

Treasury Sanctions Members of Nicaraguan President Ortega's Inner Circle Who Persecute Pro-Democracy Voices

June 21, 2019

WASHINGTON – Today, the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) designated four Nicaraguan government officials, Gustavo Eduardo Porras Cortes, Orlando Jose Castillo Castillo, Sonia Castro Gonzalez, and Oscar Salvador Mojica Obregon, pursuant to Executive Order (E.O.) 13851. Additionally, Sonia Castro Gonzalez and Gustavo Eduardo Porras Cortes have been designated pursuant to the Nicaragua Human Rights and Anticorruption Act of 2018 (NHRAA). Today's action targets Nicaraguan government officials who persecute Nicaraguan citizens exercising their fundamental freedoms, enact repressive laws, silence news media, and deny medical care to the Nicaraguan people.

"The Government of Nicaragua continues to violate the human rights of the Nicaraguan people, implementing exploitive and violent laws and holding hundreds of people as political prisoners. The United States is sending an unequivocal message to President Ortega and his inner circle: we stand with the Nicaraguan people on their calls for reform and a return to democracy," said Under Secretary of the Treasury for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence Sigal Mandelker. "We will not hesitate to take action against those who perpetuate oppression or prop up the Ortega regime at the expense of the Nicaraguan people."

As a result of today's action, all property and interests in property of these individuals, and of any entities that are owned, directly or indirectly, 50 percent or more by such individuals, that are in the United States or in the possession or control of U.S. persons are blocked and must be reported to OFAC. OFAC's regulations generally prohibit all dealings by U.S. persons or within (or transiting) the United States that involve any property or interests in property of blocked or designated persons. Further details on these designations are included below.

GUSTAVO EDUARDO PORRAS CORTES

Gustavo Eduardo Porras Cortes (Porras) is designated for being a current official of the Government of Nicaragua and for being the President of the Nicaraguan National Assembly (NNA), an entity that has enacted significant actions or policies that undermine democratic

processes or institutions in Nicaragua, pursuant to E.O. 13851 and NHRAA. Porras is the senior-most political operator of President Ortega and exerts significant control over the Institute of Social Security and Ministry of Health with the approval of Vice President Rosario Murillo. On November 27, 2018, OFAC designated Rosario Murillo for being an official of the Government of Nicaragua.

The NNA enacted an amnesty law in early June 2019 that conditionally pardons individuals who took part in the protests beginning April 18, 2018, but requires protesters to abstain from expressing themselves in a future protest or risk having amnesty revoked. The law also pardons police officers and parapolice fighters who took part in the Ortega regime's violent repression against protesters, which included the killing of hundreds of protesters. In November and December 2018, the NNA also banned nine human rights and pro-democracy organizations from operating in Nicaragua.

ORLANDO JOSE CASTILLO CASTILLO

Orlando Jose Castillo Castillo (Castillo) is designated for being a current official of the Government of Nicaragua and for being the General Director of the Institute of Telecommunications and Postal Service (TELCOR), an entity that has, or whose members have, engaged in actions that threaten the peace, security, or stability of Nicaragua, pursuant to E.O. 13851. TELCOR has been used by President Ortega and Castillo to silence independent media, including the news organization 100% Noticias.

SONIA CASTRO GONZALEZ

Sonia Castro Gonzalez (Castro) is designated for being a current official of the Government of Nicaragua, and for being the Minister of Health. For her role as Minister of Health, Castro is designated pursuant to E.O. 13851 for leading the Ministry of Health, an entity that has, or whose members have, engaged in significant human rights abuse violations pursuant to E.O. 13851. Because the Ministry of Health is an entity that has, or whose members have, engaged in significant acts of violence or conduct that constitutes a serious abuse or violation of human rights against persons associated with the protests in Nicaragua that began on April 18, 2018, Castro is also designated pursuant to NHRAA.

The Ministry of Health refused treatment to victims of violent regime repression, which exacerbated injuries and even led to death, due to the lack of medical care. Hospital staff were under orders to report admitted protesters to parapolice who removed them from hospitals,

resulting in forced disappearances. The Ministry of Health threatened healthcare workers, firing hundreds of medical personnel who treated protesters.

OSCAR SALVADOR MOJICA OBREGON

Oscar Salvador Mojica Obregon (Mojica) is designated for being a current official of the Government of Nicaragua, pursuant to E.O. 13851. Mojica is a retired Major General of the Nicaraguan Army and the current Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure. On national television, Mojica promoted the Ortega regime's "exile, jail, or death" strategy to silence the opposition, a policy that has left hundreds dead, thousands wounded, and tens of thousands either incarcerated, driven into exile, or internally displaced. Additionally, Mojica manages a significant portion of President Ortega and Vice President Murillo's official and personal finances including investments in coffee plantations and hospitality establishments.

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

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