

## **SAMPLE LETTER TO NICARAGUAN EMBASSIES ALL OVER THE WORLD**

*(The section on the bishops and the Catholic church below –paragraphs 5 and 6- could be substituted by your own organization’s statement or principles)*

Dear Ambassador,

We want to express to you in the strongest possible terms our opposition to the current campaign being waged against supporters of women’s rights in Nicaragua by the government of Daniel Ortega.

We understand the importance of political differences in a thriving democracy. Robust democracies can live with disagreements. In fact, the give and take of political opposition strengthens and enhances democratic systems. For that reason, we consider that taking legal action against your political opponents should always be seen as a last resort. We understand from our colleagues in Nicaragua, however, that the Ortega government has not only taken legal action against women’s rights activists, but has also made threats against their lives as well as the lives of their families. This is unacceptable and we call on you to exert pressure on President Ortega to stop these attacks.

Our colleagues tell us that the government has taken action against women’s rights advocates Ana María Pizarro, Sofía Montenegro, Patricia Orozco, Juanita Jiménez, Lorna Norori, Luisa Molina Arguello, Martha María Blandón, Martha Munguía, Mayra Sirias, Violeta Delgado and Yamileth Mejía as well as public figures like Ernesto Cardenal and Dora María Téllez, who have had seemingly arbitrary restrictions placed on them by the government.

The women and men who have been targeted are leaders in the struggle for human rights—and have campaigned tirelessly for an improvement in the health and rights of the women of Nicaragua. These campaigners have also been outspoken in their condemnation of the Ortega administration, especially for its support for the complete ban on therapeutic abortion.

It would appear from reports here in the US that President Ortega’s decision to support a ban on abortion came about as a result of pressure from the Catholic bishops.

It might be useful to remind all politicians in Nicaragua who feel they are in thrall to the bishops that church teachings on moral decision-making and abortion are far more complex than those presented by the bishops. In Catholic theology there is room for the acceptance of policies that favor access to the full range of reproductive health options, including contraception and abortion. For example, there is no firm position within the Catholic church on when the fetus becomes a person. In its last definitive statement on abortion, the 1974 *Declaration on Procured Abortion*, the Vatican acknowledged that it does not know when the fetus becomes a person: “There is not a unanimous tradition on this point and authors are as yet in disagreement.”

We could go on, but there is an urgent need for action to stop further attacks. We call on you to relay our concerns in the strongest possible terms to the Ortega administration, and to inform President Ortega of our unswerving solidarity with our sisters in Nicaragua, and that we will be watching every move in the ongoing struggle for basic human rights.