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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6225

January 13, 2020

The Honorable Michael R. Pompeo
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

The Honorable Steven T. Mnuchin
Secretary of the Treasury
U.S. Department of Treasury
1500 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20220

Dear Secretary Pompeo and Secretary Mnuchin:

We write to express our deep concern about the Ortega regime's blatant disregard for human rights and systematic dismantling of democratic institutions in Nicaragua, and to ask that specific actions be taken immediately to reverse this dangerous course.

It has been more than 18 months since Ortega ordered a brutal crackdown on protesters that have killed more than 320 people, and a year since his security forces raided media outlets and civil society groups, undercutting their ability to hold him accountable.

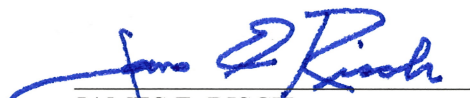
We applaud the steps taken to date by the Administration to address the Ortega regime's brutality pursuant to the Nicaragua Human Rights and Anticorruption Act of 2018 (P.L. 115-335) and Executive Order 13851. We urge you to fully implement these measures and maximize the leverage of U.S. sanctions in order to advance reforms that could lead to free and fair elections in Nicaragua. We also ask you to expand diplomatic efforts to secure the immediate release of all political prisoners, including those identified by the Organization of American States (OAS) and Nicaraguan democratic organizations.

To that end, U.S. measures should encourage the Ortega regime to seek electoral reforms in a timely manner that include: the appointment of independent new magistrates to the Supreme Electoral Council; the restoration of a 50% + one threshold for the presidential election; the establishment of a second round of voting if the electoral threshold is not reached; the establishment of a detailed electoral calendar; and the deployment of credible international and domestic electoral observers.

It is critical that the United States continue to support efforts by democratic actors in Nicaragua and the OAS to encourage Ortega to restore the rule of law and democracy in Nicaragua. A sanctions strategy that incentivizes timely progress on these matters will encourage all sides to focus on a meaningful transition to democracy in Nicaragua.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,


JAMES E. RISCH
Chairman


ROBERT MENENDEZ
Ranking Member