

# Nicaragua 2024: Rights in crisis

Analysis of repression, resistance  
and deterioration of human rights in Nicaragua



This report examines the critical human rights situation in Nicaragua from January to August 2024, highlighting the hardening of political repression, the devastating impact of the economic crisis, and civil society resistance efforts.



**FOUNDATION FOR  
DEVELOPMENT AND  
SOCIAL  
INNOVATION**

[contacto@developmentfoundation.org](mailto:contacto@developmentfoundation.org)



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**MBA. Donald Muñoz Canales**

DIRECTOR

@Donald\_Munoz

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# Introduction

Since April 2018, Nicaragua has been experiencing a deep socio-political crisis characterized by violent state repression against peaceful protests.

Government forces have responded with repressive tactics that include extrajudicial executions, arbitrary detentions, torture, and attacks on freedom of speech and press.

The situation has resulted in the death of more than 300 people and the exile of more than 750,000 people, including opposition leaders, journalists and human rights defenders.

The continued persecution and criminalization of dissidents, as well as the recent expulsion of diplomats and international organizations, reflect the deterioration of fundamental freedoms in the country.

Despite international pressure, the government of Daniel Ortega has maintained tight control over state institutions, limiting civic space and perpetuating a climate of fear and repression.

The defense of human rights stems from two essential acts: to evidence all violations with data and to make this catalog accessible to the public.

Given the repression, secrecy of information under the Ortega regime and extreme human rights abuses, it has become more crucial than ever to denounce and make visible human rights violations in Nicaragua. Civil society organizations, inside and outside the country, play a fundamental role in documenting these abuses and promoting justice and human rights internationally.

# Political and Social Context

## Summary of the political context in Nicaragua in 2024

Nicaragua continues to be immersed in a deep social and political crisis, the result of a growing concentration of power by the government of Daniel Ortega and Rosario Murillo.

The Ortega regime, which has been in power since 2007, has faced both domestic and international criticism for its authoritarian management of the country and systematic repression of the political opposition and civil society.

Throughout 2024, the political context in Nicaragua has been characterized by an increasingly tight state control over all spheres of public life, a weakening of democratic institutions and an environment of constant repression and censorship.

### Concentration of power and weakening of democratic institutions

The Ortega government has consolidated its control over the main state institutions, including the judiciary, the legislature, and the security forces. In addition, the mass media, which serves as an essential element of any democracy, has been totally repressed, leaving citizens without the information necessary to exercise their rights as informed and active citizens.

This process, which began more visibly from 2018 after mass protests against his government, has intensified in 2024 with a series of constitutional and legal reforms that have strengthened the executive branch and eroded the checks and balances capabilities of other branches of government.

Constitutional reforms approved in early 2024 allowed Ortega to eliminate term limits and granted him extraordinary powers in the area of national security. In addition, these reforms have consolidated the president's power to appoint judges and

prosecutors, which has seriously compromised the independence of the judiciary. The electoral system has also been modified, further limiting the possibility of fair and transparent competition in future elections.

The legislative branch, dominated by Ortega, has functioned as a merely formal body, expeditiously approving all executive proposals without real debate or opposition. The National Assembly has passed laws restricting the activities of civil society, the media and political participation, under the pretext of maintaining the stability and security of the country.

These are clear traits of a dictatorship.

## Repression of opposition and social control

During 2024, the Ortega government has maintained a policy of systematic repression against any form of dissent.

Opposition political parties have been persecuted since the April 2018 uprising, their leaders imprisoned or forced into exile, and their activities severely restricted. The Foreign Agents Regulation Law<sup>1</sup>, which requires all organizations and individuals receiving foreign funding to register as foreign agents, has been used to dismantle non-governmental organizations and social movements, considered critical of the government.

Although the government has long practiced censorship, control over the media has been particularly severe in 2024. Most independent media have been shut down, and journalists attempting to report on the real situation in the country face threats, intimidation, and arrests. Social media and other digital platforms have been closely monitored, with citizens arrested for speaking out against the government online. This situation has led to an environment of widespread self-censorship, where fear of reprisals limits freedom of speech and press freedom.

The use of the security forces, in particular the National Police and paramilitary groups aligned with the government, has been a constant in the repression of demonstrations and the intimidation of the population.

<sup>1</sup>See report "The application of repressive laws in Nicaragua":  
<https://nicaraguamemoriajusticia.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/La-aplicacion-de-leyes-represivas-en-Nicaragua-desde-2020-ODH-1.pdf>



These groups have been responsible for numerous human rights violations, including arbitrary detentions, forced disappearances, and extrajudicial executions. Impunity is a key factor, as complaints against these forces are not investigated, and those responsible face no consequences.

## Rosario Murillo's role in power consolidation

Rosario Murillo, Ortega's wife and the country's vice president, has played a key role in consolidating the regime's power. Murillo, known for her control over state propaganda and her influence on key government decisions, has been perceived as the true architect of the strategy of repression and social control.

In 2024, his role has been increasingly visible, not only as a political figure, but also as an omnipresent force in all aspects of public life.

Under his leadership, the State propaganda machine has intensified its work, presenting a distorted image of the country's reality, exalting the government's achievements and minimizing or denying human rights violations.

This official narrative has been fundamental in maintaining the loyalty of certain sectors of the population, especially those who depend on government social programs, which are administered with a clientelistic and exclusionary approach.

Murillo has also reinforced the use of symbols and rituals of the Sandinista revolution as tools of cohesion and ideological control, seeking to legitimize the regime through the evocation of the revolutionary past.

However, this use has been increasingly questioned, even by former Sandinista allies, who see in these practices a deviation from the original ideals of the revolution.

## Internal tensions and popular discontent

Despite the tight control exercised by Ortega and Murillo, 2024 has witnessed growing popular discontent.

Living conditions have deteriorated significantly, with high levels of poverty, unemployment, and a sharp inflation that has eroded

the purchasing power of the population. These conditions have generated a latent malaise, which manifests itself in sporadic protests and growing criticism in private spaces and in exile.

*"The basic food basket is over C\$20,000 córdobas in a country where the average salary is between C\$4,700 and C\$5,600 córdobas. The math doesn't work for me, the majority of the population is literally trying to survive...".* Donald Muñoz, Human Rights, freedom and democracy activist.

The opposition, although weakened and fragmented, has tried to reorganize itself in exile and through digital platforms. However, the constant repression and the lack of a unified leadership have made it difficult to articulate a solid movement capable of challenging the regime.

Repression and fear remain significant obstacles to popular mobilization within the country, but underlying discontent suggests that support for the government is increasingly fragile.

Internationally, Nicaragua has continued its isolation, with strained relations with most countries in the region and under pressure from sanctions imposed by the United States and the European Union.

However, the government has maintained close relations with some international allies, such as Russia and China, seeking to counteract the impact of sanctions and international condemnation.

The result of these actions has been an increase in international isolation, evidencing Ortega's clear intention to consolidate an authoritarian regime that disregards the demands of the global community and violates the fundamental freedoms of the Nicaraguan people.

In a gesture that underscores his contempt for democratic values, Ortega has sought to strengthen alliances with regimes equally questioned for their respect for human rights. Daniel Ortega and Rosario Murillo have maintained a discourse defending their rapprochement with this regime as a sovereign stance in the face of international pressure.

This statement only intensified concerns about the authoritarian direction Nicaragua has taken under his leadership.

## Future prospects

The political context in Nicaragua in 2024 suggests that the country is at a crossroads.

The authoritarian consolidation of the Ortega and Murillo regime has created an environment of repression and control that, while it has allowed the government to remain in power, has also generated growing international isolation and domestic discontent that could explode at any moment.

Internal tensions, deteriorating living conditions, and international pressure raise questions about the long-term sustainability of the regime.

Political uncertainty is high, and although the government appears firm in its control, Nicaragua's recent history demonstrates that changes can be sudden and radical. Opposition forces, both internal and external, will continue to seek ways to challenge the regime, and the outcome of this struggle is uncertain.

## Major political events that have had an impact on human rights

The year 2024 in Nicaragua was marked by a series of political events that had a significant impact on the human rights situation in the country.

These events not only deepened the existing political crisis, but also exacerbated human rights violations, seriously affecting the lives of Nicaraguans.

The following are the main political events of 2024 and their influence on human rights.

### Controlled regional elections

One of the most relevant political events of 2024 was the holding of regional elections in March, which took place in a context of strong government control and absence of democratic conditions.

From the beginning of the electoral process, the Ortega government used its power to ensure a favorable outcome, eliminating any possibility of real competition. The main indigenous opposition parties were disqualified or forced to withdraw through coercion and harassment, leaving the field open to candidates aligned with the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN).

The **Yapti Tasba Masraka Nanih Asla Takanka** (Yatama, or Sons of Mother Earth, in the Miskito language) party has been exterminated by the Sandinista government. The leader of Yatama, ex-deputy **Brooklyn Rivera**, was kidnapped by the police on September 29, 2023, and to date is, according to the Legal Defense Unit (UDJ), "in forced disappearance for concealment of whereabouts". Two days later, substitute legislator Nancy Henríquez, president of the indigenous political organization<sup>2</sup> was arrested.

As a result, the FSLN claimed victory in the elections, further consolidating its control at the regional level. However, these elections were widely rejected by human rights organizations, who pointed out that the process was flawed and undemocratic. The impact of these elections on human rights was devastating, as not only were citizens' political rights violated, but also an atmosphere of fear and repression was created.

The lack of transparency and the use of state violence to ensure electoral victory further undermined confidence in institutions and deepened the sense of helplessness among the population.

## Enhanced implementation of the "Foreign Agents Regulation Act".

In 2024, the Ortega government intensified the application of the "Foreign Agents Regulation Law", originally approved in October 2020.

This law, which had already been criticized for its repressive nature, gave the government broad powers to restrict the participation of non-governmental organizations, journalists and any actor that, according to the government, represented a threat to the country's sovereignty and stability.

<sup>2</sup><https://elpais.com/america/2024-03-03/el-caribe-de-nicaragua-asiste-a-una-eleccion-regional-controlada-por-ortega-y-con-el-principal-lider-indigena-tras-las-rejas.html>

The enhanced implementation of the "Foreign Agents Regulation Law"<sup>3</sup> has had a crippling effect on civil society, which was already weakened by years of repression.

The organizations that managed to survive did so under a constant state of fear and self-censorship, which limited their ability to defend human rights and denounce injustices.

The impact of this law on human rights in Nicaragua has been immediate and severe. Throughout 2024, the application of this law has become a key tool for repression, allowing the government to shut down civil society organizations and media outlets on accusations of being funded by foreign interests.

Ortega intensified his crackdown on civil society in Nicaragua, shutting down a total of 1,500 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in a single move on August 19. A few days later, on August 29, he shut down 169 more organizations.

This brought the total number of NGOs dissolved by his regime since 2018 to over 5,600. This represents 77% of the organizations that were registered as of 2018.<sup>4</sup>

These organizations span a wide range of sectors, including religious, human rights, and social entities, many of which had been operating in the country for decades.

Journalists in Nicaragua who attempted to cover sensitive issues such as government corruption and human rights violations faced systematic repression by the Ortega regime. Since 2018, there have been 49 media outlets closed and 263 journalists forced into exile due to constant threats, harassment and judicial persecution, according to the Inter American Press Association (IAPA)<sup>5</sup>.

The law was also used to justify the arrest of opposition leaders and social activists, who were accused of conspiring against the State. As of July 2024, 151 people are recognized to be detained for political reasons, of which 25 are women and 126 are men. This figure includes 10 people who were imprisoned before 2018.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup>The **Foreign Agents Regulation Law** was passed in October 2020 by Nicaragua's National Assembly, controlled by the Daniel Ortega regime. This law obliges individuals and organizations receiving funding from abroad to register as "foreign agents" and to submit to strict state supervision. The law has been criticized by international human rights bodies as it severely restricts freedoms of expression, association and political participation by allowing the government to control and repress civil society organizations and media that receive foreign support. The law is part of a broader strategy of the regime to consolidate its power and silence any form of dissent.

<sup>4</sup>Report "Expediente ONG Nicaragua".

<sup>5</sup>Report on freedom of expression in Nicaragua: <https://media.sipiapa.org/adjuntos/185/documentos/001/859/0001859279.pdf>

<sup>6</sup>Mechanism for the Recognition of Political Prisoners: <https://presasypresospoliticosnicaragua.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Personas-Presas-Politicas-Nicaragua-Julio-2024.pdf>

This repressive legal framework has consolidated an environment in which dissent is not only punished, but practically eradicated, thus eroding the fundamental rights of freedom of expression, association and political participation.

## Approval of the reform of the Criminal Code for transnational prosecution and massive confiscations

In September, Daniel Ortega intensified his authoritarian control by approving a reform to the Penal Code that significantly expands the state's ability to repress the opposition and confiscate property.

This reform, presented and approved by the National Assembly, gives the government new legal tools to persecute not only dissidents within the country, but also those abroad.

- **Transnational persecution**

One of the most controversial aspects of the reform is the introduction of measures that allow the State to prosecute opponents outside Nicaragua's borders.

Under this new legislation, anyone accused of "crimes against the state" or "terrorism" - terms that the government has used in a vague and expansive manner to include protest and political opposition activities - may be subject to international arrest warrants.

This measure has been widely criticized by activists and human rights organizations, which see it as an attempt to silence the Nicaraguan diaspora, which has played a crucial role in denouncing the regime's human rights violations.

*"It is a bill that violates rights and guarantees, the constitutional legal order and international human rights instruments," said Gonzalo Carrión, lawyer and human rights defender. "It strengthens and updates the strategy of criminal prosecution against those considered enemies inside and outside the country. It is draconian because it increases the punishment. It is tax collection because it has an obsession to plunder, to steal goods... and they disguise the political persecution with common, transnational crimes".<sup>7</sup>*

<sup>7</sup><https://elpais.com/america/2024-08-31/daniel-ortega-cambia-el-codigo-penal-para-continuar-la-persecucion-de-los-nicaraguenses-exiliados-y-sus-familiares.html>

The reform allows the Nicaraguan government to request the extradition of opponents from other countries, which has generated concern among activists and exiles. This policy is seen as another step in the Ortega government's strategy to eliminate any form of dissent, even outside the country's borders.

- **Mass confiscations**

Another key component of the reform is the expansion of the State's powers to confiscate property of individuals and organizations accused of being involved in activities that the government considers subversive.

This includes the possibility of confiscating assets of non-governmental organizations, private companies, and personal property of those accused of collaborating with foreign entities or governments in activities that, according to the government, undermine Nicaragua's sovereignty.

This reform has been seen as a tool for the massive and arbitrary expropriation of property, which could be used to strengthen the regime's economic control over the country. Confiscated properties are transferred to the State without compensation, which represents a flagrant violation of the right to property.

*"Ortega is no longer satisfied with imprisoning and expelling the most uncomfortable dissidents; he now intends to try and confiscate the assets of those in exile, expanding his ability to silence the opposition anywhere in the world."*<sup>8</sup> Felix Maradiaga, Human Rights Activist.

## International sanctions and their domestic impact

Throughout 2024, the Ortega regime faced increasing international pressure in the form of economic and diplomatic sanctions.

Both the United States and the European Union, along with other countries in the region, imposed new rounds of sanctions targeting senior government officials, including members of the Ortega-Murillo family and key figures in the security forces.

These sanctions, designed to isolate the regime and pressure it to respect human rights and hold free elections, had a significant

<sup>8</sup><https://confidencial.digital/opinion/la-dictadura-ortega-hace-preparativos-para-mas-expulsiones/>

impact on the Nicaraguan economy, which was already in recession.

However, instead of bringing about a change in government policy, the sanctions were used by Ortega as a propaganda tool, presenting them as a foreign attack against Nicaragua's sovereignty.

The sectors most affected by the sanctions have been small and medium-sized entrepreneurs, as well as the popular classes, whose living conditions have deteriorated even further. The impact on human rights has been significant, as the government used the sanctions as a pretext to increase repression.

The sanctions also contributed to deepening Nicaragua's international isolation, limiting the country's access to international financing and aggravating the economic crisis.

This isolation has had a direct effect on the human rights situation, as it has reduced the possibilities for diplomatic intervention and left the population more vulnerable to the arbitrariness of the regime.

## **Socioeconomic conditions and their impact on human rights**

Nicaragua is in an extremely precarious economic and social situation, aggravated by the continuing political crisis and increasing state repression.

Socioeconomic conditions in the country have had a devastating impact on human rights, affecting economic and social rights as well as civil and political rights.

This section examines in detail the main dimensions of the socioeconomic crisis in Nicaragua during 2024 and how these have influenced the human rights situation

### **Economic deterioration and increased poverty**

In 2024, Nicaragua's economy has continued to face significant challenges, driven primarily by the persistent internal political crisis, international sanctions and inefficient government management. These factors have deepened the economic



recession that has affected the country for several years, exacerbating poverty and economic insecurity for the majority of Nicaraguans.

Despite these challenges, the Ortega government has managed to finance itself and stay afloat through several key strategies:

- A significant source of support has been Venezuelan cooperation, which since 2007 has represented around US\$3.4 billion in assistance. These funds have been crucial for the regime, allowing the execution of social and economic projects that have contributed to sustain political support among certain sectors of the population, although their administration has been criticized for lack of transparency.
- In addition, the government has strengthened its relations with other international allies such as Russia and China, which have provided additional financial support, including loans and infrastructure investments.
- The regime has also turned to the exploitation of natural resources, such as mining and timber, to generate foreign exchange earnings, although these activities have been controversial due to their environmental impact and opacity in resource management.
- Another strategy is control over remittances, which are a vital source of income for many Nicaraguan families. By centralizing and monitoring these flows of money, Ortega ensures not only an additional source of financing, but also greater control over the population.
- Finally, the regime has implemented austerity policies, cutting spending in social areas and channeling resources to security and repression, which allows it to maintain its apparatus of control and repression.

These measures have allowed the regime to survive economically in the short term, but have deepened the inequalities and precariousness in the daily lives of the majority of Nicaraguans, who continue to face growing poverty and a declining economy.

- **Inflation, córdoba devaluation and purchasing power**

In 2024, Nicaragua has continued to face a considerable increase in the prices of essential goods and services, reflecting an inflationary trend that has significantly eroded the purchasing power of the population.

This phenomenon has had a severe impact on the most vulnerable sectors, hindering access to basic products such as food and medicines, and contributing to the general worsening of living conditions.

In addition, the córdoba, Nicaragua's national currency, has undergone a new annual devaluation of 2% against the U.S. dollar, effective January 2024.<sup>9</sup>

This devaluation policy, which has been applied in a sustained manner in recent years, is aimed at maintaining the competitiveness of the products that Nicaragua exports to other countries. In other words, if the córdoba is worth less against the dollar, Nicaraguan exported products, such as coffee, meat or textiles, can be sold at lower prices abroad.

However, this strategy has had adverse effects on the domestic economy, making imported products more expensive and reducing the population's purchasing power.

The devaluation of the cordoba has increased the impact of inflation, as it has made the exchange of local currency for dollars or euros less favorable, making imported goods even more expensive and decreasing the value of income in local currency.

This combination of inflation and devaluation has resulted in a significant loss of purchasing power for most Nicaraguans, intensifying the country's economic crisis.

- **The basic food basket**

According to data from an independent survey applied to young people in Nicaragua by the Fundación para la Libertad<sup>10</sup> in August, based on 330 sample surveys, 76% of those surveyed expressed that the main challenges they face are: having a decent job (39.39%) and the cost of the basic food basket (36.97%).

Another data from an independent report<sup>11</sup> by the organization "Hagamos Democracia", based on 200 sample surveys, 87.3% of the people consulted stated that their income does not allow them to cover all their monthly and daily expenses for their families.

The cost of the basic food basket in July of this year amounted to 21,015 córdobas, about US\$570. The highest minimum wage paid

<sup>9</sup><https://www.swissinfo.ch/spa/entra-en-vigor-la-nueva-devaluaci%C3%B3n-del-0-anual-del-c%C3%B3rdoba-frente-al-d%C3%B3lar-en-nicaragua/49095944>

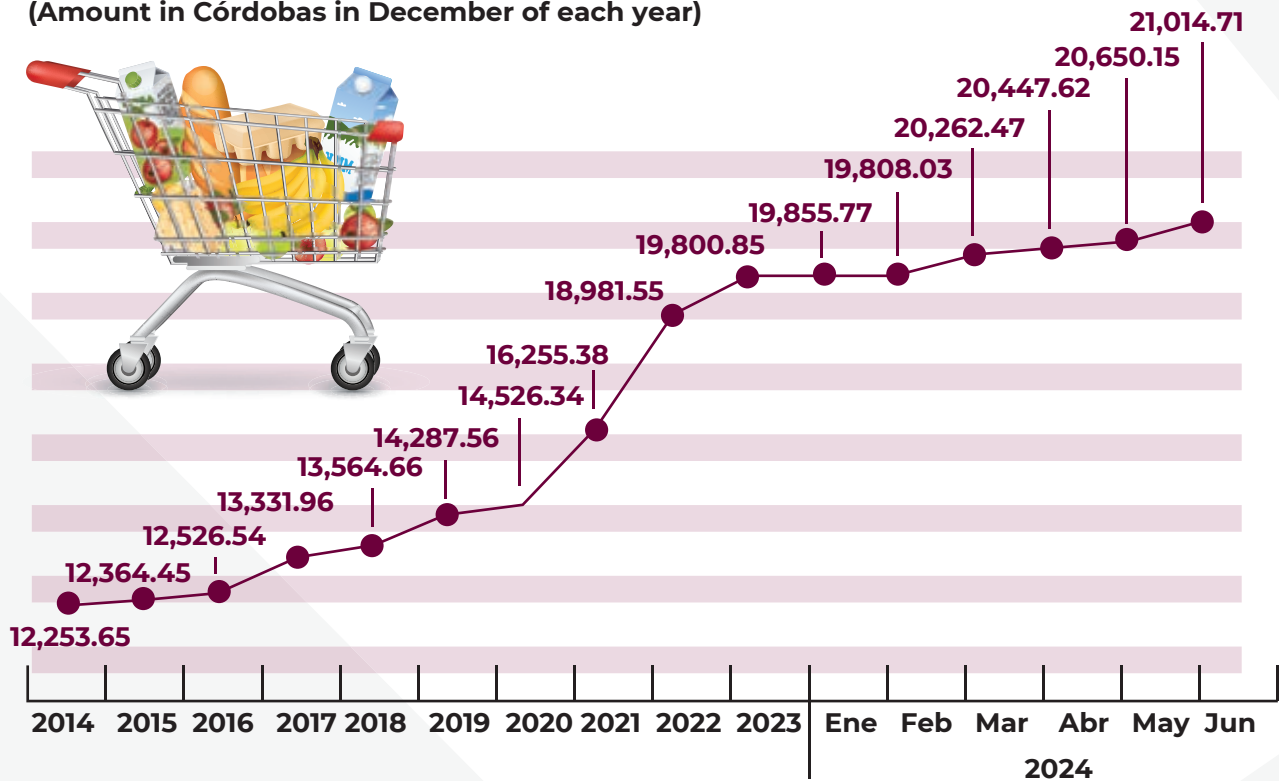
<sup>10</sup>[www.fundacionlibertad.org](http://www.fundacionlibertad.org)

<sup>11</sup>Perception of the political, social and economic reality of Nicaragua. Let's Make Democracy.

by the construction, financial establishment and insurance sector is 12,803.47 córdobas.<sup>12</sup> The lowest minimum wage is 5,721.17 córdobas in the agricultural sector.

In none of the cases, people with this salary would be able to acquire 100% of the basic food basket.

(Amount in Córdobas in December of each year)



Source: Statistics from the National Institute of Development Information (A.K.A INIDE in Spanish)

### • Unemployment and informal economy

Unemployment in Nicaragua has also shown signs of increasing in 2024, although exact figures vary according to sources. However, it is known that the informal economy remains a crucial part of the livelihood of a large segment of the population.

Many Nicaraguans rely on informal jobs to survive, as opportunities in the formal sector are limited and job creation remains insufficient to absorb the demand for labor.

The Ortega regime claims that in 2024 there has been a decrease in unemployment and underemployment rates in Nicaragua.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup>Confidential:  
<https://confidencial.digital/economia/productos-agricolas-encarecen-la-canasta-basica-en-nicaragua/>

<sup>13</sup>  
<https://www.laprensani.com/2024/06/29/economia/3340742-menos-desempleo-y-subempleo-en-nicaragua-asegura-el-regimen-de-ortega>

Official figures presented by the government indicate an improvement in the labor situation, highlighting that unemployment dropped to 2.8% and that underemployment also decreased, standing at 36.5%. These figures suggest an apparently positive outlook in terms of employment generation.

However, it is important to consider these figures with caution, because they may not fully reflect the country's labor reality, as they do not consider other factors such as the quality of employment, the number of people who have stopped actively looking for work (which could distort the unemployment rate), the thousands of Nicaraguans who are migrating out of the country or relying on remittances, and the fact that a large part of the population continues to rely on the informal economy, which often offers precarious and poorly paid jobs.

While official figures suggest a reduction in unemployment and underemployment, Nicaragua's broader economic and social context, marked by the political and economic crisis since April 2018, indicates that the labor situation may not be as favorable as Ortega's statistics present it.

- **Increased poverty**

Poverty in Nicaragua has followed a worrying upward trend in 2024, reflecting the severe economic crisis the country is going through.

According to recent data, 86.8% of Nicaraguans cannot afford the basic food basket<sup>14</sup>, which evidences a situation of generalized economic precariousness. This alarming figure highlights the deterioration of living conditions, where the majority of the population struggles daily to cover their most essential needs.

Despite the government's efforts to present optimistic employment and economic figures, the reality on the streets tells a different story.

The economic report for the second quarter of 2024 reveals that Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth has slowed considerably, with a projected growth of only 2.9%, well below the 4.5% estimated by the Central Bank of Nicaragua. This slower economic growth further aggravates the poverty situation, limiting employment opportunities and improving little or no living conditions for the majority of the population.

Lack of access to basic resources such as food, medicines and essential services has resulted in increased malnutrition and food insecurity, especially affecting children and the elderly.

Local organizations and experts warn that, if current trends continue, poverty could increase even more in the coming years, increasing social inequalities and placing a greater number of Nicaraguans in a situation of extreme vulnerability.

The combination of low economic growth, the inability of much of the population to purchase basic goods, and growing food insecurity are pushing Nicaragua into a deep social crisis, where the impact on human rights is increasingly severe.

- **Control over remittances entering Nicaragua**

The Sandinista dictatorship has implemented strict measures to control remittances entering the country, a crucial source of income for many Nicaraguan families. These remittances reached a record \$4.2 billion in 2023, representing 27.1% of Nicaragua's Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

This figure demonstrates the enormous dependence of the Nicaraguan economy on funds sent by the diaspora, mainly from the United States, which accounted for 81.6% of remittances received in the first quarter of 2024.

The Ortega regime has established mechanisms to monitor and, in some cases, redirect these funds by reforming the Anti-Money Laundering Law.

Although the official justification is to combat money laundering, in practice, these measures could be used to further repress the opposition by limiting access to these resources for those considered critical of the government.

This control also allows the government to exert political pressure on remittance-dependent families, restricting their ability to finance activities that could be perceived as a threat to the regime's power.

Compared to other countries in the region, such as Costa Rica and Guatemala, where remittances are treated as a key economic pillar without such strict control, Ortega's strategy is clearly a punitive tactic that prioritizes repression over economic welfare.

This intervention not only punishes the citizens who depend on this income, but could also further weaken the national economy, demonstrating that the regime prioritizes its political control over the country's economic stability.

The strategy of controlling remittances, while seeking to consolidate the regime's power, could have a counterproductive effect by limiting one of the most important sources of income for Nicaragua's economy.

- **Impact on human rights**

The economic deterioration in Nicaragua has had a devastating and deliberate impact on human rights, reflecting not only an economic crisis, but also an intentional strategy of repression.

The right to an adequate standard of living, which includes access to food, housing and essential services, has been severely compromised, affecting the majority of Nicaraguans, especially the most vulnerable.

What makes this situation even more alarming is the fact that the Ortega regime has not only allowed the economic crisis to deepen, but has actively restricted the inflow of resources that could alleviate the situation.

This extreme control over the economy and resources, including manipulation of remittances and limiting access to international aid, reveals a punitive tactic designed to punish the population.

Unlike other authoritarian regimes that often try to maintain some economic functionality to avoid collapse, the Nicaraguan government has chosen to use the economy as a weapon against its own people.

This strategy has increased poverty and widened the gap between the richest and poorest sectors of society.

Unequal access to education and health has become even more marked, and the lack of economic opportunities has forced many people to migrate in search of better conditions, exposing them to additional risks such as labor exploitation and violence.

The regime's approach, which prioritizes political control over economic stability, reveals an extreme disregard for the welfare of the population, taking repression to levels that even in dictatorial contexts are extraordinarily severe.

This deliberate use of the economy as a means of collective punishment underscores the brutal nature of the Ortega government and its determination to maintain power at any cost, even at the expense of the widespread suffering of the population.

## Impact on education and access to opportunities

Education in Nicaragua has been another area severely affected by the socioeconomic crisis.

Public schools, already suffering from a lack of resources, have seen their conditions worsen, with deteriorated infrastructure, a shortage of teaching materials and poorly paid teachers. Many children have dropped out of school due to the need to work to support their families, which has increased the dropout rate.

The government has sought to maintain control over the education system by using education as a propaganda tool, promoting a narrative that glorifies the regime and minimizes criticism.

This has resulted in a low-quality, heavily ideologized education that does not adequately prepare students to participate in a modern, competitive economy.

The crisis in the education system has had long-term consequences for human rights in Nicaragua. The right to education, recognized as fundamental to personal and social development, has been severely compromised.

The Ortega government has confiscated 29 universities in Nicaragua. State intervention not only compromises university autonomy and freedom of expression, but also affects educational quality and discourages international investment and cooperation.

In addition, the lack of access to quality education has increased socioeconomic inequalities, perpetuating a cycle of poverty and social exclusion that affects future generations.

## Migration and forced displacement

Deteriorating socioeconomic conditions and political repression have led to a significant increase in migration and forced displacement.

"I am not leaving the country because I want to, if I don't, my family will die of hunger... here there is no work, there are no favorable living conditions for us...". Community leader in Managua.

Thousands of Nicaraguans have fled the country in search of safety and economic opportunities, mainly to neighboring countries such as Costa Rica and the United States. This mass migration has been driven by lack of opportunity, fear of political persecution and widespread hopelessness about the country's future.

According to a recent UN report cited by Artículo 66<sup>15</sup>, nearly one million Nicaraguans have emigrated from their country since the socio-political crisis began in April 2018. This figure represents approximately 15% of Nicaragua's total population, making the country one of those with the highest rates of forced displacement in the region.

Most of the migrants have sought refuge in neighboring countries such as Costa Rica, which has received a significant number of asylum requests, and in other nations such as the United States and Spain.

The departure of such a large number of people, approximately 15% of the country's population, has had a significant impact both in Nicaragua, with the loss of human capital, and in the receiving countries, which have had to adjust their migration policies to cope with this flow.

Nicaraguan migrants face numerous challenges and risks, including labor exploitation, discrimination, and violence in transit and destination countries. In addition, many have been deported, further aggravating their situation of vulnerability.

The Ortega government has used migration as an escape valve, allowing critics and opponents to leave the country rather than face internal repression.

Forced displacement and mass migration have a direct impact on human rights, including the right to security, protection from persecution and the right to seek asylum.

The lack of adequate protection for Nicaraguan migrants, both inside and outside the country, represents a serious violation of these rights and contributes to the humanitarian crisis affecting the region.

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## | Inequality and social exclusion

The economic crisis has aggravated social inequalities and deepened the exclusion of the most vulnerable sectors of society. While a small elite linked to the government has maintained or even increased its wealth and power, the majority of Nicaraguans have seen their living conditions worsen.

Rural communities, indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples, and marginalized urban areas have been particularly affected, facing a lack of basic services, economic opportunities and social protection.

The Ortega government has implemented social programs in a selective and politicized manner, using state assistance as a tool for social control.

The beneficiaries of these programs are often selected on the basis of their loyalty to the regime, which has created a deep social divide and excluded those who consider themselves critical or independent. This strategy has increased the dependence of the poorest population on the government, while perpetuating inequality and exclusion.

Inequality and social exclusion in Nicaragua have a direct impact on human rights, preventing equitable access to the resources and opportunities necessary for human development. Although the government has reported a decrease in official extreme poverty rates from 9% in 2017 to 7% in 2022, these figures have been questioned due to growing economic disparity. According to a World Bank report, Nicaragua remains one of the most unequal countries in the region, with a Gini coefficient of 46.2.

According to an analysis by Nicaragua Investiga<sup>16</sup>, bankers in Nicaragua have taken advantage of the economic instability to increase their profits, which has generated a greater contrast between the rich and the poor.

In June 2023 alone, the equity of the national bank stood at 52,791.8 million córdobas, according to data from the Central Bank. The figure represented an increase of 12.1 percent compared to the same period in 2022.

Banks have made record profits in a context where the majority of the population struggles to survive, highlighting the extreme disparity in the distribution of wealth. This concentration of wealth in the hands of a few has exacerbated the economic gap, leaving the poorest classes with increasingly limited access to basic services such as education, health and employment.

Systemic discrimination and lack of opportunities have limited the ability of many Nicaraguans to fully exercise their rights, including the right to political participation, access to justice, and the right to an adequate standard of living.

## | Resistance and resilience of civil society

Despite harsh socioeconomic conditions and repression, civil society in Nicaragua has shown resilience throughout 2024.

Non-governmental organizations, although severely limited by the "National Sovereignty Law", have continued to operate underground or from exile, providing humanitarian assistance and documenting human rights violations.

International support has been crucial to these initiatives, although also limited by sanctions and restrictions imposed by the Nicaraguan government.

The displacement of key leaders has resulted in a loss of continuity in advocacy efforts and the implementation of long-term strategies.

In addition, the political situation and repression within Nicaragua has significantly reduced the capacity of local organizations to operate and coordinate, limiting their impact and effectiveness.

Despite these challenges, civil society has demonstrated that, even under the most adverse conditions, the struggle for human rights and human dignity continues.

A clear example is the creation of clandestine networks of support and solidarity among activists and independent journalists, who continue to document and denounce human rights violations despite the risk of reprisals.

Victims' and human rights organizations such as the Nicaragua Nunca Más Collective, the Foundation for Development and Social Innovation (FDSI), the Nicaraguan Self-Convened Unity (UNA), among others, have played a fundamental role in keeping the international denunciation alive and in providing assistance to the victims of state repression.

This resistance is the commitment of many Nicaraguans to a more just and equitable future, despite oppression and hardship. Although the socioeconomic context is extremely difficult, hope and the struggle for human rights have not disappeared.

However, without a change in the structural conditions that sustain poverty and exclusion, the capacity of civil society to resist and promote change will remain limited.

# Conclusions

Nicaragua is experiencing an alarming context, marked by increased political repression, economic and social deterioration, and growing international isolation of the Daniel Ortega regime. The main findings are summarized below in three main areas:

## Political and Social Context

- Nicaragua in 2024 continues to be under an authoritarian regime that has consolidated its control over state institutions, significantly weakening democracy and the rule of law.
- The Ortega and Murillo government has used its power to systematically repress any form of dissent, from censorship of the media and persecution of opposition leaders to the passage of repressive laws restricting fundamental freedoms.
- The regional elections were held in a context of strong government control, without real democratic conditions, resulting in a victory for the FSLN and the consolidation of power at the regional level.

## Major political events that have had an impact on human rights

- The year 2024 has been marked by several key political events that had a significant impact on human rights.
- Among them, the approval of the reform of the Penal Code that allows transnational prosecution and massive confiscation of assets, consolidating a legal framework that facilitates repression both inside and outside the country.
- In addition, the closure of more than 1,500 non-governmental organizations and the intensification of repression consolidates the regime's strategy of eliminating any opposition and dissuading social mobilization.

## Socioeconomic conditions and their impact on human rights

- The economic crisis in Nicaragua has deepened in 2024, which is unchecked due to government mismanagement and international sanctions.

- Despite government claims of declining unemployment, the reality on the ground shows increasing poverty and food insecurity.
- According to reports, almost 87% of the population cannot afford the basic food basket, and projected economic growth is significantly lower than expected.
- Another attempt to control any vestige of social mobilization is the recent measures to control remittances entering the country.
- This economic deterioration has led to an increase in migration, with nearly one million Nicaraguans having left the country since 2018, seeking to escape repression and harsh living conditions.

These findings reflect a critical situation in Nicaragua, where repression, poverty and lack of opportunity are severely eroding human rights and creating an environment of widespread uncertainty and suffering.

This report underscores the urgent need for the Nicaraguan population to take concrete and organized action to confront repression and promote change in the country. The following is a set of steps that should be taken to achieve effective and peaceful resistance:

- **Documenting human rights violations:** It is essential that the population actively participate in documenting human rights violations. This includes collecting evidence, testimonies and any other relevant information. There are platforms dedicated to this purpose, such as the website of the Human Rights Collective Nicaragua Nunca Más and the Human Rights Observatory [www.nicaraguamemoriajusticia.org](http://www.nicaraguamemoriajusticia.org) where people can safely report incidents.
- **Be adequately informed:** The population should seek reliable sources of information, such as independent media and human rights organizations, to be aware of events in the country. Disinformation is a tool used by the regime to maintain control, so it is important to verify the veracity of the news.
- **Community organizing:** Forming and strengthening local support networks is key. This may include neighborhood groups, activist collectives or civic associations that meet to discuss common problems, plan joint actions and provide mutual support in times of crisis.

- **Participation in nonviolent protests:** Peaceful protest remains a powerful tool of resistance. Demonstrations, sit-ins and other forms of protest should be organized to make the demands of the population visible. It is vital that these activities are planned with security and coordination to minimize the risks of repression.
- **Use alternative channels of communication:** Given the regime's control over traditional media, it is crucial for the population to use social networks and encrypted messaging platforms to communicate information, coordinate activities and maintain morale. These tools should be used securely, avoiding unnecessary exposure to reprisals.
- **Strengthen the connection with the diaspora:** The Nicaraguan diaspora plays a crucial role in supporting struggles within the country. It is necessary to establish and maintain strong links with Nicaraguans in exile, who can provide financial, logistical and international advocacy support.
- **Denounce at the international level:** Take advantage of the channels of international organizations and human rights organizations to denounce the situation in Nicaragua. International pressure is a key factor in achieving change and protecting those at risk within the country.
- **Strengthen a unified opposition movement:** It is imperative that the Nicaraguan population focus on creating or strengthening a unified opposition movement that can articulate resistance efforts both within the country and in the diaspora. This movement must be able to coordinate actions, establish a common strategy and serve as a legitimate interlocutor with both the international community and the Nicaraguan population. The existence of a consolidated and coherent leadership is essential to channel the demands of the people, facilitate international support, and structure a clear vision for the transition to a democratic future in Nicaragua. This movement must be inclusive and representative of the diversity of Nicaraguan society, ensuring that all voices are heard and working towards a common goal of restoring human rights and democracy.

It is essential that civil society organizations (CSOs) strengthen links between leaders within Nicaragua and the Nicaraguan diaspora in exile in order to consolidate support networks for cooperation and resistance to the authoritarian regime.

Likewise, the opposition must focus on finding effective mechanisms to achieve unity, articulating a common strategy and presenting a coherent proposal to overcome the crisis affecting the country. This joint effort is fundamental to generate a solid movement that can successfully challenge the Ortega regime.

For its part, the international community must continue to support the efforts of civil society and the resisting population inside Nicaragua. To do so effectively, it is essential to follow a series of specific and coordinated actions:

- **Apply targeted sanctions:** Targeted sanctions against key actors in the Ortega regime, including government officials, military and businessmen linked to repression and corruption, should be intensified. These sanctions should be carefully designed to impact those who sustain the dictatorship, while minimizing the negative effects on the general population.
- **Establish financial tracking mechanisms:** It is essential to create an international mechanism to track and block the flow of money that sustains the regime. This involves collaborating with international banks and financial agencies to identify and freeze assets abroad, as well as to prevent financial transactions that benefit the Ortega regime. Such measures can significantly weaken the government's ability to maintain its repressive apparatus.
- **Support documentation and denunciation of human rights violations:** The international community should provide resources and platforms for Nicaraguan civil society to document and denounce human rights violations. This includes technical and financial support to local and international organizations working to collect evidence and testimonies, as well as to disseminate this information in international forums.
- **Strengthen diplomatic pressure:** Governments and international organizations should continue to exert diplomatic pressure on the Ortega regime, promoting resolutions and declarations in bodies such as the Organization of American States (OAS), the European Parliament and the United Nations. This pressure should be accompanied by efforts to diplomatically isolate the Nicaraguan government, withdrawing ambassadors and suspending cooperation in non-humanitarian areas.

- **Support the Nicaraguan diaspora:** The international community can facilitate support for the Nicaraguan diaspora by providing assistance so that they can continue to support their families in Nicaragua and actively engage in denouncing the regime. This includes facilitating safe remittances and ensuring that Nicaraguans in exile can participate in human rights initiatives.
- **Promote the creation of an international support fund:** Consideration should be given to the creation of an international fund to support the victims of repression in Nicaragua, the efforts of civil society organizations and the work of independent media. This fund could be used to provide legal, humanitarian and financial assistance to these actors who have been affected by the repressive policies of the regime and sustain the struggle for freedom in the country.

This comprehensive approach is key to weakening the authoritarian power structure and opening space for the restoration of human rights and democracy in Nicaragua.





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