the most prominent defence lawyers representing people arbitrarily detained during the 2018 protests. Like most of the female lawyers who took on the defence of those detained during the first phase of the repression, Ms. Martínez was forced into exile.

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79. Indigenous and Afrodescendant women human rights defenders and leaders have been particularly affected by acts of intimidation, harassment and threats, among other violations, in retaliation for their work defending the rights of their communities, including their collective rights.<sup>88</sup> These women already faced structural discrimination on the basis of their ethnic origin and worked in an environment of violence, insecurity and generalized impunity owing to the presence of armed settlers in Nicaragua's Caribbean region,<sup>89</sup> a situation that overlapped with the political repression. Many of them were forced to continue their work clandestinely or to flee the country.

80. A revealing example is that of an Indigenous Miskito woman, also a human rights lawyer. She informed the Group that she had been subjected to smear campaigns, acts of harassment and intimidation, death threats, a ban on leaving the country, confiscation of her passport and criminalization by State officials and members and supporters of the FSLN. The authorities also cancelled the legal status of the organization for which she worked. In view of the increase in harassment and the risks to her personal integrity, the defender was forced to leave her country.<sup>90</sup>

*“They arrived at my family’s house [in Nicaragua]. They entered without a search warrant. The police ripped open the mattress where I slept, saying they were looking for drugs. They took my notes from elementary school, secondary school and university. They took my feminist books. They found feminist [purple] scarves. They claimed all of that was evidence against that ‘bitch’. They took my whole family into the living room, including my 8-year-old cousin. All the police officers were armed with long weapons. When they ransacked my wardrobe, they found photos of my partner and me. My sister was physically assaulted; they grabbed her by the arm. They threw the photos onto the table and told her: ‘Tell us about your sister the dyke (cochona)’.”*

Exiled woman interviewed by the Group

81. The authorities have also regularly directed their repressive actions against the relatives, including minors, of real or perceived opponents, especially exiled opponents, and against the relatives of victims of human rights violations in order to punish and silence them.<sup>91</sup> Relatives, often women, are among the main profiles of victims of acts of surveillance, threats and harassment. Such acts have often had serious consequences for the victims,

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<sup>88</sup> A/HRC/55/CRP.7, paras. 317-326; and Centro de Información y Servicios de Asesoría en Salud (CISAS), Asociación Centro de Estudios Transdisciplinarios de Centroamérica (CETCAM) and Isin Mairin Kupia kumi Muskitia Nicaragua (IMATKUMN), “Mujeres indígenas nicaragüenses desplazadas en Costa Rica: lo que sienten, lo que piensan y lo que han vivido”, January 2026, pp. 7-9, available at: <https://cetcam.org/publicacion/mujeres-indigenas-nicaraguenses-desplazadas-en-costa-rica-lo-que-sienten-lo-que-piensen-y-lo-que-han-vivido/>.

<sup>89</sup> A/HRC/55/CRP.7, paras. 345-354.

<sup>90</sup> The victim provided documentary evidence to support the information given.

<sup>91</sup> A/HRC/61/56, para. 43; and “Nicaragua: Persecution beyond borders”, pp. 26-28.

including consequences for their mental health, and have contributed to a climate of widespread fear and self-censorship both in Nicaragua and abroad. The Group has documented dozens of cases of proxy punishment of women and girls, including mothers, sisters, daughters, spouses, partners and former partners of real or perceived opponents.

82. The Group has observed that women who remain in Nicaragua have been affected in a differentiated and disproportionate manner by proxy-punishment measures, as mothers, spouses or primary caregivers. Many women victims of proxy punishment had assumed the role of head of household in precarious conditions following the expulsion or forced departure of their spouse, partner or parents. These conditions were aggravated by the confiscation of their property and/or the loss of income because of their association with real or perceived opponents in exile. The State has instrumentalized family and friendship ties, exploiting gender roles traditionally associated with caregiving, to maximize the punitive impact of proxy punishment. As a result, it has caused the breakdown of families and particularly severe psychosocial harm among women, including older women, and children.

83. Constant surveillance, threats and actions aimed at limiting public and organizational participation have forced many victims to leave the country. Thus, forced displacement becomes a survival measure. Many persons were forced to leave the country hastily, for Costa Rica, Spain, the United States of America, Honduras and Mexico, among other countries. When they went into exile, many women left their families behind, including minor children and older parents, as well as their means of subsistence and the social and community ties that sustained their daily lives.

84. With regard to people who were forced to leave their country following harassment and surveillance by State actors, the jurisprudence of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights has established that the failure of the State to investigate threats, even when they originate from non-State actors, and to provide guarantees so that the person can move and reside freely within the territory, may give rise to or perpetuate exile or forced displacement. The Court also expressly analysed State responsibility for the exile of its citizens when they do not find protection in their own country and are forced to seek it in another country. The Court established an important standard in relation to asylum by identifying exile as an autonomous violation of rights that must be added to the other violations suffered.<sup>92</sup>

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Two telling examples are those of Sofía Isabel Montenegro Alarcón and Azahalia Isabel Solís Román. Both feminist activists were subjected to threats, surveillance and acts of harassment for their activism over a period of several years. On 15 February 2023, these violations culminated in the arbitrary deprivation of their nationality by court order, even though they had not been notified of any legal proceedings against them. The same ruling declared them traitors to the homeland and fugitives from justice. Faced with imminent arrest, both women were forced to leave the country that very day. The authorities subsequently seized their properties and froze and seized their bank accounts.

See: A/HRC/55/CRP.3, pp. 34-38.

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85. The surveillance, intimidation and harassment of women and LGBTIQ+ real or perceived opponents have not been isolated incidents, but have occurred recurrently over time and space, as part of a Government strategy aimed at creating a climate of fear and inhibiting

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<sup>92</sup> Inter-American Court of Human Rights, *Case of Manuel Cepeda Vargas v. Colombia*, Merits, Reparations and Costs, Judgment, 26 May 2019, para. 274; and *Case of Vélez Restrepo and Others v. Colombia*, Preliminary Objection, Merits, Reparations and Costs, Judgment, 3 September 2012, paras. 220-224.

the participation and political leadership of women and LGBTIQ+ persons, by isolating and silencing them and dismantling their networks and organizational structures. Indeed, most of the persons affected have been forced to limit their interactions, self-censor, disengage from community, organizational and political participation spaces and/or leave the country.

### **E. Arbitrary deprivation of nationality and violations of the right to freedom of movement**

86. The Group has documented an extensive pattern of serious and systematic violations of the right to a nationality, to freedom of movement and to freely choose one's residence, which include, in particular, the prohibition of entry into one's own country, the denial of renewal or issuance of travel documents, and expulsions. These violations also form part of a broader pattern of transnational human rights violations that seek to deter, punish and silence real or perceived opponents in exile, prevent the reorganization of the opposition and erode protection spaces abroad.<sup>93</sup> The Group observed that this pattern of violations affects women in a differentiated manner, especially older women, Indigenous, Afrodescendant and *campesino* women and women with caregiving responsibilities.

#### **1. Arbitrary deprivation of nationality**

87. Since February 2023, the authorities have used the arbitrary deprivation of nationality as a tool of large-scale repression against real or perceived opponents and their relatives. The victims were persecuted on political grounds, and most were left stateless. This practice violates the right to a nationality, as well as Nicaragua's obligations under the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness of 1961; it has far-reaching consequences for the enjoyment of other human rights by victims and their families. The Group has documented the court-ordered arbitrary deprivation of nationality of 452 Nicaraguans, including 84 women, who were declared "traitors to the homeland" following manifestly unfair judicial proceedings.<sup>94</sup>

88. Of these women, 33 were part of the group of 222 arbitrarily detained opponents expelled to the United States on 9 February 2023, 26 were part of the group of 94 persons stripped of their nationality by court rulings issued on 15 February 2023 who had not been notified of proceedings against them, and 25 were part of the group of 135 arbitrarily detained persons expelled to Guatemala on 5 September 2024.

89. Most of the women victims of denationalization played an active and visible role in the public sphere. These women exercised political and community leadership, leadership in social protest and/or feminist movements, defended human rights – including women's rights – and/or worked as journalists. Many also had a high capacity for political, social and/or international advocacy, especially academics, writers, student leaders and members of community networks and religious institutions. The authorities stripped them of

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Francisca Ramírez, leader of the Anti-Canal Campesino Movement and a human rights defender, embodies the convergence of factors such as gender, the exercise of a public role perceived as transgressive, and opposition to State policies, in the selection of victims of the repression. Ms Ramírez was forced into exile in Costa Rica in 2018 owing to the surveillance, harassment and threats to which she was subjected by the police and the army. She was arbitrarily stripped of her nationality on 15 February 2023, along with 93 other people, even as she had been living outside Nicaragua for several years.

See: A/HRC/55/CRP.3, pp. 38, 39 and para. 196; and A/HRC/55/CRP.4, para. 101

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<sup>93</sup> A/HRC/61/56, paras. 25-43; "Nicaragua: Persecution beyond borders"; and A/HRC/55/CRP.3.

<sup>94</sup> A/HRC/61/56, paras. 33-35; "Nicaragua: Persecution beyond borders", pp. 9-13; and A/HRC/58/CRP.8, paras. 639-686.

their nationality not only because they considered them opponents of the Government, but also because of their highly visible profile, regarded as transgressive of the established patriarchal order<sup>95</sup> and traditional gender norms. The deprivation of their nationality thus constituted a form of punishment for having dared to exercise autonomous political and feminist leadership, questioning not only State policies but also historically imposed gender roles.

## 2. Violations of the right to freedom of movement

### *Prohibition to enter one's own country*

90. Since 2018, the Government of Nicaragua has increasingly prohibited Nicaraguans, including children, from entering their own country.<sup>96</sup> Between June 2018 and April 2026, the Group has documented 339 cases of Nicaraguans whom the authorities prohibited from entering Nicaragua, among them a majority of women (180 women, including 8 girls). However, it is very likely that a high number of cases go unreported owing to the victims' fear of being subjected to further reprisals.

91. Among the 180 women and girls whom the authorities prohibited from entering Nicaragua, 81 are relatives of real or perceived opponents. Eighteen were banned from entering because they had participated in or supported the 2018 demonstrations and/or because of the content of their social media. Seventeen are journalists, 15 human rights defenders, 14 businesswomen and 7 political opposition activists. The other victims include doctors, lawyers and women linked to the Catholic and other Christian churches. In all these cases, the victims were temporarily abroad for family, professional or health reasons when they were prevented from returning to their country.

*“On the day I was due to travel to Nicaragua, I received an email from the airline stating that the Nicaraguan Government wouldn't allow me to enter the country. They wouldn't even let me get to the airport. That's when I started to panic. You start thinking about what you've left behind back home. I wrote to the Ministry of the Interior but never received a reply. I told them I'd been refused entry and wanted to know why. Someone told me it could take up to six months to get a reply and that I should write a letter of apology to Rosario Murillo and send money so they would let me in. I still haven't received a reply. Someone checked how I appear in the system and told me that, for speaking ill of the Government and for breaking laws (they didn't say which laws), the penalty imposed on me is an entry ban.”*

Woman interviewed by the Group

92. Although the profile of women subject to entry bans is relatively heterogeneous, the Group observed that many of these victims performed visible functions in the public sphere, such as political and community leaders, human rights defenders, activists or journalists. These women not only challenged the established political order and the actions of the Government,

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<sup>95</sup> According to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women: “Patriarchy is a system of power deeply embedded in political, social, economic and cultural structures. It creates a hierarchy, historically assigning distinct roles, worth and qualities to women and men. It results in a division of labour whereby women are primarily responsible for the private sphere of the home and family, while men are the main actors in the public sphere of politics and economy, based on differential weights assigned to efforts in the two domains. Patriarchy permeates all societies.” (General recommendation No. 40, CEDAW/C/GC/40, 2024, para. 11). With regard to Nicaragua, the Committee noted with concern: “Legislation, public policies and practices, including the paradigm of Marianismo, in accordance with which women should fulfil qualities of the Virgin Mary, the Catholic religious icon, which reinforce patriarchal attitudes and discriminatory stereotypes concerning the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and in society” (CEDAW/C/NIC/CO/7-10, para. 25(a)).

<sup>96</sup> A/HRC/61/56, paras. 37 and 38; “Nicaragua: Persecution beyond borders”, pp. 13-15; and A/HRC/58/CRP.8, paras. 619-638.

but also defied traditionally imposed gender norms and stereotypes, which exposed them to forms of political reprisal and repression whose gravity is increased by gender factors.

93. The prohibition of entry into one's own country leaves victims in a condition of de facto statelessness when they do not have another nationality. It also affects victims' relatives in Nicaragua, especially older persons and children who depend on the caregiving and/or assistance of their relatives who are, for the most part, women.<sup>97</sup>

#### *Denial of travel documents*

94. The Group documented that, since at least 2021, Nicaraguan consular authorities and the Directorate General for Migration and Alien Affairs have arbitrarily denied the issuance or renewal of passports and other travel documents to persons considered opponents or a threat to the Government. Nor have their relatives inside the country and abroad been able to obtain passports or other travel documents. The denial of passports leaves victims in a condition of de facto statelessness when they do not have another nationality.<sup>98</sup>

95. Between May 2021 and April 2026, the Group has documented 62 cases of Nicaraguans abroad to whom the authorities denied the issuance or renewal of their passports, 21 of which concern women, two of them over 70 years of age. However, there is likely a high number of unreported cases owing to the victims' fear of suffering additional reprisals or that their relatives inside or outside the country be also subjected to them. In addition, some victims have refrained from reporting because they retain the hope of receiving their travel document.

*"I don't have a passport, and that has prevented me from being granted asylum. They're asking me to go back to my country to get a passport, but I can't because I'd be sent to prison. I'm trying to figure out how to get by. A relative went to the consulate because I was too scared to go myself. They kept him waiting for three months. He rang them, but they didn't answer. He even went to the consulate in person to ask for information. Six months later, he went back and was told: 'Don't expect your relative to be issued with a passport because she isn't entitled to one. She doesn't appear to exist in the system.' Another relative went to request birth certificates for me and my son. He managed to get my son's, but not mine. They told her: 'She isn't in the system.' I currently have no identity documents. That's why it's difficult to access healthcare, education, employment and freedom of movement. I can't leave this country."*

Exiled woman interviewed by the Group

96. The authorities have denied women the renewal or issuance of their passports because of their opinions and/or public activities critical of the Government, or because of their family, social, professional or political relationships with persons considered opponents.

#### *Expulsions*

97. The expulsions of Nicaraguans from their country began in 2022 and increased drastically from February 2023. The authorities have expelled hundreds of Nicaraguans from the country, either individually, with their families or collectively. The Group documented expulsions to Vatican City, Costa Rica, El Salvador, the United States, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico and Panama. All Nicaraguans expelled from the country were expelled for political reasons and most were also arbitrarily deprived of their nationality. These victims were left in

<sup>97</sup> "Nicaragua: Persecution beyond borders", pp. 14 and 15; and A/HRC/58/CRP.8, para. 622.

<sup>98</sup> "Nicaragua: Persecution beyond borders", pp. 15-17; and A/HRC/58/CRP.8, paras. 687-697.

a situation of extreme vulnerability without access to the protection of their country; those who did not have another nationality were also left in a situation of de facto statelessness.<sup>99</sup>

98. Between April 2022 and April 2026, the Group has documented the expulsion of 443 Nicaraguans from Nicaragua, including 78 women. On 9 February 2023, 222 people who had been arbitrarily detained, including 33 women, were released from prison and expelled to the United States after being declared “traitors to the homeland”.<sup>100</sup> On 5 September 2024, 135 people who had been arbitrarily detained, including 25 women, were released from prison and expelled to Guatemala, also on charges of treason.<sup>101</sup> The Group also documented the collective expulsions of Nicaraguan nuns to Central American countries between July 2022 and August 2024. The Group further documented the expulsion of 62 Nicaraguans individually or with their families, including 20 women.

*“It was 7:00 a.m. Several police officers arrived and told me I had 24 hours to leave the country. They started turning up every hour. They took photos of me and shouted that I had 24 hours to leave Nicaragua. My family had to buy the ticket. They gave me a new passport. They put me in a police car. There were male and female police officers, and they were all armed with long weapons. They took me away in that car to get me out of the country. One of the female police officers whispered in my ear: ‘You can’t come back to Nicaragua because if you do, you’ll end up in El Chipote [detention centre] and you’ll never get out.’ As I was getting out of the vehicle, she repeated: ‘You know, you’ve been warned, don’t ever come back here because we know where your children are.’”*

Woman interviewed by the Group

99. Most women victims of expulsion had been criminalized for their participation in political, civic, community or religious activities, or for having expressed themselves critically against the Government. Among the women victims of individual or family expulsions were political leaders, human rights defenders, healthcare, communications, law and business administration professionals, persons linked to community or religious movements, and participants in the 2018 demonstrations, as well as relatives of real or perceived opponents. These profiles suggest that the authorities’ repressive strategy combines the dismantling of “transgressive” female political and organizational leadership with the expansion of State control into community, religious and family spheres.

### 3. Differentiated impacts on women

100. The arbitrary deprivation of nationality, prohibition of entry into one’s own country, denial of issuance or renewal of passports and travel documents, as well as the arbitrary expulsion of nationals, place the victims in a situation of extreme vulnerability, especially when they leave them stateless if they have no other nationality. These violations also generate cumulative impacts for victims and, at times, their relatives, affecting the exercise of multiple civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including access to asylum and migration regularization procedures.<sup>102</sup>

<sup>99</sup> A/HRC/58/26, paras. 48-55; and A/HRC/58/CRP.8, paras. 570-618.

<sup>100</sup> A/HRC/55/CRP.3, paras. 76-79.

<sup>101</sup> A/HRC/58/26, para. 49.

<sup>102</sup> A/HRC/58/26, paras. 56, 63 and 83; A/HRC/58/CRP.8, paras. 571, 622 and 646; “Nicaragua: Persecution beyond borders”, pp. 12, 14 and 29; and A/HRC/55/CRP.3, paras. 3, 21, 74, 92, 105, 116 and 257.

101. In the case of women, the situation of vulnerability is aggravated by the structural gender discrimination that they face daily, in many cases separated from their families, communities and support networks. Many women in exile assume disproportionate caregiving and economic support burdens for their children and other dependent relatives who are with them or remained in Nicaragua. Several women described having been forced to take on multiple jobs to guarantee minimum conditions of housing, food and protection for their children.

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A case of particular concern is that of Vilma Núñez de Escorcía, a prominent 87-year-old lawyer and human rights defender who, at the time of writing, was the only person arbitrarily stripped of their nationality who remained living in Nicaragua in a situation of statelessness in situ. Among many other victims, Ms. Núñez represented Zoilamérica Nárvaez Murillo before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in 2001. Since February 2023, she has faced severe restrictions on the exercise of multiple rights, especially her rights to health, social security and participation in public life, as a result of the arbitrary loss of the legal protection and guarantees associated with her status as a national.

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102. In many cases, the arbitrary confiscation of the property and pensions of women in exile has deepened pre-existing structural gender inequalities, such as obstacles to accessing sources of income and their economic dependence, thereby exposing them to economic precariousness and poverty. These confiscations also affect relatives who depend on them, such as minor children and older persons, both in Nicaragua and abroad. They have generated a cumulative effect with other violations on the living and subsistence conditions of these women and their relatives. The need to seek new means of subsistence at advanced ages, or to depend economically on relatives, has significantly increased feelings of distress, uncertainty and hopelessness among older women.

*“The brutal confiscation of our pensions and our income is undermining our ability to live with dignity. It also has repercussions for others, as we were supporting elderly relatives who depended on us.”*

Woman interviewed by the Group

103. Several women with caregiving responsibilities in Nicaragua have also described to the Group the constant anguish of being unable to be with their children, parents or other relatives, or to support them during illness, bereavement or other crucial moments in their lives. Several victims described the profound impact on their mental health of maintaining family relationships only at a distance, while continuing to assume affective and economic responsibilities.

*“I’ve been trying to get a passport for my teenage son ever since I arrived in this country. At first, I asked his father to apply for a passport for him. He was allowed to complete the paperwork and pay the fees. He also tried to get him a national identity card. However, in the end, he was told he had to go to Managua because his son’s mother didn’t appear in official records.”*

Woman interviewed by the Group

104. The arbitrary deprivation of nationality has especially serious impacts in the case of single, widowed or divorced mothers whose children legally depend on them.<sup>103</sup> Denationalization not only places them in a legal limbo, but it can also create problems in establishing the identity and filiation of their children, which can seriously affect family reunification processes.

105. The deprivation of nationality, prohibition of entry and expulsion can generate deep feelings of uprooting, loss of identity, exclusion and uncertainty about the future of one’s family

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<sup>103</sup> A/HRC/55/CRP.3, paras. 168-179.

and personal life. Several women have told the Group that these measures constituted attempts to “erase” them from the national political and civic space, especially when they held high-profile roles as human rights defenders, activists, journalists and political or community leaders. In this regard, these violations have operated as a way of silencing women whose identity and work are considered particularly transgressive of the social order established by the authorities.

106. The Group further observed that the impacts of violations of the right to a nationality and to freedom of movement are deepened when multiple factors of discrimination and exclusion converge, such as age or ethnic origin. For example, victims’ vulnerability is aggravated in contexts where they face language difficulties in host countries, which may specifically affect their migration and asylum procedures.

107. In particular, Indigenous, Afrodescendant and *campesino* women and women from rural areas face additional barriers in exile related to historical conditions of inequality and lower levels of access to economic resources, education, support networks and institutional protection mechanisms. For example, some Indigenous and Afrodescendant women whose mother tongue is not Spanish or who have different forms of communication linked to their cultural contexts have faced language barriers in host countries that have affected their access to information, legal assistance, health services, migration and asylum procedures and international protection. Indigenous, Afrodescendant and *campesino* women, who have strong ties to their lands, cultural practices and traditional forms of organization, which constitute central elements of their identity and way of life, have been particularly affected by uprooting and the loss of their communities. This has heightened their vulnerability, especially to labour exploitation, violence, including gender-based violence, and social exclusion.<sup>104</sup>

#### IV. Crimes against humanity

108. The Group previously concluded that there were reasonable grounds to believe that a variety of State and non-State actors, following orders from the Co-Presidents, had perpetrated serious human rights violations against part of the Nicaraguan population on account of their political identity, activities or opinions. These violations amount, *prima facie*, to crimes against humanity under customary international law.<sup>105</sup>

109. With regard to the “attack” element, which transforms a prohibited act into a crime against humanity, the Group concluded that there were reasonable grounds to believe that, from April 2018 to date, a widespread and systematic attack directed against the civilian population of Nicaragua has been carried out in Nicaragua.<sup>106</sup> Although the Group has documented a change in the patterns of the crimes committed throughout the different phases of repression, the intensity of the attack has not diminished and the attack continues to be perpetrated, affecting an ever-growing number of victims.

110. During the different phases of repression, the Government has consolidated and broadened its patterns of victimization and its methods for determining whether a person is

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<sup>104</sup> Centro de Información y Servicios de Asesoría en Salud (CISAS), Asociación Centro de Estudios Transdisciplinarios de Centroamérica (CETCAM) and Isin Mairin Kupia kumi Muskitia Nicaragua (IMATKUMN), “Mujeres indígenas nicaragüenses desplazadas en Costa Rica: lo que sienten, lo que piensan y lo que han vivido”, January 2026, pp. 7-9, available at: <https://cetcam.org/publicacion/mujeres-indigenas-nicaraguenses-desplazadas-en-costa-rica-lo-que-sienten-lo-que-piensan-y-lo-que-han-vivido/>.

<sup>105</sup> A/HRC/52/63, paras. 109-115, 123 and 124; A/HRC/55/27, paras. 82-87; A/HRC/58/26, paras. 2, 85-90; and A/HRC/61/56, paras. 2, 77-81.

<sup>106</sup> A/HRC/52/63, para. 109; A/HRC/55/27, para. 83; and A/HRC/58/26, para. 86.

critical, an opponent or has autonomous social mobilization capacity, systematically expanding the group of persons targeted by the repression. Different profiles of women have been among the targets of the repression since the first phase (see section II(D) for further details).

111. During the first three phases of repression (2018–2022), the victimization of women detailed in the present document was directed mainly against women human rights defenders, political and community leaders, activists, feminists, students and journalists, among others, all women with a public presence and capacity for social and political organization. Indigenous, Afro-descendant and *campesina* women were also targeted by the repression, both because of their political activism and because of the politicization of their collective identities.

112. In its latest report (2026), the Group determined that an increasing number of real or perceived opponents and their relatives, especially those in exile, have been affected by the violations and crimes documented.<sup>107</sup> Since the beginning of the fourth phase of repression in 2023, a significant number of women relatives and associates of real or perceived opponents, both in Nicaragua and in exile, have been targeted by the repression. These persons have been victims of “proxy punishment”; that is, violations affecting relatives, including minors and older persons, and other persons associated with real or perceived opponents, solely because of their family ties or connections.

113. The Group has reasonable grounds to believe that the violations against part of the Nicaraguan population documented herein were committed intentionally as part of the attack against the civilian population and that the direct perpetrators and the masterminds had knowledge of the attack and that their acts formed part of it.

114. The crimes against humanity committed in Nicaragua since 2018 that are addressed in the present document include: murder, imprisonment, torture (including sexual violence), deportation, enforced disappearance (other inhumane acts) and persecution on political grounds.

#### **A. Murder**

115. The Group previously concluded that the 40 extrajudicial executions of men in the context of the protests that it documented constituted murder as a crime against humanity. These murders were committed by members of the National Police, the Nicaraguan Army and pro-government armed groups, acting on orders from the Co-Presidents. The Commander-in-Chief of the Nicaraguan Army transmitted those orders to the Chief of the General Staff and then to the heads of each unit for execution. The then Deputy Director General of the National Police ordered police officers to use lethal force against demonstrators. The chief of the Police Special Operations Directorate led the participation of its members in the repression of the protests. In addition, the national organization secretary of the FSLN transmitted the order to defend the revolution by all means to FSLN political secretaries in various public institutions, which led to the deployment of pro-government armed groups against the demonstrations.<sup>108</sup>

#### **B. Imprisonment**

116. To qualify a conduct of imprisonment or other severe deprivation of physical liberty as a crime against humanity, it is necessary to establish: (i) the deprivation of a person’s liberty; (ii) that the deprivation of liberty was carried out arbitrarily, that is, without a legal basis; and

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<sup>107</sup> A/HRC/61/56, paras. 6-12.

<sup>108</sup> A/HRC/52/63, paras. 16 and 112; A/HRC/52/CRP.5, paras. 989-1004; A/HRC/58/26, paras. 22-27; and A/HRC/58/CRP.8, paras. 399 ss.

(iii) that the act or omission by which the person is deprived of physical liberty was carried out by the direct perpetrator, or by a person or persons for whom the direct perpetrator bears criminal responsibility, with the intent to arbitrarily deprive the person of physical liberty or with the reasonable knowledge that his or her act or omission could cause an arbitrary deprivation of physical liberty.<sup>109</sup>

117. During the first phase of repression, arbitrary detentions were carried out first in the context of the protests and subsequently in the context of the Operation Clean-Up and other police operations. During the following phases, they occurred mainly in the context of large-scale police operations. The Group previously concluded that the imprisonments were perpetrated by members of the National Police and pro-government armed groups acting on orders from the Co-Presidents. Those orders were transmitted directly to the Deputy Director General of the National Police, then Director General (who transmitted them to the Deputy Director General of the Sub-directorate General for Prevention and Public Security, the head of the Department of Surveillance and Patrolling that same Sub-directorate, the head of the Sub-directorate General of the Metropolitan Delegation of Managua and the heads and personnel of special units and departmental, regional and district delegations). Daniel Ortega also transmitted orders directly to the chief of the Police Special Operations Directorate. Similarly, the Co-Presidents transmitted orders to the secretary general of the Managua Mayor's Office also national organization secretary of the FSLN, who organized and supervised the deployment of pro-government armed groups.<sup>110</sup>

118. The arbitrary nature of women's detentions, carried out during all phases of repression, has been demonstrated by the patterns documented by the Group, including: (i) the detention of people on criminal charges that were unfounded, disproportionate, based on laws that violate human rights and/or false evidence; (ii) the enforcement of detentions without the presentation of an arrest warrant or without informing the persons detained of the reasons for their arrest; (iii) the bringing of detained persons before a judicial authority several days, and even weeks, after their detention; (iv) the failure to comply with habeas corpus orders; (v) the excessive and arbitrary use of pretrial detention, which was imposed widely without taking into account the specific circumstances of each case, the criteria of proportionality and purpose of the proceedings, and without due consideration of alternative measures; (vi) the systematic violation of the due process rights of real or perceived opponents, including the absence of equality before the courts and equality of arms; (vii) the systematic violation of the right to an adequate defence; and (viii) the absence of judicial review of detentions.

119. Among the 62 victims whose cases were documented by the Group are women human rights defenders and activists, feminists, *campesinas*, Indigenous, Afrodescendant and LGBTIQ+ women, who are real or perceived political opponents. As detailed in section III(B) above, the vast majority of these detentions were carried out without arrest warrants, without bringing the persons before a judge within the 48-hour time limit and without granting them access to legal assistance. Arbitrary detention was used as exemplary punishment against these women, not only for their activism or political positions, but also for challenging traditional gender roles.

120. With regard to the intent of the perpetrators, the Group determined that the Nicaraguan authorities used arbitrary detentions as a tool to attack real or perceived opponents, and that

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<sup>109</sup> ICTY, *Prosecutor v. Krnojelac*, IT-97-25-T, Trial Chamber, Judgment, 15 March 2002, para. 115; ICTY, *Prosecutor v. Krajišnik*, IT-00-39-T, Trial Chamber, Judgment, 27 September 2006, para. 752; and ICTY, *Prosecutor v. Karadžić et al.*, IT-95-5/18, Trial Chamber, Judgment, 24 March 2016, para. 519. See also: A/HRC/52/CRP.5, paras. 1037-1052.

<sup>110</sup> A/HRC/52/63, paras. 47-50; A/HRC/52/CRP.5, paras. 464 ss.; A/HRC/58/26, paras. 28-31; and A/HRC/58/CRP.8, paras. 441-484.

such arbitrary detentions formed part of a State policy implemented through the methodical involvement of different public institutions at various levels, the repetition of the conduct and the evolution of such criminal practices.<sup>111</sup>

### **C. Torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment**

121. Under customary international criminal law, to qualify a conduct of torture as a crime against humanity, it is necessary to establish: (i) the infliction, by act or omission, of severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental; (ii) the intent with respect to the act or omission; and (iii) that the act or omission was aimed at obtaining information or a confession, at punishing, intimidating or coercing the victim or a third person, or at discriminating, on any ground, against the victim or a third person.<sup>112</sup>

122. Acts of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment have been committed during all phases of repression, both after arrest and during detention in the National Prison Service. Acts of torture were committed by officials of the National Police and the Prison Service and by members of pro-government armed groups. The Deputy Director General of the Sub-directorate General for Prevention and Public Security and the head of the Legal Cooperation Directorate gave instructions for the use of violence and personally participated in acts of torture and ill-treatment against detainees in police stations and the facilities of the Legal Cooperation Directorate.<sup>113</sup>

123. The Deputy Minister of the Interior transmitted orders to the Director General and the Deputy Director General for Administration of the Directorate General of the National Prison System regarding the discriminatory treatment of persons deprived of their liberty on political grounds, which included cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and, in some cases, acts of torture. Those orders were then transmitted to the heads of prisons. The heads of La Modelo prison and “La 300” maximum-security prison directly perpetrated acts of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

124. Sexual violence against detained women, including LGBTIQ+ women (see section III(C)), in many cases reached the threshold of torture, either as such or in combination with other acts. These acts included various forms of sexual and gender-based violence, such as individual and gang rape, repeated threats of rape, forced nudity and insults of a sexual or gender-based nature, with severe and lasting effects on the victims’ physical and psychological integrity. They were used deliberately as mechanisms of punishment, intimidation and control over their bodies.

125. In addition, the discriminatory treatment specifically applied to some women detained on political grounds qualifies as cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, and even torture. This discriminatory treatment included prolonged solitary confinement, the prohibition of visits by relatives, including minor children, and lawyers, and the deprivation of the rights to recreation, exercise, adequate food and adequate medical care. These measures were used to increase the suffering of the victims.

126. The acts or omissions committed by officials of the National Police and the National Prison Service and members of pro-government armed groups were deliberate acts and were carried out with the intent to inflict severe physical or mental pain or suffering on the victims.

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<sup>111</sup> A/HRC/52/CRP.5, para. 1045.

<sup>112</sup> ICTY, *Prosecutor v. Dragoljub Kunarac et al.*, IT-96-23 & IT-23/1-A, Appeals Chamber, Judgment, 12 June 2002, paras. 142 and 144-148. See also: A/HRC/52/CRP.5, paras. 1053-1081.

<sup>113</sup> A/HRC/52/63, paras. 67-86; A/HRC/52/CRP.5, paras. 555-569; A/HRC/58/26, paras. 41-46; and A/HRC/58/CRP.8, párrs. 523 a 568.

Likewise, the officials who participated in each of the documented cases of torture and ill-treatment acted with the purpose of obtaining information, punishing, intimidating or coercing the victims, or discriminating against them for being, or being perceived as, opponents of the Government.

#### **D. Enforced disappearance (other inhuman act)**

127. For an act to qualify as an “other inhumane act” under customary international law, the jurisprudence established the following requirements: (i) the act or omission caused serious mental or physical suffering or injury or constituted a serious attack of human dignity; and (ii) the act or omission was of similar seriousness to any other act listed under the category of crimes against humanity; (iii) the act or omission was carried out intentionally.<sup>114</sup> In determining the gravity of the act, all factual circumstances must be taken into account.<sup>115</sup>

128. The Group considers that the duration of an enforced disappearance constitutes one of the elements for concluding that the enforced disappearance reaches the threshold of a “similar nature” to the other crimes against humanity. In interpreting this temporal element, the Group relied on the jurisprudence of the International Criminal Court, which determined that several months satisfies the temporal requirement.<sup>116</sup>

129. From the fourth phase of repression onwards, the authorities have begun to use enforced disappearances lasting several months, or even years, as a repressive strategy against real or perceived opponents. These enforced disappearances qualify as other inhumane acts and form part of the widespread and systematic attack against part of the Nicaraguan population.<sup>117</sup>

130. In all documented cases, the victims were arbitrarily arrested by officers of the National Police. Officials of the Directorate General of the National Prison Service, including prison directors, and of the National Police held the victims in facilities under their control and refused to reveal their fate or whereabouts.<sup>118</sup>

131. The 10 cases of real or perceived women opponents who were disappeared for several months to more than one year – or who remain disappeared –, including women linked to the 2018 protests or to political activism and the Catholic Church, form part of the enforced disappearances that qualify as the crime against humanity of other inhumane acts.

132. Enforced disappearances caused great suffering and had a serious impact on the physical integrity and mental health of the victims and their relatives. With regard to the intent of the perpetrators, they selected the victims because they were real or perceived opponents. In addition, despite repeated requests from their relatives, they systematically refused to reveal the fate or whereabouts of the victims, which indicates their intent to cause great suffering and serious injury to physical integrity, mental and physical health or human dignity.

#### **E. Deportation**

133. To qualify a conduct of deportation of the population as a crime against humanity, it is necessary to establish: (i) the forcible displacement of individuals; (ii) that the individuals were

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<sup>114</sup> See, for instance: ICTY, *Prosecutor v. Vasiljević*, IT-98-32-A, Appeals Chamber, Judgment, 25 February 2004, para. 165; and ICTY, *Prosecutor v. Kordić et al.*, IT-95-14/2-A, Appeals Chamber, Judgment, 17 December 2004, para. 117.

<sup>115</sup> ICTY, *Prosecutor v. Vasiljević*, IT-98-32-A, Appeals Chamber, Judgment, 25 February 2004, párr. 165.

<sup>116</sup> ICC, *The Situation in the Republic of Burundi*, ICC-01/17-X, Pre-Trial Chamber III, Public Redacted Version of “Decision Pursuant to Article 15 of the Rome Statute on the Authorization of an Investigation into the Situation in the Republic of Burundi”, ICC-01/17-X-9-US-Exp, 25 October 2017, para. 120. See also: A/HRC/58/CRP.8, para. 870.

<sup>117</sup> A/HRC/58/CRP.8, paras. 865-873.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, paras. 499-513.

lawfully present in the territory from which they were displaced; (iii) that the displacement was without grounds permitted under international law; and (iv) that the intent was to forcibly displace the population.<sup>119</sup>

134. From the third phase of repression onwards, 76 women, including 3 LGBTIQ+ women, have been expelled from Nicaragua to Vatican City, Costa Rica, El Salvador, the United States, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico and Panama (see section IV(E)(2)). These expulsions constitute, *prima facie*, the crime of deportation as a crime against humanity. These acts of deportation were ordered directly by the Co-Presidents and, following those orders, carried out by members of the National Police, the Nicaraguan Army, the Ministry of the Interior and the judiciary.<sup>120</sup>

135. The requirements of the crime of deportation may also be met in cases in which victims decide to leave the country because they have no option but to flee owing to coercive acts and violations committed by the Government.<sup>121</sup> In such cases, it must be established that the victims had no option but to leave.

136. Forced displacement has affected numerous Nicaraguans, including many women political leaders, feminists, activists, human rights defenders, and Indigenous and Afrodescendant women. The Group documented cases in which women had no option but to leave because of the harassment, threats and surveillance to which they were subjected by the Government and the imminent danger of arbitrary detention. The victims went mainly to Costa Rica, Spain, the United States, Honduras and Mexico, among other countries. They include the feminists and activists Sofía Isabel Montenegro Alarcón and Azahalia Isabel Solís Román and the lawyer Yonarqui Martínez (see section III(D)).

137. This coercive and intimidating environment of extreme vulnerability, caused by the actions and omissions of the Government and non-State actors, combined with the lack of access to justice, indicates, *prima facie*, the absence of a context of freedom and security for these victims. Forced displacement occurs because of the lack of effective protection and the legal abandonment deliberately created by the Government, which takes advantage of the vulnerability of the victims to force them to leave the country. Therefore, the departure from Nicaragua of these women constitutes, *prima facie*, the crime of deportation as a crime against humanity.

138. With regard to the intent of the perpetrators to forcibly displace the population across a border, the Group recalls its conclusions in the conference room paper accompanying its first report, in which it identified several indicia that pointed, *prima facie*, to the existence of an agreement or plan of deportations with respect to the expulsions.<sup>122</sup> The creation of a coercive and intimidating environment of extreme vulnerability, which left the victims no alternative but to leave the country, constituted an essential component of that plan.

#### **F. Persecution on political grounds with a gender dimension**

139. As the Group detailed in the conference room paper accompanying its first report, under customary international law, to qualify a conduct of persecution as a crime against humanity, it is necessary to establish that the conduct: (i) discriminates in fact and (ii) deprives or infringes

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<sup>119</sup> A/HRC/52/CRP.5, para. 1009.

<sup>120</sup> A/HRC/58/CRP.8, paras. 602-618.

<sup>121</sup> A/HRC/55/CRP.3, para. 197. See also: International Criminal Court, "Elements of Crimes", art. 7(1)(d)(1).

<sup>122</sup> A/HRC/52/CRP.5, paras. 1027-1032; A/HRC/55/CRP.3, para. 92; and A/HRC/58/CRP.8, paras. 570 and 602.

fundamental rights established under international law, (iii) on racial, religious or political grounds, and (iv) is carried out deliberately with the intent to discriminate.<sup>123</sup>

140. The Group previously concluded that there were reasonable grounds to believe that the crimes against humanity of murder, imprisonment, torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (including sexual violence), deportation, enforced disappearance (other inhumane acts), arbitrary deprivation of nationality, and the cumulative effect of various other violations documented by the Group since the first phase of repression have been committed in the context of a discriminatory campaign on political grounds, and coordinated from the highest levels of Government. These crimes have been committed against part of the population of Nicaragua and constitute, *prima facie*, the crime against humanity of persecution on political grounds.<sup>124</sup>

#### *Cumulative effect of violations*

141. The Group recalls that, in determining whether specific acts of persecution meet the threshold of gravity, it must be assessed whether they meet the threshold on their own or together with other acts because of their cumulative effect.<sup>125</sup> The Group determined that the crime against humanity of persecution has been perpetrated through a multitude of related and interdependent violations against victims and their relatives with a cumulative effect.<sup>126</sup>

142. Many of the victims in Nicaragua and in exile, as well as their relatives, have been subjected to a multitude of violations with a cumulative effect. Victims of arbitrary deprivation of nationality who do not have another nationality have been stripped of their political rights, including the right to political participation, and of those civil rights that are based on nationality. The removal of victims from the civil registry or the refusal to issue birth certificates<sup>127</sup> violates their rights to recognition as a person before the law and to protection against arbitrary and unlawful interference with the family, among many others. The property and assets of many victims have been confiscated, in violation of their right to property. The authorities have also confiscated the pensions of several victims, in violation of their right to social security. Female students who were expelled from their universities, or from universities whose legal status was cancelled, and to whom the State denied the issuance of their degrees and/or academic records,<sup>128</sup> were unable to continue their studies, in violation of their right to education.

143. The cumulative effect of the violations has placed the vast majority of victims in a situation of “civil death”. Likewise, having been stripped of their property and, in some cases, their retirement pensions, the victims have been unable to support themselves in exile, thus suffering an “economic death”, that is, they were rendered insolvent.

#### *Political grounds with a gender dimension*

144. The crimes detailed above were committed on political grounds, and their severity was incremented by gender-related factors. Although gender was not the main factor in the political persecution of the victims, the victims also suffered gender discrimination, which has

<sup>123</sup> A/HRC/52/CRP.5, paras. 1082-1096.

<sup>124</sup> A/HRC/52/CRP.5, paras. 1082 ss.; A/HRC/55/CRP.3, paras. 201-218; A/HRC/55/CRP.6, paras. 349-357; and A/HRC/58/CRP.8, para. 875.

<sup>125</sup> ECCC, *The Prosecutor v. Kaing Guek Eav alias Duch*, Case No. 001/18-07-2007-ECCC/SC, Appeal Judgment, 3 February 2012, paras. 257-259. See also: A/HRC/52/CRP.5, para. 1090.

<sup>126</sup> A/HRC/55/CRP.3, paras. 210-218.

<sup>127</sup> “Nicaragua: persecución más allá de las fronteras”, pág. 17.

<sup>128</sup> A/HRC/55/CRP.6, paras. 190 ss.

manifested itself in different ways. Gender has shaped: (1) the selection of victims; (2) the methods of repression (including sexual violence and humiliation based on gender stereotypes); and (3) the differentiated impacts on women.

145. In the context of international criminal law, the Group refers to a broad concept of gender that is not limited to the female and male sexes.<sup>129</sup> Rather, the Group understands gender as a social concept whose meaning evolves and changes over time.<sup>130</sup> Similarly, the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court has stated that gender “varies from society to society and even within a single society. It can change over time”.<sup>131</sup> In its application for arrest warrants in the situation in Afghanistan in 2025, the Office of the Prosecutor also included LGBTIQ+ persons within the notion of gender under the Rome Statute.<sup>132</sup>

146. For the perpetrators, gender has played an important role in the **selection of victims** within the broader group of persons who are real or perceived opponents. The victims of the different crimes against humanity have heterogeneous profiles; however, they all share the common denominator of having been perceived by the administration of the Co-Presidents as a threat to their control of the State.

147. In the case of the female victims of the crimes detailed in the present document, the challenging of traditional gender norms through their activism was a crucial element in their selection as targets of repression. Women human rights defenders, activists and feminists were selected because of their public role and for subverting traditional gender norms, whether through their leadership, bodily autonomy or feminist activism, as a form of punishment. Certain groups of women, such as Indigenous, Afrodescendant and *campesina* women, were repressed both because of their political activism and the politicization of their collective identities. They have faced multiple forms of discrimination owing to the combination of political repression with the imposition of discriminatory sociocultural norms and patterns, racism, classism and territorial dispossession. In the case of women relatives or associates of real or perceived opponents, the perpetrators selected them because of their family ties or associations, while at the same time using their assigned gender roles, as caregivers, mothers or wives, to amplify the pain and impact of the violations committed.

148. Gender has also determined the **methods used** by the perpetrators in the commission of crimes against women, in particular imprisonment, torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, deportation and violations with a cumulative effect. These crimes were systematically accompanied by forms of gender-based violence and coercion through which the authorities used gender norms and stereotypes and social roles (specifically the roles of mothers, caregivers or wives) to stigmatize women, punish them for subverting traditional gender roles and discourage their participation in public life. These practices included sexual violence, humiliation, harassment and attacks linked to their socially assigned roles and aimed at amplifying the pain and impact of the crimes.

149. Acts of persecution have also caused, shaped and aggravated **differentiated gender-based impacts**. By instrumentalizing gender norms and stereotypes, the authorities increased the severity of the harm suffered and caused differentiated effects, including the deepening of risks of violence, stigmatization, social isolation and the destruction of the life projects of

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<sup>129</sup> See the more limited concept of gender included in article 7(3) of the Rome Statute (“For the purpose of this Statute, it is understood that the term ‘gender’ refers to the two sexes, male and female, within the context of society. The term ‘gender’ does not indicate any meaning different from the above.”).

<sup>130</sup> See also: Report of the International Law Commission, A/74/10, paras. 41 and 42.

<sup>131</sup> Office of the Prosecutor of the ICC, “Policy on Gender-based Crimes”, 2023, paras. 17 y 18.

<sup>132</sup> Office of the Prosecutor of the ICC, Public redacted version of “Prosecution’s application under article 58 for a warrant of arrest against Haibatullah Akhundzada”, ICC-02/17, 23 January 2025, paras. 90 ss.

victims and their relatives, especially girls, boys, adolescents and older persons. This is also reflected in the cumulative effect of several violations, which in many cases is particularly serious for women owing to pre-existing structural factors. When women have primary responsibility for minor children, they also face the impact of their civil death. Likewise, the impossibility of fulfilling caregiving responsibilities for relatives in Nicaragua owing to the prevention of their return to the country causes an additional psychological impact of guilt.

150. The discriminatory policy of systematically silencing real or perceived opponents has also manifested itself in a State communications policy that contains a gender dimension aimed at defaming real or perceived women opponents and turning them into the targets of repression.<sup>133</sup> In particular, these attacks have been evident in the Co-President's public statements in which she presented women activists, feminists and human rights defenders as a group that is distinct from the "simple and genuine working women of our Nicaragua" because of interests considered hostile to the interests of the State, among them its gender policy.<sup>134</sup> Invoking traditional women roles, the Co-President stated publicly that "the so-called feminists" and "political activists with women's names" are not connected with "our very respectable traditions and ways of life", but instead seek to "destroy Nicaraguan women and families".<sup>135</sup> From the third phase of repression onwards, women human rights defenders were also criminalized through the use of terms such as "foreign agents", "traitors" and "enemies of the family", and were insulted for following a "garbage feminism" with agendas contrary to morality or the family.<sup>136</sup>

151. These statements show that gender has played a relevant role in the implementation of the State's persecutory policy. Women leaders and members of feminist movements have been perceived as a threat to the absolute control of the State because of their political opposition and because they subvert gender norms.

#### *Intent to discriminate*

152. The murders, imprisonments, torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, deportations, arbitrary deprivations of nationality, enforced disappearances and the various other violations with cumulative effect were committed deliberately and with the intent to discriminate against real or perceived opponents of the Government. The victims have been targeted because of their identity, as part of a discriminatory policy of systematically silencing any person and dismantling any civic or political organization that maintains a position different from or opposed to that of the Government, or is perceived as doing so.

## **V. Conclusions and recommendations**

### **A. Conclusions**

153. The Group of Human Rights Experts on Nicaragua concludes that the serious human rights violations and abuses committed in Nicaragua since April 2018 have had clear and systematic gender dimensions. These violations have not only affected women, girls and LGBTIQ+ persons in a differentiated manner, but they have also reproduced, instrumentalized

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<sup>133</sup> A/HRC/52/CRP.5, paras. 745-759.

<sup>134</sup> Confidencial, "La vicepresidenta Rosario Murillo atiza discurso de odio, "en defensa del amor"", 17 September 2020, available at: <https://confidencial.digital/politica/la-vicepresidenta-rosario-murillo-atiza-discurso-de-odio-en-defensa-del-amor/>; and El 19 digital, "Proclama en el día de lucha contra violencia de género", 23 November 2018, available at: <https://www.el19digital.com/articulos/ver/84297-proclama-en-el-dia-de-lucha-contra-la-violencia-de-genero?fbclid=IwAR3wQFh2P7GcqQPZbvhlTP9WLAerz2hhTmvsR9d8hySz0IkwKCzKyKh1So8>.

<sup>135</sup> El 19 digital, "Proclama en el día de lucha contra violencia de género", 23 November 2018.

<sup>136</sup> Rosario Murillo, "El feminismo chatarra y las guerras de baja intensidad".

and deepened pre-existing structural inequalities and gender stereotypes to punish, discipline and silence the victims. Some of these violations and abuses constitute the crimes against humanity of imprisonment, torture, enforced disappearance, deportation and persecution on political grounds.

154. There is a stark contradiction between the official gender equality rhetoric promoted by the Government and the documented reality. Despite formal progress in terms of equal political representation, the authorities have driven legal reforms and policies, as well as public discourse, that reinforce traditional gender roles and stereotypes and limit the autonomous exercise of women's rights. In addition, the absence of State willingness to prevent, investigate and punish gender-based violence, especially when it intersects with political repression, has contributed to the consolidation of a climate of impunity and fear.

155. The feminist movement and women's and LGBTIQ+ organizations have been subjected to a sustained policy of harassment, criminalization and institutional dismantling because of their long-standing capacity for mobilization, advocacy and independent organization. The mass and arbitrary cancellation of civil society organizations, especially those dedicated to defending the rights of women and LGBTIQ+ persons, eliminated essential spaces for protection, support, documentation and participation, disproportionately affecting historically discriminated-against populations.

156. State repression has used specific gender-based violence measures against women who played visible roles in public life, including on account of the defence of human rights, activism, political, community, student, *campesino* or feminist leadership, and journalism. The authorities and pro-government non-State actors have used sexual violence, sexualized threats, humiliations based on gender roles, stigmatization campaigns and punishments associated with family ties and caregiving roles as deliberate tools of political repression.

157. Serious human rights violations and crimes against humanity sometimes converge in the same person or family. Their impacts have been profound, interconnected and differentiated according to the gender of the victim. The Group concludes that political repression has caused a direct and indirect impact on the children of persecuted people, especially minors, in contravention of the principle of the best interests of the child. The children of persons deprived of liberty, exiled or stripped of their nationality, among other people, face serious and far-reaching consequences: prolonged family separation, loss of household economic support, social stigmatization, bullying at school and profound psychological effects resulting from the detention, enforced disappearance or exile of their parents.

158. The intersectional analysis conducted by the Group has further determined that certain groups have faced aggravated forms of victimization. Indigenous, Afrodescendant and *campesino* women, older women, LGBTIQ+ women and women living in poverty suffer differentiated impacts resulting from the interaction between multiple forms of direct and indirect discrimination and political repression.

159. Co-Presidents Daniel Ortega and Rosario Murillo, together with high-level officials from the different branches of the State and members of the FSLN, are responsible, prima facie, for serious, systematic and widespread human rights violations and crimes against humanity committed since April 2018. These violations, which in themselves or because of their cumulative effect constitute persecution on political grounds, are further aggravated by their convergence with gender discrimination. They also cause a differentiated impact depending on the gender of the victim.

160. The documented patterns expose a State policy of political persecution aimed at silencing all forms of dissent, neutralizing real or perceived opposition and inhibiting all criticism, both inside the country and abroad. In Nicaragua, this persecution on political grounds has gender dimensions, insofar as gender shapes the selection of victims and the methods of repression and has differentiated effects on women and girls. The authorities have instrumentalized traditional norms and gender stereotypes to stigmatize and punish a significant number of real or perceived women opponents, including LGBTIQ+ women. Although several women, including political and community leaders, human rights defenders and alleged “traitors” to the FSLN, had suffered discrimination at the hands of the State before 2018, the political repression that began in April 2018 increased the pressure on them, both because of their public stance against State violence and because of their fight for justice for the victims.

## **B. Recommendations**

161. The Group urges the Government of Nicaragua to put an end to all forms of repression and persecution against real or perceived opponents that instrumentalize the victims’ gender, sexual orientation or gender identity.

162. In particular, the Group calls upon the Government of Nicaragua to:

- a) Immediately and unconditionally release all persons arbitrarily detained and guarantee full respect for their human rights;
- b) Cease all forms of surveillance, harassment, intimidation and reprisals that directly or indirectly use forms of gender-based discrimination against women human rights defenders, journalists, Indigenous, Afrodescendant, *campesina*, community and student leaders, feminist activists, LGBTIQ+ women, as well as women linked to Christian churches, both inside and outside the national territory;
- c) Cease all forms of persecution or proxy punishment of relatives, especially minors, and other persons related to real or perceived women opponents;
- d) Promptly, thoroughly, independently and impartially investigate all reports of extrajudicial executions, torture, sexual and gender-based violence, enforced disappearances and other serious human rights violations, ensuring the integration of international standards on non-discrimination on the grounds of gender, sexual orientation or gender identity, and of an intersectional perspective;
- e) Take legal action against all those responsible;
- f) Adopt effective measures to prevent and punish gender-based discrimination and violence, guaranteeing access to justice, comprehensive reparation and effective protection for victims; also adopt institutional reforms to guarantee the non-repetition of these forms of discrimination and violence;
- g) Repeal or reform all legislation, policies or practices that are incompatible with the State’s international obligations regarding gender equality and non-discrimination, including regulatory and institutional frameworks that unduly restrict civic space and freedom of association;

- h) Restore the legal status, property and assets of organizations that were arbitrarily cancelled, especially those dedicated to defending the rights of women and LGBTIQ+ persons;
- i) Guarantee a safe and enabling environment for the work of feminist organizations, organizations whose work focuses on the protection of human rights and sexual and gender diversity, and organizations providing essential social and community services essential for women, especially those organizations that existed previously;
- j) Go beyond mere rhetoric and promote, in a substantive and policy-driven manner, gender equality and full respect for women's rights, in line with the provisions of CEDAW and other international standards
- k) Guarantee public, transparent and timely access to updated and disaggregated statistical information on gender-based violence, femicides, sexual violence and other human rights violations;
- l) Adopt specific measures to protect children and adolescents affected by political repression, including psychosocial support, family reunification and guarantees of access to education, health care and documentation; and
- m) Guarantee the right to nationality and allow the safe and dignified return of persons arbitrarily deprived of their nationality and/or forced into exile.

163. The Group recommends that the international community:

- a) Keep up international monitoring of the human rights situation in Nicaragua, including its gender dimensions;
- b) Start and support accountability initiatives for serious human rights violations and crimes against humanity, including through universal jurisdiction mechanisms where appropriate;
- c) Provide protection and support to Nicaraguans in exile, especially women defenders, journalists, activists and LGBTIQ+ women, or others who have been forced into exile to protect themselves from political repression;
- d) Increase cooperation with and political, technical and financial support to human rights and feminist organizations operating from outside Nicaragua, especially those working to defend the rights of women and LGBTIQ+ persons, ensuring that their work of documentation and support to victims can continue following the dismantling of the domestic civic space; and
- e) Integrate an intersectional approach into the monitoring of the human rights situation in Nicaragua and measures for accountability, restitution of rights and redress, recognizing factors such as gender and sexual orientation, ethnicity, age and socioeconomic status as additional conditions of discrimination and violence.