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December 26, 2018

Mr. António Guterres
Secretary-General
United Nations Secretariat Building
405 E 42nd Street
New York, NY 10017

Dear Secretary-General Guterres,

On behalf of the Steering Committee of the World Movement for Democracy, a global network of civil society activists, scholars, parliamentarians and journalists, I write to express our appreciation for your outspoken condemnation of the escalating political violence targeting civil society and journalists in Nicaragua. Due to the rapidly worsening situation in Nicaragua, we urge you in your capacity as the United Nations Secretary General to help protect Nicaraguan civil society against the government's repressive measures.

Since the initial student-led protests began in April 2018, President Daniel Ortega's government has launched an offensive against civilians and all independent institutions in the country. Peaceful protesters were met with disproportionate violence by the anti-riot police and government sanctioned vigilante groups. According to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), since the protests broke out, 325 people have been killed, more than 300 arbitrarily detained, and thousands injured. As you stated in July 2018, "the death toll is absolutely shocking. . . the national dialogue, be revitalized because only a political solution is acceptable."

Unfortunately, the Ortega government has targeted those who would represent the public interest in such negotiations. Civil society activists, rural community leaders, religious leaders, and journalists are being systematically targeted with arrests and violence. On December 12, the Ortega-controlled parliament stripped the legal registration of five prominent civil society organizations and Confidencial, one of the few independent media outlets left in Nicaragua. Even more troubling, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Bachelet announced on December 21 that the Ortega government has expelled the two IACHR monitoring missions which "means there are now virtually no functioning independent human rights bodies left in Nicaragua."

The World Movement for Democracy believes that all dissident voices in Nicaragua are under immediate and tremendous danger. Earlier this week, we learned that two journalists Lucía Pineda Ubau and Miguel Mora have been reportedly detained in the infamous jail, El Chipote. Among many independent journalists who have been targets of the government's recent repression, Carlos Fernando Chamorro, director of Confidencial, and Sofia Montenegro, our fellow Steering Committee member and a veteran

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Ryota Jonen, Director

journalist and Confidential contributor - fear they are at immediate risk of arrest or assassination by the Ortega government. We urge you to use all available UN mechanisms to safeguard their safety and lives as soon as possible.

We also request that you publically and categorically demand that President Ortega cease the repression of civil society organizations and individuals, return the legal status and items confiscated from the raided organizations, and rescind the expulsion of the IACHR observation missions. The lives and dignity of thousands of people, as well as the defense of citizenship, civil society, and democratic institutions, not only of Nicaragua, but of the entire region, depend on this.

Sincerely yours,



Zainab Hawa Bangura
Chair (Sierra Leone), Steering Committee



Ryota Jonen
Director