

# Treasury Sanctions Three Nicaraguan Individuals for Serious Human Rights Abuse and Corrupt Acts

July 5, 2018

**Washington** – The United States is deeply concerned about the ongoing crisis in Nicaragua. We condemn the violence perpetrated by security forces and others that have resulted in the death of at least 220 demonstrators, and nearly 1,500 injured. Since protests began on April 18, the Nicaraguan government’s violent response has included beatings of journalists, attacks against local TV and radio stations, and assaults on mothers mourning the deaths of their children. Accordingly, today the U.S. Department of the Treasury’s Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) sanctioned Nicaraguan National Police Commissioner Francisco Javier Diaz Madriz (Diaz) and Secretary of the Mayor’s Office of Managua Fidel Antonio Moreno Briones (Moreno) for being responsible for, or the leaders of entities involved in, serious human rights abuse in Nicaragua. These actions were taken pursuant to Executive Order (E.O.) 13818, “Blocking the Property of Persons Involved in Serious Human Rights Abuse or Corruption,” which targets perpetrators of serious human rights abuse and corruption.

Additionally, OFAC designated Jose Francisco Lopez Centeno (Lopez), the Vice President of ALBA de Nicaragua (ALBANISA) and President of Petronic, for engaging in corrupt activities, also pursuant to E.O. 13818. Today’s designations are just the latest in an ongoing series of actions to target human rights abusers and corrupt actors around the world under the Global Magnitsky sanctions program.

“The violence perpetrated by the government of Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega against the Nicaraguan people and the efforts of those close to the Ortega regime to illicitly enrich themselves is deeply disturbing and completely unacceptable,” said Sigal Mandelker, Under Secretary of the Treasury for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence. “President Ortega and his inner circle continue to violate basic freedoms of innocent civilians while ignoring the Nicaraguan people’s calls for the democratic reforms they demand, including free, fair, and transparent elections. These sanctions are part of our ongoing campaign under the Global

Magnitsky program to hold individuals who engage in human rights abuses and corruption to account.”

As a result of today’s actions, any property, or interest in property, of those designated by OFAC within U.S. jurisdiction is blocked. Additionally, U.S. persons are generally prohibited from engaging in transactions with blocked persons, including entities 50 percent or more owned by designated persons.

## **GLOBAL MAGNITSKY**

Building upon the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act, on December 20, 2017, the President signed E.O. 13818, in which the President found that the prevalence of human rights abuse and corruption which have their source, in whole or in part, outside the United States, had reached such scope and gravity that it threatens the stability of international and political systems. Human rights abuse and corruption undermine the values that form an essential foundation of stable, secure, and functioning societies; have devastating impacts on individuals; weaken democratic institutions; degrade the rule of law; perpetuate violent conflicts; facilitate the activities of dangerous persons; and undermine economic markets. The United States seeks to impose tangible and significant consequences on those who commit serious human rights abuse or engage in corruption, as well as to protect the financial system of the United States from abuse by these same persons. To date, 76 individuals and entities have been designated under E.O. 13818.

## **FRANCISCO JAVIER DIAZ MADRIZ**

Diaz is a Commissioner of Nicaragua’s National Police (NNP) who has been referred to as the de facto head of, and has directed the day-to-day business of, the NNP. Under Diaz’s command the NNP has engaged in serious human rights abuse against the people of Nicaragua, including extrajudicial killings. In June, masked gunmen accompanied by individuals identified by witnesses as Nicaraguan police reportedly set fire to a family home in Managua, killing six, including two young children. When neighbors attempted to help, the police allegedly shot at them, preventing the would-be rescuers from reaching the family. The Nicaraguan police have approached gang leaders in Nicaragua for support in attacking anti-government protesters and have been accused of indiscriminately firing on, and killing, peaceful protestors.

## **FIDEL ANTONIO MORENO BRIONES**

Moreno serves as the main link between municipal governments and the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) and has also acted as a leader of the Sandinista Youth, the FSLN's youth organization. The Sandinista Youth has been implicated in numerous serious human rights abuses related to the ongoing protests against the Nicaraguan government, including in the beating of protesters in April 2018 and allegedly participating in the June attack that killed a family of six in Managua. Moreno has been personally implicated in ordering attacks on protesters as far back as 2013, when elderly and young people who were peacefully protesting reduced retirement pensions were violently dislodged from their encampment by members of the Sandinista Youth. In 2013 Moreno also orchestrated the use of motorcyclists to violently attack individuals protesting the flawed rollout of a Nicaraguan government program, and in early 2017 recruited others to join a group of motorcyclists to take part in measures to counter anti-government marches. Moreno has been accused of stealing large sums of money from Managua municipal projects, as well as using municipal funds to pay for FSLN party activities.

## **JOSE FRANCISCO LOPEZ CENTENO**

Lopez is the Vice President of ALBANISA, the company that imports and sells Venezuelan petroleum products, and President of the Nicaraguan state-owned oil company Petronic. Lopez has had access to large amounts of funds collected by the government in the form of taxes and fines that he could exploit, including for the personal use of Nicaraguan leaders. When involved in infrastructure projects, Lopez would syphon funds by negotiating personal fees, has placed numerous individuals throughout the government who have helped him steal millions of dollars on an annual basis, and has used his position to his and his family's benefit by using companies they own to win government contracts. ALBANISA is 49% owned by Petronic, and 51 % owned by Venezuela's national oil company, Petroleos de Venezuela (PDVSA). Senior officials within the Nicaraguan government and the FSLN have used ALBANISA funds to purchase television and radio stations, hotels, cattle ranches, electricity generation plants, and pharmaceutical laboratories.

[Identifying information on the individuals designated today.](#)

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