

Presentation - Melba Castillo (Nicaragua)

My name is Melba Castillo, I am Vice President of the Academy of Sciences of Nicaragua, additionally, I'm the director of a private research center specialized in educational policies, educational innovation and training to young teachers and researchers.

In terms of gender, our Academy has taken important steps, currently we are 37 members, of which 10 are women and 3 have been elected to be part of the Board of Directors. Its President and Vice President are women.

In my country, it has always been difficult to do research due to the lack of resources and lack of specialized personnel, however, our Academy has made enormous efforts to promote relevant research in the field of natural resources and the environment. In a special way, we have raised our voice in the face of the current government's attempts to open an interoceanic channel, against all environmental and economic logic and that ultimately proved to be a failed attempt to obtain external resources, in this case from a Chinese investor, in exchange for concessions of all kinds.

Currently, as you all know, the situation is worse. Since April 18, our country is experiencing a situation of state terrorism, derived from the protests that began with the just demand of the young people for the negligence of the State in dealing with the fire of the Indio Maíz Natural Reserve, one of the most important reserves of tropical forest in Central America and then by the reforms to the Social Security that increased the employer and labor quotas and reduced the pensions of the retirees. The government Ortega Murillo, chose to send their shock groups, thinking that this would silence the voices of the people who protested, and this only worsened the situation. So they opted for the worst solution: indiscriminate repression, for which armed groups of paramilitaries, who together with the police, have left more than 400 dead, 500 political prisoners, many missing and more than 30,000 people leaving the country to neighboring countries, especially Costa Rica.

Our Academy has strongly denounced the human rights violations and the university autonomy that as a result of the repression have occurred in our country. On the other hand, we see a very difficult situation for our scientific community due to the dismissals that public universities have made of outstanding figures in the field of research, especially medicine doctors, who in one way or another attended the injured in the period of the protests and as a result, were dismissed from their work centers, without considering their credentials and their joint investigations with centers abroad. Also for the departure of young professionals, among which many dedicated to research are already looking for new options abroad because of the difficulty of working in our country.

We are living in a country where respect for human rights has been lost, in which there is no guarantee for anyone. At any time the police or paramilitary groups can stop you for the simple fact of having a national flag in your car or in your bag.

Under these conditions, our Academy remains committed to continue our work, three of our members are actively participating in the national dialogue, which is being held back by the government's intransigence. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the academics who in different ways have expressed their solidarity with the Nicaraguan people and we urge each and

every one of you to speak, individually or collectively, in support of this cause whose justice is based on the more fundamental rights, the human right.