

PERSONAL STATEMENT

I will omit my name for security and identify myself as a Nicaraguan in exile.

My life and that of my family changed on April 16, 2018 when the Government of Nicaragua made reforms to Social Security, my family and I joined the protests along with thousands of Nicaraguans. Since that day we received threats, persecution and continuous siege by the police, Sandinista militants and paramilitary groups. We participated in different marches, civic sit-ins and witnessed brutal attacks by the Sandinista police against students and civil society.

At the same time we witnessed the participation of the Catholic Church as a mediator and defender of human rights, and I will cite some events.

- In the city of Matagalpa on May 15 the Sandinista police and paramilitary groups attacked the young demonstrators, the Catholic Priests interceded and achieved a cease fire.
- The Catholic Church opened the doors of its churches to protect the life and integrity of the students and demonstrators. On May 30, Nicaraguan Mother's Day, a march was organized in support of the mothers of the assassinated youths, thousands of Nicaraguans participated, among them my family and myself, as the march progressed gun shots were heard, the dictatorship had snipers and they shot at the civilian population that participated. My eldest son and other young people set out to help the wounded. My husband, one of my sons and I managed to get to our house, however, my oldest son could not, he took refuge in the Cathedral of the Catholic Church. In the early morning of the next day my husband and I managed to get them out of the cathedral.
- One of my sons was kidnapped by paramilitaries in mid-2018, at the time of his kidnapping two Catholic priests were passing by who immediately informed us of the kidnapping.
- The same day of his kidnapping my son was transferred to the torture prison El Chipote, the mothers remained outside the prison day and night, accompanied by several priests, we did not know if our sons were alive or dead, it was until Bishop Rolando José Álvarez arrived at El Chipote and asked to see the kidnapped young men, until that moment I knew that my son was alive.
- Bishop Rolando Alvarez together with all the clergy of the Diocese of Matagalpa, celebrated a mass outside the Chipote for the Freedom of the Kidnapped and for the Peace of Nicaragua.
- As the dictatorship was opening trials for the kidnapped, they were being transferred to the Modelo prison, the Catholic Church made arrangements so that we could see them. The visit took place in a large cell where there were many rusty iron bars, the condition of the cell was deplorable, very dirty, I saw my son tortured, his whole body was beaten and with many insect bites. Right next to us there were some young men maybe 15, 16 years old, you could see the tortures they had been subjected to, I remember that one of them lifted up his pants and showed me his calf, it had been burned with acid, he could not bend the fingers of his hands due to the tortures.
- On July 13 the Sandinista police attacked with firearms the students who were at the National Autonomous University of Nicaragua, the students took refuge in the Divine Mercy Catholic Church. With my husband we went to try to help the wounded students, but we did not succeed, the police presence and the attack prevented us from entering; that day two students died.
- In 2018 I suffered a direct attack against my physical integrity. I received a phone call informing me that there was an arrest warrant against me, for that reason I had to leave my country.

All this accompaniment of the Church towards the people of Nicaragua has provoked persecution by the Government.

November, 2023

I hope that my testimony will serve as a basis for taking forceful action against the Ortega-Murillo Regime and that Bishop Rolando José Álvarez will be freed and that the persecution against the Catholic Church and the laity will stop.