

Notice: Undefined index: et_header_layout in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1214

Notice: Trying to access array offset on value of type null in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1214

Notice: Undefined index: et_header_layout in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1215

Notice: Trying to access array offset on value of type null in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1215

Notice: Undefined index: et_template in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1216

NICARAGUA: USCIRF condemns 26-year prison sentence for Bishop Álvarez

NICARAGUA: USCIRF condemns Nicaragua's 26-year prison sentence for Bishop Rolando Álvarez

USCIRF (14.02.2023) – The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (**USCIRF**) condemns the Nicaraguan government's **sentencing** of Catholic Bishop **Rolando Álvarez** to 26 years in prison for the alleged **crimes** of “undermining national security and sovereignty, spreading

[fake news] through information technology, obstructing an official in the performance of his duties, [and] aggravated disobedience or contempt of authority.’” The Ortega regime imprisoned Bishop Álvarez for criticizing Nicaragua’s religious freedom conditions after holding him under house arrest for six months and depriving him of due process.

“We are appalled that Bishop Álvarez will now serve 26 years in prison for raising concerns about Nicaragua’s many religious freedom violations. This miscarriage of justice will not be forgotten,” said USCIRF Commissioner **Frederick A. Davie**. *“USCIRF urges the U.S. government to call on the Nicaraguan government to release Bishop Álvarez immediately and unconditionally.”*

The Nicaraguan government, led by President Daniel Ortega and his wife Vice President Rosario Murillo, has **persecuted** the Catholic Church with increasing vigor over the past five years. In 2022, the regime targeted clergy, eliminated Church-affiliated organizations, and placed restrictions on religious observances. Additionally, the government arrested and/or imprisoned nearly a dozen Catholic clergy and laypeople in 2022, including Bishop Álvarez.

On February 9, 2023, the regime **released** from prison and forced into exile 222 political prisoners who had been indefinitely held in jails, prisons, and under house arrest, including eight religious prisoners featured in USCIRF’s **Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) Victims List**. Authorities reportedly gave Bishop Álvarez the opportunity to join the exiled prisoners, but he chose to stay in his native country to be with the Catholic community under repression by the Ortega regime. In **addition** to the prison sentence, he will be fined and stripped of his Nicaraguan citizenship.

“While the release of the 222 political prisoners was a welcome gesture by the Nicaraguan government, it is not enough. The subsequent sentencing of Bishop Álvarez

demonstrates that the regime's campaign against the Catholic Church will not soon abate," said USCIRF Commissioner **Frank Wolf**. *"The U.S. government should use every tool at their disposal to encourage the restoration of democracy and human rights in Nicaragua."*

USCIRF recently published a **country update** on religious freedom conditions in Nicaragua in 2022, held a **hearing** on the "Crackdown on Religious Freedom in Nicaragua," and discussed the situation in an **episode** of the USCIRF Spotlight Podcast.

Photo: uscirf.gov

Notice: Undefined index: et_footer_layout in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1267

Notice: Trying to access array offset on value of type null in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1267

Notice: Undefined index: et_footer_layout in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1268

Notice: Trying to access array offset on value of type null in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1268

Notice: Undefined index: et_template in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1269