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RIDHE condemns the criminal law manipulations and lack of judicial guarantees in the trials carried out against political prisoners in Nicaragua and calls for their immediate release. Likewise, RIDHE condemns the violations to the right of freedom of association in the country, especially weakened in light of recent events, among which the arbitrary shutdown of Universities and Organisations for academic and social purposes.

Brussels, February 25, 2022

The International Network for Human Rights Europe (RIDHE), in its demand to promote and protect human rights in the Latin American and the Caribbean Region, repudiates the summary trials that have been carried out recently in Nicaragua against political prisoners detained since May and June 2021. These trials were conducted in clear violation of due process requirements, such as the presumption of innocence and the right of defense.

These judicial procedures have been carried out behind closed doors against more than 30 people, either in an expedited manner or in longer sessions. For instance, in the trials against the seven Nicaraguan opposition leaders, the procedures began on February 15 and were conducted in 12 hours sessions over seven days.

These people were detained for political reasons. Criminalized *a priori* by the public prosecutor, which, by its clear lack of independence, represents a clear demonstration of the continuous dismantling of the rule of law and democracy in the country.

Additionally, Public Liberties restrictive laws, such as law 1055 or the special cybercrime law, are contrary to international law standards. These laws have been the legal reasoning behind the judicial court decisions that convicted defendants of "conspiracy to undermine national integrity" or receiving "foreign resources for money laundering."

These judicial decisions were in clear violation of the principle of proportionality, by imposing arbitrary deprivation of liberty measures (between 8 to 13 years in prison) based on manipulated or fictitious evidence, such as testimonies by public officials and the police, as well as social media posts, interviews, political leadership activities, and human rights advocacy activities.

Owing to this systemic repression, the deplorable conditions in which political prisoners find themselves are equally worrying. Among 21 elderly people, it should be noted that one of them, Mr. Hugo Torres, 73, died after eight months in prison.



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Given these circumstances, RIDHE calls upon the Nicaraguan authorities to restore the constitutional order in adherence to human rights international standards. We call for an end to the arbitrary trials and the immediate release of 177 people that are detained since April 2018.

Likewise, RIDHE vehemently condemns the revocations of legal personality conducted by the Nicaraguan National Assembly against organizations, including universities, and academic and social associations whose facilities and campuses were confiscated by the State.

The revocations of legal personality carried out on the 2nd, 3rd, and 15th of February 2022, were conducted against 26 organizations and 6 human rights NGOs respectively, which means that, since April 2018 protests, a total of 93 NGOs were shut down including 14 Universities, Human Rights organizations, and educational research centers.

These provisions represent a serious threat to the right to education, academic freedom, and university autonomy, while also undermining the worker's fundamental rights whose mission to protect human rights has shown to be vital.

RIDHE has received several reports on the authorities' arbitrary refusal to issue the certificates of compliance of countless civil society organizations, which have been prevented from operating in the country.

The principles and rights related to academic freedom and university autonomy, the right of association, as well as the respect of judicial guarantees are at stake, and organizations must be provided the necessary means so they can comply with such requirements and avoid the revocations of legal personality.

RIDHE calls upon the Nicaraguan State to refrain from hindering compliance with the requirements outlined in the current legislation, as well as the constant violations of the rule of law mechanisms.



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