

30 de Septiembre de 2016

## Nicaragua: Women's rights defenders arrested during peaceful demonstration

On 28 September 2016, women's rights defenders Mss **Patricia Orozco, Duyerling Ríos, Celia Contreras, Luisa Molina, María Jesús Tenorio** and **Jessica Hernández** along with journalist Abixael Mogoyón, were detained without justification while participating in a peaceful demonstration commemorating the International Day for the Decriminalisation of Abortion in Latin America and the Caribbean. The defenders were released an hour after their arrest, without any explanation provided by the police.

[Patricia Orozco](#), Celia Contreras, Duyerling Ríos, María Jesús Tenorio, Jessica Hernández and Luisa Molina are prominent Nicaraguan feminists, members of the **Campaña 28 de Septiembre** (Campaign 28 of September) and the **Iniciativa Nicaragüense de Defensoras** (Initiative of Nicaraguan Defenders). The Campaign 28 of September was born during the 5th Feminist Latin American and Caribbean Encounter that took place in San Bernardo, Argentina, in November 1990. Its purpose is to generate the conditions in all countries of Latin America and the Caribbean for women to be able to access free and safe abortions with quality health care. Abixael Mogoyón is a journalist for the radio programme Onda Local.

In the morning of 28 September 2016, International Day for the Decriminalisation of Abortion in Latin America and the Caribbean, the six human rights defenders were near the National Assembly, demonstrating in favour of the decriminalisation of abortion. Every year on 28 September, feminist movements demand that the Nicaraguan state restores the right of women to have legal and safe abortions. The right to safe and free abortion remains one of the most contentious issues in the country: it was allowed in Nicaragua for over 100 years before a vote of Congress in 2006 introduced a complete ban that does not allow any exception, including in case of serious complications during pregnancy or rape.

At the demonstration, the human rights defenders carried a placard that read "Illegal abortion equals State violence" and spilled red paint in the street outside the National Assembly to symbolise the death of women who had not had access to legal and safe abortion. Shortly after, the defenders were approached by two plain clothes officers who introduced themselves as police officers but refused to provide identification, before being surrounded by uniformed police officers. They were all detained, along with journalist Abixael Mogoyón, and taken to the police station *Distrito Uno*. The group was released after an hour. No justification was provided for the arrest and thus the actions of the police appeared arbitrary.

This incident is not isolated. Women human rights defenders working to advance sexual and reproductive rights as well as combating violence against women and girls in Nicaragua have been [particularly targeted](#) by pro-government forces, as a result of their human rights work and their vocal stance against authoritarianism. Front Line Defenders has also identified a

recurrent trend of police violently dispersing demonstrations in the country linked to women's rights but also other demands expressed by civil society.

Front Line Defenders condemns the unjustified arrest of the human rights defenders and journalist, as it appears to be an act of intimidation and an attempt to silence the voice of human rights defenders in the country.

### **Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Nicaragua to:**

1. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into arbitrary detention of Patricia Orozco, Duyerling Ríos, Celia Contreras, Luisa Molina, María Jesús Tenorio, Jessica Hernández and Abixael Mogoyón, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
2. Adopt appropriate measures to ensure that all persons under its jurisdiction can exercise in practice their right to freedom of peaceful assembly;
3. Redouble its efforts to prevent and eliminate all forms of the excessive use of force by law enforcement officials and members of the security forces against peaceful demonstrators;
4. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in **Nicaragua** are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions, including judicial harassment.