

Congress of the United States  
Washington, DC 20515

March 17, 2014

The Honorable John Kerry  
Secretary  
Department of State  
2201 C Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20520

The Honorable Rajiv Shah  
Administrator  
U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)  
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20523

Dear Secretary Kerry and Administrator Shah:

We are gravely concerned that democracy continues to be under threat in Nicaragua. Daniel Ortega has repeatedly violated the Nicaraguan constitution in order to stay in power and now was granted new constitutional changes seeking to abolish the two-term limit for presidents, eliminate the requirement that a candidate must receive 35 percent of the popular vote to become president, and help Ortega rule by decree.

This is not the first time that Ortega has tried to consolidate power and ignore the rule of law. In 2009, the Nicaraguan Supreme Court ruled in Ortega's favor to allow him to run for re-election ignoring the fact that Article 191 of the Nicaraguan constitution states that the Supreme Court does not have the power to amend the Constitution, that power is instilled in the National Assembly. In addition, Article 147 of the Nicaraguan Constitution clearly states that a candidate cannot serve as President consecutively and that a President cannot serve more than two terms. Yet, Daniel Ortega became President for the third time under elections with serious irregularities and is currently serving two consecutive terms in clear violation, once again, of the Nicaraguan constitution.

We would like to receive an update on how USAID funds are being spent in Nicaragua to promote the democratic process, rule of law, build the capacity of civil society, and improve the corrupt electoral system. We firmly believe that we must support the people of Nicaragua and their local organizations to empower them to seek real, substantive reforms in their pursuit to protect democratic principles.

With this in mind, we would ask that you please respond to the following questions:

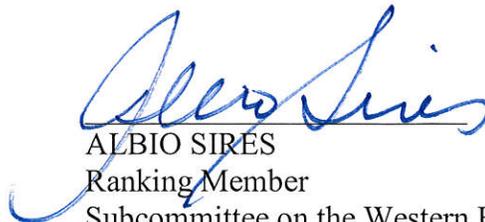
- What actions is the Department of State and USAID undertaking to ensure that democracy and the rule of law is upheld in Nicaragua?
- What specific efforts has the USAID Mission in Nicaragua undertaken to build capacity with the local organizations to ensure that U.S. – funded projects are having an impact?

Thank you very much for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN  
Chairman Emeritus  
House Foreign Affairs Committee



ALBIO SIRÉS  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere  
House Foreign Affairs Committee



KAY GRANGER

Chairman

Subcommittee on State and Foreign Operations

House Committee on Appropriations



MATT SALMON

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MARIO DIAZ-BALART

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