

*June 8, 2021
Media Release*

**INTERNATIONAL COUNSEL FOR
NICARAGUAN POLITICAL PRISONER FÉLIX MARADIAGA
CONDEMNS HIS SEVERE BEATING, ARREST, AND DISAPPEARANCE**



Nicaraguan activist and pre-presidential candidate Félix Maradiaga.

Statement of Jared Genser
Pro Bono Counsel to Félix Maradiaga,
Nicaraguan Opposition Leader and Presidential Candidate

I am honored to join the international legal team for Nicaraguan opposition leader and presidential candidate Félix Maradiaga, who was beaten, arrested, and disappeared earlier today by security forces of the regime of President Daniel Ortega.

Today, Félix had been summoned to appear before the Public Ministry (Prosecutor's Office) and was informed he was under investigation for a large list of transparently baseless charges, including inciting foreign interference in internal affairs, soliciting military interventions, and organizing acts of terrorism and destabilization with funding by external entities (see the press release from the Nicaraguan Police below).

I have just received important and reliable information from a first-hand witness that Félix was then very badly beaten being taken in custody. After his disappearance, he is being detained in an undisclosed location. Especially in light of serious past physical abuse that he has suffered at the hands of Nicaraguan security forces and the risk he is being subjected to further torture, I demand Ortega immediately provide proof that Felix is alive and that he be transferred immediately to a hospital where he can access family and counsel. I ask all countries around the world to press the Ortega regime to meet these demands.

Given his fearless efforts to restore democracy and human rights to Nicaragua, Félix is no stranger to this kind of political persecution and has for years been a target of Daniel Ortega and his dictatorship, but this does not make today's events any less shocking or appalling.

In recent weeks, Ortega has transparently and brazenly decapitated the political opposition by disqualifying the three candidates who were most likely to prevail in the opposition's presidential primary vote on August 2, 2021, including Cristiana Chamorro, Arturo Cruz, and now Félix. In the last week Chamorro was put under house arrest and Cruz was detained. Now Félix has been beaten and disappeared pending an investigation into charges that are completely and utterly false. The winner of the primary, which includes seven other candidates with much less support in the polls, is slated to face Ortega in the presidential election on November 7, 2021.

By arresting Félix in quick succession after his colleagues, Ortega has crossed a red line, and the international community must unequivocally condemn this assault on Nicaragua's democracy.

I spoke with Felix late yesterday and he is prepared for whatever comes next. I asked him if he was detained what messages would he want to make sure the world understands about the situation in Nicaragua. He told me the following: First, the Ortega regime has imprisoned over 120 grassroots activists, students, union leaders, and other opposition voices in its attempt to crush dissent. They are all political prisoners, and their cases merit as much attention as the cases of higher-profile detainees. Second, Ortega's repeated attempts to provoke violence seeks to destroy the progress that the non-violent grassroots opposition movement has made. Continued non-violent resistance to the oppression of the regime is fundamental. And finally, there can be no free or fair presidential elections in Nicaragua if the three leading opposition candidates remain disqualified and detained.

Below is the press release that Félix issued shortly after his detention. My team will continue to work tirelessly to ensure Félix's release and that of all of Ortega's political prisoners, and to support his fight for freedom, justice, and human rights in Nicaragua.

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UNLAWFUL IMPRISONMENT OF FELIX MARADIAGA

Felix Maradiaga has dedicated his life to strengthening democracy, rule of law, and civic participation in Nicaragua. He is the son of a former political prisoner and a first-hand witness to the horrors of war and repression. As a young boy, he was forced to flee Nicaragua to the United States in the late 1980s to escape the ongoing conflict from the Contra war. Upon his return, he made it his life's mission to contribute to the development and reconciliation process of his country. After ten years working in public service, which culminated in serving as the youngest Secretary-General of the Ministry of Defense of Nicaragua, he launched a new career as a human rights and civil society activist. He is currently the leader of Blue and White National Unity, the largest opposition group in Nicaragua, and one of the leading candidates in the presidential primaries.

As Maradiaga prepares to challenge the unfounded accusations against him, today international human rights lawyer Jared Genser has announced that he has joined Maradiaga's legal team. Genser is best known for his work on the highest-profile political prisoner cases around the world, including his past representation of Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Liu Xiaobo, former President of the Maldives Mohamed Nasheed, and Venezuelan opposition leader Leopoldo López.

Genser issued the following statement: "I am proud to serve as counsel to my friend Felix Maradiaga. He is both a patriot and a courageous and unrelenting advocate for democracy and human rights in Nicaragua. Much like Leopoldo López in Venezuela was detained by President Maduro because his political speech threatened the regime's grip on power, Felix is now being targeted by President Ortega for similar reasons. The world must stand in solidarity with Felix and the people of Nicaragua in their struggle to restore democracy to the country."

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June 8th, 2021



DETENCIÓN ILEGAL DE FÉLIX MARADIAGA

Félix Maradiaga ha dedicado su vida a fortalecer la democracia, el Estado de derecho y la participación cívica en Nicaragua. Su padre fue un preso político y vivió en carne propia los horrores de la guerra y la represión. Siendo un joven adolescente, Maradiaga tuvo que huir de Nicaragua a finales de los años ochenta a causa de la guerra. Cuando regresó, decidió dedicar su vida a contribuir al desarrollo y la reconciliación de su país. Después de diez años de servicio público, culminó su carrera como Secretario General del Ministerio de Defensa, desempeñándose posteriormente como defensor de los derechos humanos, académico y activista. Actualmente es el líder de la Unidad Nacional Azul y Blanco, el grupo de oposición más grande en Nicaragua y uno de los principales precandidatos a la presidencia.

Mientras Maradiaga se prepara para desafiar las acusaciones infundadas en su contra, hoy el abogado internacional de derechos humanos Jared Genser ha anunciado que se ha unido al equipo legal de Maradiaga. Genser es mejor conocido por su trabajo en los casos de presos políticos de más alto perfil en todo el mundo, incluida su representación anterior de premio Nobel de la Paz Liu Xiaobo, el expresidente de las Maldivas Mohamed Nasheed y el líder opositor venezolano Leopoldo López.

Genser emitió la siguiente declaración: "Me enorgullece servir como consejero de mi amigo Félix Maradiaga. Félix es un patriota y un valiente e implacable defensor de la democracia y los derechos humanos en Nicaragua. Al igual que Leopoldo López en Venezuela, quien fue detenido por el presidente Maduro porque su discurso político amenazaba el control del poder del régimen, Félix ahora está siendo atacado por el presidente Ortega por razones similares. El mundo debe solidarizarse con Félix y el pueblo de Nicaragua en su lucha por restaurar la democracia en el país".

Para más información, contacte a:

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8 de junio de 2021

(English translation of press release)

Republic of Nicaragua
NATIONAL POLICE
Public Relations

Press Release No. 139 – 2021

The National Police informs the people of Nicaragua:

Today, Tuesday, June 8, 2021 at 12:40 p.m., citizen FÉLIX ALEJANDRO MARADIAGA BLANDÓN was detained, who is being investigated for committing acts that undermine the independence, sovereignty, and self-determination; incite foreign interference in internal affairs; solicit military interventions; organize with funding by external entities in order to execute acts of terrorism and destabilization; propose commercial and economic blockades and financial operations against the state and its institutions; demand, praise, and applaud the imposition of sanctions against the state of Nicaragua and its citizens; and damage the supreme interests of the nation in conformity with Article 1 of the Law 1055 “Law of the Defense of the Rights of the People to Independence, the Sovereignty, and Self-Determination for Peace.”

The National Police will carry out all pertinent investigative diligences and remit the individual under investigation to the competent authorities for prosecution and determination of criminal responsibilities.

Our institution reiterates its commitment to continuing to work to fortify the security of individuals, families, and communities.

Managua, Tuesday, June 8, 2021

Division of Public Relations
National Police



República de Nicaragua
POLICÍA NACIONAL
Relaciones Públicas



TRABAJANDO POR LA PAZ Y SEGURIDAD DE NUESTRA COMUNIDAD

NOTA DE PRENSA No. 139 – 2021

La Policía Nacional informa al pueblo de Nicaragua:

El día de hoy martes 8 de junio de 2021, a las 12:40 minutos del mediodía, fue detenido el ciudadano **FÉLIX ALEJANDRO MARADIAGA BLANDÓN**, quien está siendo investigado por realizar actos que menoscaban la independencia, la soberanía, y la autodeterminación, incitar a la injerencia extranjera en los asuntos internos, pedir intervenciones militares, organizarse con financiamiento de potencias extranjeras para ejecutar actos de terrorismo y desestabilización, proponer y gestionar bloqueos económicos, comerciales y de operaciones financieras en contra del país y sus instituciones, demandar, exaltar y aplaudir la imposición de sanciones contra el Estado de Nicaragua y sus ciudadanos, y lesionar los intereses supremos de la nación, de conformidad con el artículo 1 de la Ley No. 1055 "Ley de Defensa de los Derechos del pueblo a la Independencia, la Soberanía y Autodeterminación para la Paz",

La Policía Nacional realiza todas las diligencias investigativas pertinentes y remitirá al investigado a las autoridades competentes para su enjuiciamiento y determinación de las responsabilidades penales.

Nuestra institución reitera su compromiso de continuar trabajando para fortalecer la seguridad de las personas, familias y comunidades.

Managua, martes 8 de junio de 2021.

División de Relaciones Públicas
Policía Nacional



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