

Treasury Sanctions Public Ministry of Nicaragua and Nine Government Officials Following Sham November Elections

November 15, 2021

WASHINGTON — Today, the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) designated the Public Ministry of Nicaragua (Ministerio Publico de Nicaragua) as well as nine officials of the Government of Nicaragua in response to the sham national elections orchestrated by President Daniel Ortega (Ortega) and Vice President Rosario Murillo (Murillo). This action targets those who are repressing Nicaraguans for exercising their human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Between October 2020 and June 2021, the Nicaraguan National Assembly, controlled by Ortega and Murillo, approved six laws that facilitated the government's repression against the opposition and eliminated its chances in the November 2021 elections. Several officials designated in today's action were appointed to their government positions by Ortega and are key supporters of the regime and its anti-democratic policies; the officials designated today also include multiple persons implicated in violence against peaceful protestors during Nicaragua's 2018 demonstrations.

As President Biden stated, President Daniel Ortega and Vice President Murillo orchestrated a pantomime election that was neither free nor fair, and most certainly not democratic. The unjust imprisonment of nearly 40 opposition figures since May, including seven potential presidential candidates, and the blocking of political parties from participation rigged the outcome well before election day.

"The Ortega regime is using laws and institutions to detain members of the political opposition and deprive Nicaraguans from the right to vote," said Office of Foreign Assets Control Director Andrea M. Gacki. "The United States is sending an unequivocal message to President Ortega, Vice President Murillo, and their inner circle that we stand with the Nicaraguan people in their calls for reform and a return to democracy."

Today's action, taken pursuant to Executive Order (E.O.) 13851, "Blocking Property of Certain Persons Contributing to the Situation in Nicaragua," and the Nicaragua Human Rights and Anticorruption Act of 2018 (NHRAA), now known as the Nicaragua Investment Conditionality

Act of 2018 (NICA), is intended to highlight the anti-democratic actions that the Ortega regime has undertaken to alter and corrupt the election process in Nicaragua and solidify the power of Ortega, Murillo and their inner circle.

PUBLIC MINISTRY OF NICARAGUA (MINISTERIO PUBLICO DE NICARAGUA)

The Public Ministry of Nicaragua is the federal public prosecutor's office and is designated for being responsible for or complicit in, or for having directly or indirectly engaged or attempted to engage in, actions or policies that undermine democratic processes or institutions in Nicaragua. Relying on Nicaraguan law, including Law 1055, the Public Ministry has unjustly arrested and investigated presidential candidates and prevented them from running for office, thereby undermining democracy in Nicaragua. Law 1055 prohibits from public office anyone determined to be "traitors," such as those advocating "foreign interference" in Nicaragua or other actions deemed to be undermining Nicaraguan sovereignty. In June 2021, the Public Ministry used Law 1055 and requested that leading opposition presidential candidate Cristiana Chamorro, whom it was investigating on groundless charges relating to "the crimes of laundering, forgery of official documents, and abusive management," be disqualified from the electoral process. The Public Ministry also initiated investigations or filed charges against leading presidential candidates Arturo Cruz, Felix Maradiaga, Juan Sebastian Chamorro, and Miguel Mora, all of whom were detained since June of this year in the run-up to the sham November elections. The Public Ministry is also responsible for the arrest of nearly 40 individuals since late May, including leaders of civil society, the private sector, students, and journalists.

LUIS ANGEL MONTENEGRO ESPINOZA

Luis Angel Montenegro Espinoza (Montenegro) was designated for being an official of the Government of Nicaragua or for having served as an official of the Government of Nicaragua at any time on or after January 10, 2007. As the Superintendent of the Superintendency of Banks and Other Financial Institutions (SIBOIF), Montenegro ordered banks to comply with a request from the Public Ministry to audit and turn over financial information on 13 senior executives and businessmen in accordance with Law 1055 due to being the subject of an investigation. Additionally, in April 2020, SIBOIF issued regulations implementing the February 2020 amendments to the Law for the Protection of Consumers and Users, which forbids

banks in Nicaragua, without a reason recognized by Nicaraguan law, from refusing financial services to customers, including OFAC-designated persons.

JOSE ADRIAN CHAVARRIA MONTENEGRO

Jose Adrian Chavarria Montenegro (Chavarria) is the Nicaraguan Vice Minister of Finance and Public Credit and is designated for being an official of the Government of Nicaragua or for having served as an official of the Government of Nicaragua at any time on or after January 10, 2007. Chavarria replaced, as a board member of the National Electric Transmission Company, U.S.-designated Ivan Adolfo Acosta Montalvan, who arranged significant financial support to the Ortega regime.

RODOLFO FRANCISCO LOPEZ GUTIERREZ

Rodolfo Francisco Lopez Gutierrez is the Managing Director of the Electric Distributor of the North (DISNORTE) and Electric Distributor of the South (DISSUR) and is designated for being an official of the Government of Nicaragua or for having served as an official of the Government of Nicaragua at any time on or after January 10, 2007.

JOSE ANTONIO CASTANEDA MENDEZ

Jose Antonio Castaneda Mendez is the President of Nicaraguan Institute of Energy and is designated for being an official of the Government of Nicaragua or for having served as an official of the Government of Nicaragua at any time on or after January 10, 2007.

MOHAMED FARRARA LASHTAR

Mohamed Farrara Lashtar (Lashtar) is the Nicaraguan Ambassador to Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. Lashtar is designated for being an official of the Government of Nicaragua or for having served as an official of the Government of Nicaragua at any time on or after January 10, 2007.

SALVADOR MANSELL CASTRILLO

Salvador Mansell Castrillo is the Nicaraguan Minister of Energy and Mines and is designated for being an official of the Government of Nicaragua or for having served as an official of the Government of Nicaragua at any time on or after January 10, 2007.

SADRACH ZELEDON ROCHA

Sadrach Zeledon Rocha (Zeledon) is the Mayor of the Nicaraguan city of Matagalpa and is designated for being an official of the Government of Nicaragua or for having served as an official of the Government of Nicaragua at any time on or after January 10, 2007. Zeledon contributed to the violence inflicted against demonstrations by Nicaraguan citizens that began in April 2018. He was connected to the actions of paramilitary forces, the pro-Ortega Police, and shock groups that engaged in serious abuses against protestors.

LEONIDAS CENTENO RIVERA

Leonidas Centeno Rivera (Centeno) is the Mayor of Jinotega and is designated for being an official of the Government of Nicaragua or for having served as an official of the Government of Nicaragua at any time on or after January 10, 2007. Centeno is directly linked to instances of repression in Jinotega during the 2018 protests. In particular, attacks with heavy weaponry carried out by paramilitary members killed four individuals, and members of Centeno's mayoral office staff actively participated in the repression of protestors.

FRANCISCO RAMON VALENZUELA BLANDON

Francisco Ramon Valenzuela Blandon (Valenzuela) is the Mayor of Esteli and is designated for being an official of the Government of Nicaragua or for having served as an official of the Government of Nicaragua at any time on or after January 10, 2007. Valenzuela's office was ordered to position snipers to target demonstrators during the protests of 2018.

SANCTIONS IMPLICATIONS

As a result of today's action, all property and interests in property of these persons that are in the United States or in the possession or control of U.S. persons are blocked and must be reported to OFAC. In addition, any entities that are owned, directly or indirectly, 50 percent or more in the aggregate by one or more of such persons are also blocked. 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.

The sanctions imposed today are not intended to be permanent but are issued to encourage a positive change of behavior by the identified persons and the authoritarian regime they support. The United States makes clear that the removal of sanctions may be available for

individuals and entities designated pursuant to E.O. 13851 and the NHRAA who take concrete and meaningful actions to promote democracy and the rule of law in Nicaragua.

[View identifying information on the entity and individuals designated today.](#)

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