

INTER-AMERICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Special Monitoring Mechanism for Nicaragua

Preliminary overview of results

June 24, 2019

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (hereinafter “the Commission,” “the Inter-American Commission,” or “the IACHR”) has followed with special attention the progressive deterioration of the human rights situation in Nicaragua, in particular since the start of acts of violence as of April 18, 2018.

2. On May 3, 2018, the IACHR announced it had established a Rapid and Integrated Response Coordination Unit (hereinafter referred to by its acronym in Spanish, SACROI) to focus special attention on the human rights situation in Nicaragua through its various mechanisms.¹ Given the protests that did not cease against state repression, the President of Nicaragua indicated he was open to convening a National Dialogue, in which the Catholic Church would be participating as a mediator. The Church requested the Commission to visit the country as one of the main conditions for establishing the dialogue forum.² On May 13, 2018, the state of Nicaragua indicated its consent for the Commission to conduct a working visit “in order to observe *in loco* the human rights situation in Nicaragua, in the context of the events of April 18 to the present date.”³

3. On May 17-21, 2018, the Commission conducted a working visit to the country and issued its preliminary observations with 15 initial recommendations to the State.⁴ On June 20, 2018, the State of Nicaragua transmitted to the IACHR the agreements reached at the National Dialogue sessions of June 15 and 16, among which the following was indicated: “1. Encourage the IACHR to be present and urge it to announce the members of the GIEI and to install its functioning, as well as the monitoring mechanism (MESENI).”⁵

4. On June 22, 2018, the IACHR submitted to the Permanent Council of the Organization of American States its Final Report: “Gross Human Rights Violations in the Context of Social Protests in Nicaragua.” The Commission reiterated the 15 recommendations that were initially made and issued additional recommendations, among which it requested the State to pledge to install a monitoring mechanism along with the IACHR to oversee implementation of the recommendations that were made in the framework of the visit and in the report itself.⁶

5. In compliance with the recommendations that were made and at the invitation of the State, on June 24, 2018, the Commission installed the Special Monitoring Mechanism for Nicaragua (hereinafter referred to by its acronym in Spanish, MESENI). Since that date, the Special Mechanism has been instructed to fulfill the following mandate: a) to support and assist the Verification and Security Commission (CVS) established in the framework of the National Dialogue; b) to monitor the human rights situation in Nicaragua, in conformity with the scope and mandate of the IACHR itself; c) to provide technical assistance and capacity building for civil society; d) to monitor the precautionary measures granted in this context; e) to monitor the recommendations made by the IACHR as a result of its visit to the country, such as the Preliminary Observations and the Report “Gross Human Rights Violations in the Context of Social Protests in Nicaragua.” Likewise, the Special Mechanism acts as part of the IACHR’s broad mandate stemming from the American Convention on Human Rights and other applicable human rights instruments that are binding for Nicaragua.

¹ IACHR, Press Release 094/2018 - [IACHR to Set Up a Coordination Unit to Monitor Events in Nicaragua](#), Washington, D.C., May 3, 2018.

² The first session of the National Dialogue was held on May 16, 2018, and was attended by representatives of the government, the private business sector, universities, students, social organizations, and communities of indigenous peoples and persons of African descent. Between May 23 and June 15, 2018, the National Dialogue suspended its plenary sessions because of the lack of consensus between the government and civil society. IACHR, [Gross Human Rights Violations in the Context of Social Protests in Nicaragua](#), 2018, para. 68 and following.

³ According to Article 18.C of the Statute. Communication from the state of Nicaragua, Note MRE-DMDMC/DGAJST/00202/05/18, May 13, 2018.

⁴ IACHR, Press Release 113/18 - [Preliminary observations on the IACHR working visit to Nicaragua](#), Washington, D.C., May 2, 2018.

⁵ Note from the Permanent Mission of Nicaragua to the OAS, MRE/DM-DMC/00268/06/18, June 19, 2018.

⁶ IACHR, Press Release 134/2018 - [IACHR Issues Report on Nicaragua’s Serious Human Rights Situation](#), Washington, D.C., May 3, 2018.

6. On July 2, 2018, in conformity with the recommendation No. 3 of the IACHR's Preliminary Observations issued at the end of its working visit to Nicaragua, the IACHR announced the installation of the Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts (GIEI), which is responsible for helping and supporting the investigations of the deaths occurred between April 18 and May 30, 2018, in the context of the violent incidents in the country.⁷

7. The experience of the MESENI in Nicaragua is one of the longest field missions deployed in IACHR's history in a context of crisis. For six months, the on-site functioning of the MESENI made it possible to keep the international community informed in real-time about the evolution of the human rights crisis and, above all, to support Nicaraguans in the context of the progressive deterioration of the rule of law in the country.

8. On December 19, 2018, the State of Nicaragua reported the decision to temporarily suspend MESENI's presence in the country and the IACHR's visits to Nicaragua. Since then, MESENI has continued to monitor the human rights situation in Nicaragua from IACHR's headquarters in Washington, D.C., to safeguard the life and physical integrity of persons and the liberties of the Nicaraguan people. The above is in line with its new Plan of Action approved by the IACHR for 2019.

9. One year after the MESENI was installed, the IACHR is submitting its preliminary overview of the actions that were carried out and the impact of the results achieved by the MESENI when it was in the field, at headquarters, and as part of working visits. Furthermore, the IACHR announces that it will continue to provide special monitoring for the grave situation in Nicaragua through all of its mechanisms, such as: MESENI itself; convening public hearings; press releases; requests for information addressed to the State on the basis of Article 41 of the American Convention; working visits; ongoing meetings with civil society organizations; information forwarded by the State and civil society organizations; reviewing requests for petitions, cases, and precautionary measures; as well as international organizations.

10. The IACHR thanks all donors and supporters for their financial support, especially Swiss Cooperation, Spain, the European Commission, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Argentina, Chile, the United States, Peru, and SOS Children's Villages for creating and supporting the work conducted by MESENI.

11. The IACHR reiterates its recognition of the steadfast work conducted every day by human rights defenders and victims' organizations, as well as Nicaragua's media workers and independent journalists. Furthermore, the Commission expresses its solidarity with the victims of violations of the rights to life and personal integrity; with persons who continue to be deprived of their liberty and their next of kin; as well as students; physicians and health professionals; clergypersons; peasants; children and adolescents; women; displaced persons; exiles; and in general the entire Nicaraguan population whose lives are seriously impacted by the grave crisis that started on April 18, 2018.

⁷ IACHR, Press Release 121/2018, [IACHR to Create Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts to Help Investigate Recent Violence in Nicaragua](#), Washington, D.C., May 30, 2018.

II. OVERVIEW OF THE IMPACT OF THE MESENI'S ACTIONS

12. For 60 years, the Inter-American Commission has been working throughout the Hemisphere to tackle various contexts of gross human rights violations that threaten to go unpunished and to neglect the victims and their next of kin. IACHR's continuous response has always been steadfast and committed to fulfilling its mandate as the autonomous body for the promotion and protection of human rights in the entire region.

13. On April 18, 2018, given the start of the crisis in Nicaragua, the IACHR had the duty of shouldering this historical responsibility based on experience accumulating for over six decades of institutional existence and evolution. As a result, the IACHR deployed the entirety of its treaty-based tools and resorted to innovative mechanisms to develop its mandate in all of its breadth. For instance, it had been installed MESENI, responsible for monitoring Nicaragua's crisis, coordinating actions to defend the human rights of persons at risk, and keeping the victims' call for truth, justice, and reparations on the international agenda. Below, the IACHR provides an overview of the initial results achieved by MESENI after functioning for a year.

Technical assistance and cooperation in the context of the National Dialogue and the Negotiating Table

14. As soon as it arrived on site, the MESENI took up the mandate of providing technical assistance in human rights to the Verification and Security Commission (CVS) established as part of the National Dialogue. In fulfillment of this duty, the MESENI was at the permanent disposal of the members of the CVS and other stakeholders participating in the National Dialogue. The IACHR takes a positive view of the fact that, because of the technical assistance, the actors involved in the National Dialogue called upon the State to fulfill its international human rights obligations as a condition to move forward toward a settlement of the crisis.

15. The IACHR observes that the MESENI's actions exerted a positive impact on the Negotiating Table that started on February 27, 2019. The Civic Alliance for Justice and Democracy, comprised of various actors with which the MESENI had previously worked with by providing technical assistance and cooperation in the field, was called to participate in the Negotiating Table. On March 19, 2019, the Civic Alliance presented its negotiation agenda, which included, under item V, compliance with the recommendations made by the IACHR.

16. Likewise, the role played by the IACHR in the field, as a witness and supporter of the National Dialogue, consolidated among the population a sense of trust that has continued even today. As a result of this trust, civil society continues to call for the MESENI to return to Nicaragua to support the effective restoration of human rights in the country.

17. The IACHR stresses that the initial stance of openness taken by the state of Nicaragua was essential for installing the MESENI itself and for the implementation of preliminary actions, among which: releasing persons arbitrarily detained; holding missions to observe the human rights situation at the roadblocks in Jinotepe and Juigalpa; gaining access to the "La Modelo" penitentiary to interview persons who have been criminalized; gathering official information on persons who were injured or deceased at the protests; support for installing the GIEI-Ni; and holding technical meetings with high-level authorities in order to support compliance with the recommendations made by the IACHR.

Countering the official narrative and keeping the international community informed

18. In July 2018, the implementation of the cleaning operation to dismantle the roadblocks throughout the country was a turning point in Nicaragua's crisis because it meant the National Dialogue's suspension. Likewise, the state of Nicaragua was implementing a strategy to promote, at both the domestic and international levels, a climate of apparent normality although human rights violations continued to take place throughout the country.

19. Under this scenario, the IACHR considers that the work carried out by the MESENI was essential for countering the official narrative, which denied that human rights violations were occurring. Between June 24 and December 19, 2018, the MESENI reported, from the field, the almost daily occurrence of human rights violations, as well as events that were emblematic of State repression, such as the development of the cleaning operation, the attack on the Church of Divine Mercy, repression of the March of Flowers, the flags, the shutdown of democratic forums, among others. After December 19, the continuity of the MESENI's work was essential to the international community, once it highlighted the installation of a state of exception in Nicaragua after the forced dissolution of civil society organizations, the closing of independent media, the prohibition of holding social protests, the blockage of international scrutiny, and ultimately the adoption of an amnesty law that could make it possible for violations to go unpunished.

20. The IACHR deems that technical coherency in the MESENI's work has been essential to exert a major impact on the international community. The information produced through the Special Mechanism has been welcomed by regional and international political organizations in various discussion forums and the adoption of various resolutions, among which: the General Assembly of the OAS, the United Nations Human Rights Council, and the European Parliament. On six occasions, the American States requested the IACHR to present information to the Permanent Council of the OAS on the evolution of the crisis in Nicaragua. To date, the General Assembly of the OAS has adopted one resolution and the Permanent Council of the OAS has adopted four resolutions on the situation in Nicaragua, which make use of information transmitted by the IACHR.

Actions for coordinating and empowering civil society

21. The IACHR appreciates that the MESENI's ongoing presence and readiness in Nicaragua has had a positive impact on empowering Nicaraguan civil society, in particular for the development of new collectives and organizations for the next of kin of victims, which took an important role in the course of the crisis to reestablish human rights in the country.

22. From the start of the third phase of the repression, characterized by the criminalization of all persons identified as opponents of the government, the IACHR undertook human rights training actions aimed at the next of kin of detainees and their legal representatives. Nevertheless, in addition to the concrete training forums, the MESENI's ongoing and on-site support contributed to empowering this collective for its establishment and consolidation as a Committee for Political Prisoners. At present, through the MESENI, the IACHR continues to collaborate continuously with the Committee to draw up and crosscheck the lists of persons who have been detained and charged in the context of the crisis.

23. Furthermore, the IACHR is developing an on-site and online training program on the mechanisms and standards of the inter-American human rights system. It is also developing training on truth, justice, and reparations with organizations such as the National Blue and White Unity and the Mothers of April Association. Regarding the enactment of the amnesty law in Nicaragua and a reparations program, that does not meet international standards, the IACHR notes that training forums have contributed to the work of these organizations from the appropriation of international standards in the matter and the recommendations made by the Commission.

24. Furthermore, although the IACHR's linkage and collaboration with civil society organizations is not a new activity, in the context of the Nicaraguan crisis, technical coherency and historical trust in the IACHR's impartial work helped the MESENI take on a unique role as a creator of synergies, coordinating advocacy actions and exchanging information with Nicaraguan civil society organizations and other international actors who visited or worked in Nicaragua, such as the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Amnesty International, the Center for Justice and International Law, among others. Today, the IACHR continues to work in a coordinated fashion with these actors by participating in parallel events at the international level, as well as by organizing Situation Panels that have made it possible to bring together collectives of victims, exiled persons, representatives of OAS member States, among others, in order to discuss the current outlook in the country and other advocacy actions for human rights.

Monitoring the situation and following up on the recommendations made by the IACHR

25. Since the IACHR's working visit to Nicaragua in May 2018, the Government of Nicaragua has ignored the findings and recommendations made by the IACHR in its Preliminary Observations and afterward in its Country Report. Although the State initially made progress by complying with the recommendations on the Monitoring Mechanism, the GIEI, and international scrutiny, the Commission has repeatedly denounced actions taken by Nicaraguan authorities to discredit the IACHR's work and that of other human rights organizations by issuing press releases and public statements in order to justify their failure to fulfill international human rights obligations voluntarily undertaken by their government.

26. Despite the above, through the MESENI, the Inter-American Commission has continued to permanently monitor, promote, and protect human rights in Nicaragua. As a result of this function, the IACHR has published more than 54 press releases that unveil the progressive and constant deterioration of the human rights situation in Nicaragua and of the rule of law itself. Furthermore, on March 17, 2019, the Commission decided to include Nicaragua under Section B of Chapter IV of its Annual Report. In this report, the IACHR deemed that the gravity of the crisis in the various stages of state repression matched the causes set forth in Article 59 of its Rules of Procedure, among which: the illegitimate suspension of human rights and the intrusion of the executive branch in the other branches of government.

27. The IACHR appreciates that the work done by the MESENI to follow up on the recommendations made by the IACHR constitutes a key contribution to safeguarding historical memory, as well as to secure truth and justice regarding the gross human rights violations taking place in Nicaragua since April 18, 2018.

IACHR database of the victims of state repression

28. The databases established by the IACHR have been used by civil society and the representative of the General Secretariat of the OAS in the framework of the talks held at the Negotiating Table. On March 18, 2019, the IACHR presented to the General Secretariat of the OAS a list of persons who continued to be deprived of liberty for incidents associated with the protests. Afterward, this registry was crosschecked with information from the State and the Civic Alliance to reach a preliminary agreement that has facilitated the release of 493 persons.

29. The Commission's databases are being updated permanently because of a collaborative work plan with human rights organizations, human rights defenders, and legal representatives of detainees and persons indicted in Nicaragua. The IACHR reminds that the State of Nicaragua has the non-delegable obligation to guarantee access to complete, truthful, and objective information on the victims of gross human rights violations occurring in the country. Likewise, the IACHR reiterates its entire and immediate readiness to crosscheck official information with that obtained directly by the MESENI.

The Situation of Nicaraguan migrants in the region

30. In the framework of the MESENI, the IACHR is making working visits to countries with a high number of displaced Nicaraguans, such as Costa Rica, Honduras, and the United States. This work has been essential to highlight the grave and massive migration of Nicaraguans who are fleeing their country to other countries. On various occasions, the IACHR has called upon the States of the region and the international community to implement a regional and international response based on shared responsibility and respect and guarantee for the human rights of these persons, in order to respond adequately and effectively to this situation. Likewise, as part of the visits made, the IACHR has received information on the positive impact that the use of its published reports and press releases would have for assessing requests made by Nicaraguans who need international protection in various states of the region.

III. ACTIONS UNDERTAKEN AS PART OF THE MECHANISM’S MANDATE

A. PRECAUTIONARY AND PROVISIONAL MEASURES

31. Article 25 of the Rules of Procedure of the IACHR foresees the mechanism of precautionary measures. According to the Rules, in situations of gravity and urgency, the Commission may, on its own initiative or at the request of a party, “request that a State adopt precautionary measures. Such measures, whether related to a petition or not, shall concern serious and urgent situations presenting a risk of irreparable harm to persons or to the subject matter of a pending petition or case before the organs of the inter-American system.” These measures may be collective in order to prevent irreparable harm to persons because of their association with a given or determinable organization, group, or community of persons.

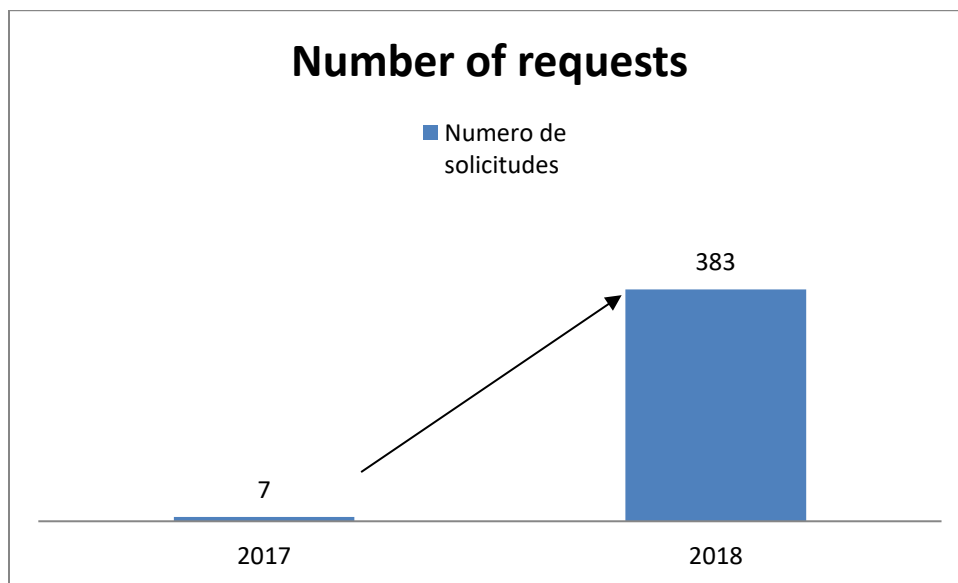
32. With the 2013 amendment, the IACHR established in its rules a procedure for processing a request for precautionary measures, which, among other aspects, envisages, as a rule under the terms of Article 25.5 of the Rules of Procedure, requesting information from the State, before adopting a measure, unless the case admits of no delay.

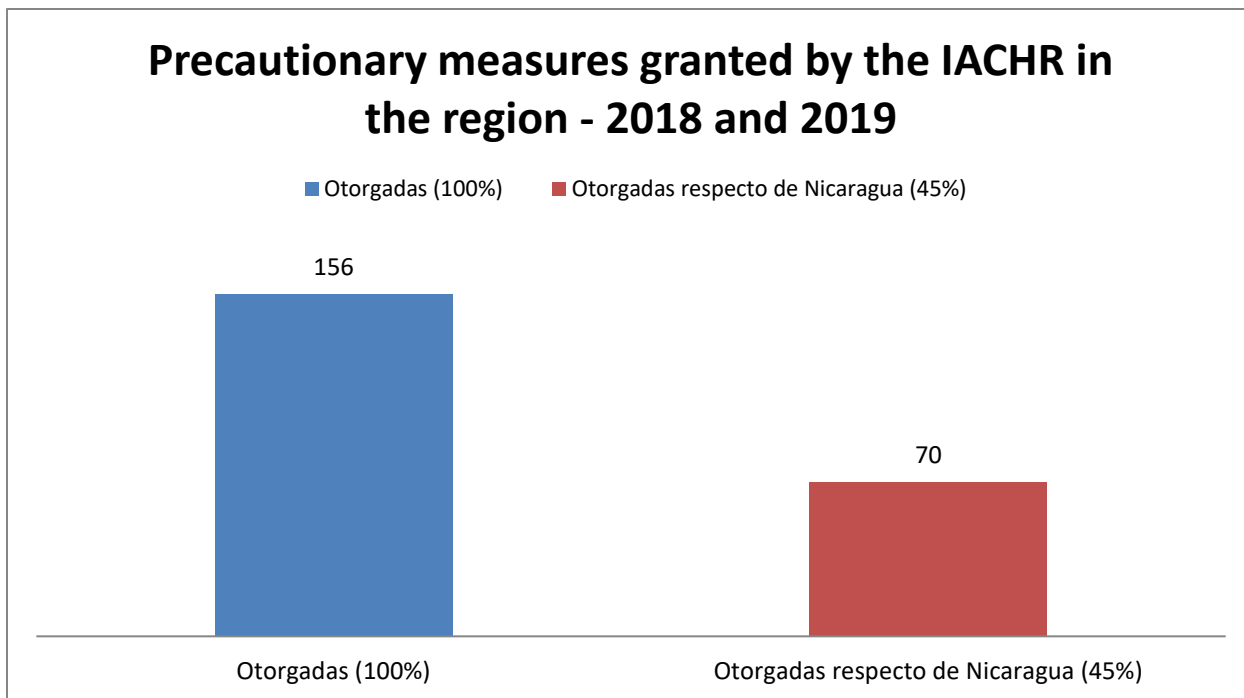
Number of requests for precautionary measures received in 2018 and 2019

33. In the context of the human rights crisis in Nicaragua, the Commission has received, to date, 407 new requests for precautionary measures. These requests have been received during both the in loco visit and the MESENI’s field presence, as well as transmitted by electronic media to the Commission. The situation presented highlights a serious situation of vulnerability, which, at the same time, has led to increasingly wider use of technology to facilitate more flexible access to petitioners to narrate events of risk, presenting their stories by audio or video recordings.

34. 100% of the requests for precautionary measures received regarding Nicaragua benefit from an initial assessment and also a follow-up evaluation in those cases where additional information is required from the State or the petitioners. The above has led to transferring the information into the registry, its systematization, drawing up draft resolutions and memorandums, as well as translations, Commission deliberations, and notification of communications.

35. The number of requests for precautionary measures received in 2018 regarding Nicaragua amounts to a 5,471% rise compared to the requests received in 2017, with 7 requests received in 2017 and 383 in 2018.





*Data from January 1, 2018 to June 14, 2019

Precautionary measures granted

36. Between 2018 and 2019, the Commission granted or extended 72 precautionary measures on Nicaragua in 39 resolutions, equivalent to about more than 180 beneficiaries, in addition to next of kin, as necessary. The resolutions were adopted as established in Article 25 of the Rules of Procedure, considering that said persons are in a situation of gravity, urgency, and at risk of irreparable damage. The profile of beneficiaries encompasses mainly students, social leaders, human rights defenders, journalists, members of the Nicaragua Peasant Movement, members of the Civic Alliance for Justice and Democracy of Nicaragua, which participates in the Dialogue Forum, persons deprived of their liberty in the context of the protests, and the next of kin of deceased or injured persons.

37. In order to ensure expeditious proceedings, certain resolutions for granting measures assess compliance with regulatory requirements in two or more requests for precautionary measures, which made it possible to provide a timely response to matters that shared common sources of risk.

38. In 2018, the Commission granted or extended a total of 121 precautionary measures in 87 resolutions regarding various States parties to the OAS. Thus far, this year (2019) the Commission granted or extended 35 precautionary measures based on 29 resolutions granting or extending measures. To date, between 2018 and 2019, the Commission has granted or extended a total of 156 precautionary measures. Out of all the precautionary measures granted over this period, Nicaragua alone accounted for 45% of them.

39. It should be pointed out that, in view of the context of the human rights crisis directly observed by the MESENI and allegations that the main sources of risk are State actors or third parties acting with their acquiescence, in most of the resolutions for precautionary measures, the Commission proceeded to grant them without requesting information from the State, pursuant to the exception set forth under Article 25 of the Rules of Procedure.

40. In several matters pertaining to Nicaragua, the information provided by the MESENI has made it possible to support compliance with the regulatory requirements in various resolutions to grant measures, as well as to closely monitoring the situation in which beneficiaries are living.

41. After granting precautionary measures, the Commission is monitoring the situation by requesting information from the parties and has been evaluating other mechanisms to guarantee the effectiveness of the precautionary measures adopted.

Provisional measures

42. On May 15, 2019, the Commission filed with the Inter-American Court of Human Rights a request for provisional measures pursuant to Article 63.2 of the Inter-American Convention on Human Rights in response to the situation of “extreme” gravity in which 17 beneficiary persons deprived of their liberty because of incidents associated with the protests occurring since April 2018:

1) Kevin Rodrigo Espinoza Gutiérrez, 2) Cristhian Rodrigo Fajardo Caballero, 3) Yubrank Miguel Suazo Herrera, 4) Edwin José Carcache Dávila, 5) Medardo Mairena Sequeira, 6) Mario Lener Fonseca Díaz, 7) Ricardo Baltodano, 8) Jaime Ramon Ampie Toledo, 9) Julio José Ampie Machado, 10) Reynaldo Lira Luquez, 11) Miguel Mora Barberena, 12) Lucia Pineda Ubau, 13) Amaya Eva Coppens Zamora, 14) Olesia Auxiliadora Muñoz Pavón, 15) Tania Verónica Muñoz Pavón, 16) María Adilia Peralta Serrato, and 17) Irlanda Undina Jeréz Barrera, in Nicaragua.

43. The 17 persons identified were beneficiaries of precautionary measures. Nevertheless, after these measures were granted, and despite the Commission’s repeated actions to obtain information from the State of Nicaragua, there has been no response indicating that suitable and effective measures of protection have been adopted to address the situation of risk identified, concerted actions, or measures aimed at investigating the events of risk. This situation was of particular concern because all of the persons identified were deprived of their liberty and were therefore in the State’s custody.

44. To obtain information on the current situation of the beneficiaries, the Commission, through MESENI, requested information from the parties. Because many beneficiaries were, at the same time, their own representatives in the precautionary measures proceedings, it was impossible for them to provide the information requested after they were deprived of their liberty. Nevertheless, the Commission, through MESENI, held talks with next of kin and attorneys in the domestic proceedings of detainees, who were able to provide greater detail on their current situation from the occasions they were able to visit them. Because many beneficiaries were held in the same detention facilities, the Commission was also able to review common risk factors that they faced both in “La Modelo” prison for men and in “La Esperanza” prison for women.

45. According to information provided to the IACHR, all the identified persons had played a leading and visible role against the measures promoted by the current government of Nicaragua since April 2018 and had voiced their opposition to the State’s repressive action against the civilian population in the current context. The information received about the persistence of events jeopardizing health, life, and personal integrity, along with indication of arbitrariness in the detentions, the criminal offenses charged, and the alleged violations of due process in their cases, suggested that said deprivation of liberty was closely connected to the intent of silencing them by retaliation, thereby transmitting a message of punishment to persons marching or protesting against State actions. Under these circumstances, the Commission considered that their rights to health, life, and personal integrity were being seriously placed at risk and that the proposed beneficiaries were exposed to being the target of acts of violence. In that regard, the Commission contended, before the Court, that it was imperative for the competent authorities to immediately adopt alternative measures to deprivation of liberty as a means of safeguarding their rights.

46. On May 21, 2019, the President of the Inter-American Court granted urgent measures espousing the Commission’s arguments and resolved the following: 1. Request the State to immediately adopt the necessary measures to effectively protect the health, life, and personal integrity of the 17 persons identified; 2. As regards the beneficiaries María Adilia Peralta Cerratos, Jaime Ramón Ampié Toledo, Julio José Ampié Machado, Reynaldo Lira Luquez, and Tania Verónica Muñoz Pavón, taking into account the State’s contention that these petitioners “were granted the legal benefit of living with their families as of May 20, 2019,” request the petitioners’ representatives or the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights to

confirm the information that this benefit has effectively been granted and that they have been released; 3. Request to the State, as regards the remaining 12 petitioners (Kevin Rodrigo Espinoza Gutiérrez, Cristhian Rodrigo Fajardo Caballero, Yubrank Miguel Suazo Herrera, Edwin José Carcache Dávila, Medardo Mairena Sequeira, Mario Lener Fonseca Díaz, Ricardo Baltodano, Miguel Mora Barberena, Lucia Pineda Ubau, Amaya Eva Coppens Zamora, Olesia Auxiliadora Muñoz Pavón, and Irlanda Undina Jeréz Barrera), to immediately assess whether alternative measures to deprivation of liberty should be granted; 4. Provide that, with the State's permission, a delegation of the Inter-American Court, composed of its President, Vice-President, or other judge, as well as the Secretary and the Secretariat staff, to carry out as soon as possible a visit to the prisons of "La Esperanza" and "La Modelo," in Nicaragua, or wherever the beneficiaries of the present measures are, in order to interview every one of them, as well as different state authorities; 5. To request to the State to provide all the facility and security so that the delegation of the Inter-American Court can conduct the visit shortly.

B. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO THE VERIFICATION AND SECURITY COMMISSION

47. On June 24, 2018, the technical team of the MESENI was installed in Nicaragua. As part of its mandate to provide technical assistance to the Verification and Security Commission, the team of the MESENI participated in plenary sessions of the CVS and held meetings with members designated by the Civic Alliance and the Government. Likewise, the IACHR organized nine technical meetings held with the highest-ranking authorities of the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Public Prosecutor's Office, the Ministry of Justice, the National Police Force, and the Forensic Medicine Institute.

48. During the first two weeks in the field, the IACHR provided technical assistance and support to the CVS for the **release and taking of testimonies of 65 detainees in the El Chipote Judicial Assistance Department of the Police Force.**

49. It also carried out **three missions** of observation and support for the CVS.

- Mission to Jinotepe. On Friday, June 29, the IACHR observed the human rights situation of more than 200 truck drivers who remained at the roadblock, as well as the general population. In addition, the MESENI participated as an observer in the meetings held with various social actors, without the presence of the forces of law and order.
- Mission to Masaya. On July 6, in support of the CVS, the IACHR had the opportunity to observe the situation in Masaya and interview persons in danger of death who participated in the protests and whose homes were burnt in retaliation for their participation in the protests. During that visit, the IACHR took relevant testimonies for the subsequent granting of precautionary measures for the benefit of Yubrank Miguel Suazo Herrera, Cristian Fajardo, and María Adilia Serrato. It also met with the next of kin of persons deceased and injured in the context of the protests from the indigenous territory of Monimbó, in Masaya. It also held a meeting with leaders of the National Technological Institute of Masaya (*Instituto Tecnológico Nacional de Masaya—INATEC*) in the facilities of the National Police Force based on a State's request.
- Mission to Juigalpa. On July 13, in view of the impending deployment of an operation in Juigalpa to dismantle the roadblocks, the field team of the MESENI helped the CVS draft agreements that would enable the peaceful and voluntary lifting of the roadblocks with assurances of non-retaliation against the protesters. During the visit, the technical team observed armed groups acting under State tolerance and control.

C. MONITORING THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN NICARAGUA

50. With the installation and monitoring of the MESENI, the IACHR orchestrated a strategy to provide a sustained and timely response to the crisis in Nicaragua, which led to a record number of monitoring activities and actions conducted by the IACHR regarding Nicaragua. Over the year that the MESENI was functioning, the IACHR has sent to the State of Nicaragua **88 requests for information** on the specific situation of the victims of State repression and the actions taken to protect their human rights. The IACHR has also compiled **more than 1,500 testimonies from victims** of the repression in Nicaragua.

51. The information received has been essential for drafting reports and denouncing the serious situation in the country. In that respect, the IACHR has issued **54 press releases** on the situation in Nicaragua to alert the international community about the evolution of the human rights crisis.

52. Furthermore, the IACHR convened **6 hearings** to gather specific information on the situation in the country:

- [Reports on repression and violence in the context of the protests](#). October 2, 2018.
- [Situation of human rights defenders in Nicaragua: Denouncing arbitrary detentions and lack of access to justice](#). October 2, 2018.
- [Repression and human rights violations in Nicaragua](#). December 6, 2018.
- [General human rights situation in Nicaragua](#). February 14, 2019.
- Situation of the rights of women deprived of liberty in Nicaragua (private hearing). February 14, 2019.
- [Situation of indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants of Nicaragua's Caribbean Coast](#). May 8, 2019.

53. During the first phase of the MESENI's field operation, the Commission **conducted six technical visits and four working visits to Nicaragua**. After the State announced the suspension of the IACHR's visits to the country on December 19, 2018, the IACHR has conducted working visits to various countries of the region to monitor the situation of persons forced to flee their country. These visits have been relevant to gather information on the persistence of the patterns of human rights violations, as well as to highlight, in the international community, the situation of thousands of displaced Nicaraguans.

▪ Visit of Commissioner Antonia Urrejola, Rapporteur for Nicaragua, to Managua

54. In July 2018, Commissioner Antonia Urrejola visited Managua in order to participate in installing the MESENI on June 24 and the GIEI of the IACHR on July 2, 2018. The Commissioner also participated in the first activities of the MESENI, such as meetings with civil society organizations and the release of detainees in the Judicial Assistance Department of the Police Force.

Noteworthy interviews:

Antonia Urrejola. [IACHR Rapporteur leaves Nicaragua after installing investigative team](#). July 5, 2018. Agencia EFE.

Pablo Abrão: ["Repression has changed its modus operandi"](#) July 10, 2018. *El Confidencial*



▪ **Visit of IACHR Rapporteur on Persons Deprived of Liberty to Managua**

On September 18 to 26, 2018, Commissioner Joel Hernández, Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons Deprived of Liberty, conducted a working visit to examine the detention conditions of persons deprived of liberty because of incidents associated with the protests that started on April 18, 2018. During his visit, the Rapporteur held various meetings with representatives of civil society, human rights defenders, and next of kin of persons deprived of liberty. He also made new recommendations to the State.

[Press release on the visit](#)

Noteworthy interview:

Joel Hernández, IACHR Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons Deprived of Liberty. [“We cannot know how many persons have been incarcerated”](#)

September 22, 2018, *El Confidencial*



▪ **Visit of IACHR President and Rapporteur for Persons of African Descent and Women to Managua**

56. The President of the IACHR, Margarette May Macaulay, conducted a working visit to Nicaragua on October 25 to 27, 2018, to examine the human rights situation in the country, especially women human rights defenders, women deprived of liberty, and persons of African descent. In the framework of the visit, the IACHR reiterated to the State of Nicaragua the requests made to facilitate meetings between the President of the IACHR and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Public Prosecutor’s Office, the Directorate General for the National Penitentiary System, the National Police Force, the Office of the Ombudsperson for the Defense of Human Rights, as well as the authorities in charge of public policymaking relative to the rights of women and persons of African descent.

[Press release on the visit](#)

Noteworthy interview:

[Report on the working visit of the President of the IACHR](#)

October 26, 2018, *El Nuevo Diario*



▪ **Visit of the IACHR Rapporteur on Migrants to Costa Rica in October 2018**

57. The IACHR conducted a working visit to Costa Rica on October 14-18, 2018 in order to monitor the situation of Nicaraguan asylum seekers needing international protection who were forced to flee their country and look for international protection in Costa Rica. As a result of the visit, the IACHR is working on a report on the situation of Nicaraguans in this country.



[Preliminary observations](#) on the working visit to monitor the situation of Nicaraguans forced to flee to Costa Rica

[Video of IACHR visit to Costa Rica](#), CIDH TV

Noteworthy interview: [Commissioner Luis Vargas on the working visit](#). October 22, 2018, *El Confidencial*

▪ **Visit of Commissioner Joel Hernández to Costa Rica and Honduras in May 2019**

58. Between May 19 and 24, 2019, Commissioner Joel Hernández conducted working visits to Costa Rica and Honduras to monitor and follow-up on the situation of Nicaraguans forced to flee these countries because of the crisis that started on April 18, 2018 in Nicaragua.

59. In Costa Rica, the MESENI held meetings with more than 15 civil society collectives and organizations of Nicaraguans in Costa Rica. In addition, as part of his duties to promote capacity building of Nicaraguan civil society, the MESENI facilitated two training sessions on precautionary measures and international standards for truth, justice, and reparations to the executive board of the Association of the Mothers of April (AMA), comprised of mothers and next of kin of persons who died in the context of the crisis in Nicaragua.

60. In Honduras, the technical team of the MESENI had the opportunity, for the first time, to gather information in the field on the situation of Nicaraguans who fled Honduras. In addition, the MESENI held meetings with authorities of the National Migration Institute, civil society organizations, and the National Office of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR).



[IACHR Concludes Working Visits to Costa Rica and Honduras to Monitor the Predicament of Nicaraguans Who Have Been Forced to Flee their Country](#). Washington, D.C., June 12, 2019

Visit of the President of the IAHR, Commissioner Esmeralda Arosemena, and Commissioner Antonia Urrejola to Miami in June 2019

61. On June 17-18, 2019, Commissioner Esmeralda Arosemena, President of the IACHR, and Commissioner Antonia Urrejola, Rapporteur for Nicaragua, visited Miami to hold meetings with civil society organizations on the human rights situation in Nicaragua and with Nicaraguans who had to leave their country. Likewise, on June 17, the Commissioners presented the IACHR Report on the Situation of Human Rights in Nicaragua in the framework of a Situation Panel attended by representatives of Nicaraguan organizations and persons, among which peasant organizations, students, human rights defenders, and leaders released from custody.



D. KEEPING THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY INFORMED

62. The Inter-American Commission’s response to Nicaragua’s situation—mainly by conducting a working visit in May and with the subsequent installation of the MESENI—was essential to disseminate the gross human rights violations occurring in the context of the protests that started on April 18, as well as to keep the international community as a whole informed. Since the installation of the MESENI, the IACHR has presented information about the situation in Nicaragua to the Permanent Council of the OAS on seven occasions; six of them after the MESENI was installed.

Presentations to the Permanent Council of the OAS

- June 22, 2018. [Presentation of the Report “Gross Human Rights Violations in Nicaragua”](#). Commissioner Antonia Urrejola.
- July 11, 2018. [Presentation on the updated human rights situation in Nicaragua](#); activities and installation of the MESENI. Remarks by the Executive Secretary, Paulo Abrão.
- October 19, 2018. [Presentation on the updated human rights situation in Nicaragua](#). Remarks by the Executive Secretary, Paulo Abrão.
- December 27, 2018. [Presentation on the updated human rights situation in Nicaragua](#). Remarks by the Vice-President of the IACHR, Commissioner Esmeralda Arosemena.
- January 11, 2019. [Presentation on the situation in Nicaragua](#). Remarks by the Executive Secretary of the IACHR, Paulo Abrão.
- April 5, 2019. Presentation by Commissioner Joel Hernández on [“The situation in Nicaragua.”](#)
- April 26, 2019. [Presentation by the Assistant Executive Secretary](#) for Monitoring, Promotion, and Technical Cooperation in Human Rights of the IACHR, María Claudia Pulido.

63. The Inter-American Commission, through the work of the MESENI, keeps the Working Group for Nicaragua of the OAS Permanent Council informed about the situation in the country.

64. In the framework of the fortieth regular session of the United Nations Human Rights Council, the IACHR undertook the following activities to highlight the situation in Nicaragua for the international community.

- **February 27, 2019.** For the first time, the IACHR intervened in the High-Level Segment of the session; at that event, Commissioner Joel Hernández made a [presentation mainly focusing on the situation in Nicaragua](#).
- **March 7, 2019.** The IACHR participated in the interactive debate of the Human Rights Council with an intervention on human rights in Nicaragua.
- **March 19, 2019.** The IACHR held a parallel event on the situation in Nicaragua



E. STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND DISSEMINATION STRATEGY

65. From the start of the crisis in Nicaragua and during the Mechanism’s field operation, the IACHR has upheld an active communication strategy on the situation in Nicaragua via the Commission’s own social media by issuing daily reports on the situation in the country and implementing other actions. Among the carried out actions, we highlight the following ones:

- The Inter-American Commission has granted more than **60 interviews** to the media of 12 countries: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, France, Germany, Mexico, Netherlands, Nicaragua, Peru, Spain, and United States of America.
- The IACHR has launched **two communication campaigns** on social media. On April 18, 2019, on the occasion of the commemoration of the start of the social protests in the country and another on May 30, 2019, to remember the victims of state repression at the “March of the Mothers,” one of the events with the highest number of casualties in the context of the protests.
- The IACHR has produced **4 videos** on the MESENI’s work, which are available on [Canal TV CIDH](#).
- The work of the MESENI is permanently available on the **web page** of the Inter-American Commission in the section created on the [situation in Nicaragua](#).
- In 2019, the IACHR started publishing a **monthly newsletter** on the activities of the MESENI. At present those for the months of [April](#) and [May](#) have been published.
- In the framework of the MESENI, the IACHR has held **two events entitled “Panel on the human rights situation in Nicaragua”** which brings together the participation of civil society, international organizations, representatives of OAS member states, journalists, social leaders, exiled Nicaraguans, among others.



You can follow the activities of the MESENI on our web section and social media:

[Webpage](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [TV CIDH/MESENI](#)

F. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND CAPACITY BUILDING FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

66. Throughout 2018, MESENI provided Nicaraguan civil society with capacity building and training on international human rights standards. In that respect, during its field operation, 9 training events were held in the cities of Managua and Matagalpa, in Nicaragua, providing training for a total of 249 persons on subjects such as the mechanisms and standards of the inter-American human rights system, international asylum and protection, human trafficking, the rights of persons deprived of liberty, and transitional justice, among others. Also noteworthy is the training provided to 24 participants on inter-American human rights standards in San José, Costa Rica, to Nicaraguans forced to flee to Costa Rica. Since December 19, 2018, the IACHR continued with training actions provided online or during working visits.

Training provided by the MESENI – 2018

Name of the activity	Subject	Place and date	Persons trained	Groups trained
Training course on transitional justice (MESENI)	Transitional justice	Managua, Nicaragua, July 13	25	Civil society
Training workshop on IACHR mechanisms: MESENI and GIEI (MESENI)	Standards of the Inter-American human rights system applicable to the situation in Nicaragua	Managua, Nicaragua, July 14	30	Next of kin of victims of human rights violations
Training workshop on inter-American human rights standards (MESENI)	Standards of the inter-American human rights system applicable to the situation in Nicaragua	Managua, Nicaragua, June 29	35	Civil society
Training workshop on IACHR mechanisms and inter-American human rights standards (MESENI)	Standards of the inter-American human rights system applicable to the situation in Nicaragua	Managua, Nicaragua, from July 31 to August 1	14	Civil society
Training workshop on IACHR mechanisms and inter-American human rights standards (MESENI)	Standards of the inter-American human rights system applicable to the situation in Nicaragua	Matagalpa, Nicaragua, August 22 and 23	23	Human rights defenders
Training on international asylum and protection	International asylum and protection	Managua, Nicaragua, August 29	43	Students, human rights defenders, and civil society in general
Training on human trafficking and international standards	Human trafficking and international standards	Managua, Nicaragua, September 6	15	Women human rights promoters

Training workshop on inter-American human rights standards (MESENI)	Standards of the inter-American human rights system applicable to the situation in Nicaragua	Managua, Nicaragua, September 8	19	Students, human rights defenders, and civil society in general
Training on the rights of persons deprived of liberty	Rights of persons deprived of liberty	Managua, Nicaragua, September 19	45	Civil society
Training workshop on inter-American human rights standards (MESENI)	Standards of the inter-American human rights system applicable to the situation in Nicaragua	San José, Costa Rica, November 30	24	Human rights defenders

Training provided by the MESENI – 2019

Name of the course	Place and date	Number of persons trained	Specific groups (number and trained group)
Training workshop on international standards for migration and asylum (Rapporteurship on the Rights of Migrants/MESENI)	Washington, D.C., February 25	20	Representatives of the Nicaraguan Civic Association
Online training on transitional justice for the Committee for the Release of Political Prisoners – Session 1 (Advocacy and Training/MESENI)	Washington, D.C./Managua, Nicaragua, March 29	15	Mothers and next of kin of political prisoners, defense attorneys, voluntary advisors
Online training on transitional justice for the Committee for the Release of Political Prisoners – Session 2 (Advocacy and Training/MESENI)	Washington, D.C./Managua, Nicaragua, April 6	13	Mothers and next of kin of political prisoners, defense attorneys, voluntary advisors
Online training on transitional justice for the National Blue and White Unity (UNAB) – Session 1 (Advocacy and Training/MESENI)	Washington, D.C./Managua, Nicaragua, April 10	18	Representatives of the Justice Commission, the Security Commission, and attorneys
Online training on transitional justice for the Committee for the Release of Political Prisoners – Session 3 (Advocacy and Training/MESENI)	Washington, D.C./Managua, Nicaragua, April 12	15	Mothers and next of kin of political prisoners, defense attorneys, voluntary advisors
Online training on transitional justice for the National Blue and White Unity (UNAB) – Session 2 (Advocacy and Training/MESENI)	Washington, D.C./Managua, Nicaragua, April 26	12	Representatives of the Justice Commission, the Security Commission, and attorneys
Online training on the IACHR's System of Petitions and Cases for the Association of Mothers of April (AMA) – Session 1 (Advocacy and Training/MESENI)	Washington, D.C./Managua, Nicaragua/Mexico, April 29	7	Mothers and next of kin of those who died in the context of the crisis
Online training on transitional justice for the National Blue and White Unity (UNAB) – Session 3 (Advocacy and Training/MESENI)	Washington, D.C./Managua, Nicaragua, May 3	8	Representatives of the Justice Commission, the Security Commission, and attorneys
Onsite training on transitional justice and precautionary measures for the Mothers of April Association (AMA) – Sessions 2 & 3 (Advocacy	San José, Costa Rica, May 20 and 21	19	Mothers and next of kin of those who died in the context of the crisis

and Training/MESENI)			
Onsite training: Introduction to the inter-American human rights system and its protection instruments (MESENI)	Miami, Florida, June 18	33	Nicaraguan diaspora in the United States and other countries of the region

67. At the cutoff date for the instant report, the MESENI had facilitated a **total of 20 training events, reaching 435 direct beneficiaries.**

68. Some of the successful experiences reflecting the impact of the actions for capacity building of society are indicated below:

- Human Rights Office. Diocese of Matagalpa.

69. In August 2018, the MESENI and the Rapporteur for Human Rights Defenders provided training to members of the Diocese of Matagalpa interested in opening human rights offices to receive reports from the population. Two months later, on October 18, 2018, the MESENI received about 100 reports of human rights violations documented by said offices in four different regions of the department of Matagalpa. The MESENI received the request to continue training new persons, as well as on specific subjects such as the safeguarding of information.

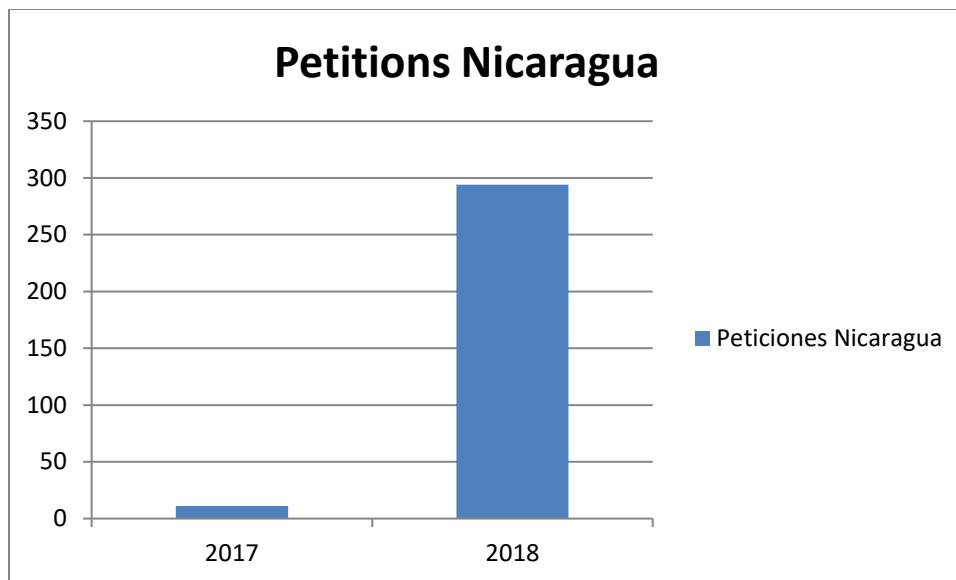
- Committee for Political Prisoners

70. The MESENI carried out actions for civil society capacity building during the third phase of State repression, as well as for the next of kin of detainees being criminalized because they were identified as opponents of the government regime. In particular, during the first phase, the MESENI closely supported the creation of the Committee for Political Prisoners through training actions on subjects such as international standards for pre-trial detention and the rights of persons deprived of liberty. In a second phase, after the state of Nicaragua suspended the MESENI's authorization to stay in the field, the technical team of the Special Mechanism continued to work closely with this Committee in order to gather specific and technical information regarding the situation of detainees.

G. PETITIONS AND CASES

71. By filing a petition with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), persons who have sustained human rights violations can obtain assistance. The Commission investigates the situation and can make recommendations to the State responsible so that the enjoyment of rights can be restored to the extent possible, so that similar incidents do not occur again in the future, and so that the incidents that occurred are investigated and redressed.

72. In connection with the acts of violence that took place since State repression of the protests of April 2018 and new incidents, the MESENI has continued monitoring the human rights situation in Nicaragua permanently. There were 294 petitions filed in 2018 referring to possible human rights violations occurring in the framework of protests, of which **73 (24%)** have been reviewed. After a preliminary examination of available information, the initial study team proposed opening 16 of them, all referring to possible acts of **torture, extrajudicial executions, kidnapping, or arbitrary detention of liberty.**



- Considerations in the study stage
 - i. Many of the violations sustained by the alleged victims are recognized and documented by the Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts of Nicaragua (GIEI) and the Special Monitoring Mechanism for Nicaragua (MESENI).
 - ii. The State is aware of them and is therefore under the obligation of starting an investigation *ex officio* in order to clarify what happened to identify and punish those responsible. Three of the petitions are associated with precautionary measures that were granted and are in force.

Petitions dismissed

- i. A preliminary proposal is aimed at dismissing **57** petitions because they do not meet the requirements of Article 28 of the Rules of Procedure of the IACHR. Many of them deal with damages to private property or general allegations about the country's political situation, without specifying a concrete violation of human rights to the detriment of the alleged victim. In the case of petitions referring to threats, repression, or damages sustained during the protests, coordination is being conducted with the MESENI team in order to corroborate that we do not have further information on the alleged victims.

Landmark cases on Nicaragua

- i. In the IACHR cases are processed chronologically, and that may take several years from the start to the final processing. Nevertheless, the IACHR has chosen two petitions whose proceedings were opened and whose facts were related or similar to facts appearing in the crisis unleashed in April 2018.
- ii. These two petitions in the admissibility stages are both related to guarantees of the electoral process. One of them regards the nullification of the legal status of a political party in the election (Case 13.745, Political parties MRS and PC), and the other is related to the rights to participation in public affairs and conditions of equality (Case 13.727, Fabio Gadea Mantilla), and another case that is in the merits stage, analyzes the arbitrary use of lethal force, which is being processed in the Inter-American Court (Case 12.722, Roche Azaña et al., Nicaragua).

H. MONITORING THE RECOMMENDATIONS

73. In the framework of the implementation of the Special Program to Monitor IACHR Recommendations (Strategic Program 21) of its [Strategic Plan 2017-2021](#), the IACHR is developing strategic and innovative actions to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the recommendations made to the State, among which, the creation of special monitoring mechanisms. For the IACHR, these Special Mechanisms promote a more holistic review of the IACHR’s decisions and recommendations; facilitate the presentation of up-to-date information to the international community on the situation or the concrete case; benefit from the Commission’s field presence; foster a systematic and periodic monitoring of priority issues; broaden the dialogue with the parties and the search for concerted solutions, among others. All of this leads to an in-depth and specialized follow-up by the Commission on compliance with the human rights commitments and obligations undertaken by the States.

74. In connection with Nicaragua, the IACHR, after its working visit to the country, issued its preliminary observations with 15 initial recommendations addressed to the State. On June 22, 2018, the IACHR submitted its Final Report “Gross Human Rights Violations in the Context of Social Protests in Nicaragua.” In the report, the Commission reiterated its 15 initial recommendations and made 9 additional recommendations.

75. Afterward, in the framework of the MESENI’s operation, the IACHR conducted several additional visits to Nicaragua. The Rapporteur on Persons Deprived of Liberty conducted a working visit to Nicaragua on September 18-20, 2018. When concluding its visit, the Rapporteur addressed **10 new recommendations** to the Nicaraguan State related to the detention conditions of persons deprived of liberty in the country in the context of the social protests and the dismantling of the roadblocks. On October 14-18, the Rapporteur on the Rights of Migrants conducted a working visit to Costa Rica in order to monitor the situation of Nicaraguan asylum seekers who were forced to flee and who require international protection. At the end of this visit, the IACHR published its preliminary observations and addressed **four new recommendations** the state of Nicaragua.⁸



⁸ IACHR, Press Release 233/2018 - [Preliminary observations on the working visit to monitor the situation of Nicaraguans forced to flee to Costa Rica](#), Washington, D.C., November 1, 2018.

76. Finally, on December 21, the Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts (GIEI) installed by the IACHR presented its “[Final Report on the violent events that took place in Nicaragua between April 18th and May 30th](#)”. This report confirmed the findings of the working visit conducted by the Commission on May 17-21. The GIEI made new recommendations to the State of Nicaragua to overcome the country’s current crisis.

Recommendations made by IACHR mechanisms to Nicaragua in 2018

	Number of recommendations	Date of publication
Preliminary observations after the working visit	15	May 21, 2018
Final Report: Gross Human Rights Violations in the Context of Social Protests in Nicaragua	9 additional	June 22, 2018
Visit of the Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons Deprived of Liberty	10	September 26, 2018
Preliminary observations after the visit to Costa Rica	4*	November 1, 2018
GIEI Report	20	December 20, 2018

* In its preliminary observations, the IACHR made 10 additional recommendations to the state of Costa Rica.

77. During the year it was functioning, the MESENI provided specialized and in-depth monitoring of this series of recommendations, using a follow-up matrix which is periodically updated, in addition to sending letters, holding hearings and meetings, and conducting visits, as well as in its [Annual Report 2018, Chapter IV.B on Nicaragua](#). As a result, the IACHR has revealed how the human rights situation has progressively deteriorated in Nicaragua and how the rule of law has been undermined.

78. The IACHR shall continue its ongoing work of monitoring, promoting, and protecting human rights in Nicaragua through its various mechanisms. The IACHR is fulfilling this mandate independently and autonomously, as part of its attributions conferred upon it by the American States and, principally, with the responsibility of always being alongside the victims who are suffering from human rights violations.