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Nicaragua: New arbitrary detention of human rights defender Freddy Alberto Navas López

On 5 July 2021, **Freddy Alberto Navas López**, human rights defender and peasant leader, was arrested by members of the Nicaraguan National Police. At the time of the arrest, the human rights defender was at his home in the city of Managua. Others were also arrested on the same day, including peasant leader Pedro Joaquín Mena Amado and presidential candidate Medardo Mairena Sequeira.

[Freddy Alberto Navas López](#) is a peasant leader, human rights defender and coordinator of the Movimiento Campesino y Aliados de Nicaragua (Peasant Movement and Allies of Nicaragua), which was originally founded in 2013, with the aim of stopping the Nicaragua Grand Inter-oceanic Canal project. The human rights defender's work in the defence of the land and in favour of the rights of peasants has been prominent for the last eight years. From 2018 to date, Freddy Alberto Navas López has been involved in protests seeking the democratisation of Nicaragua.

On 5 July 2021, at around 9:00 pm, members of the National Police violently and forcefully entered the human rights defender's house. After throwing Freddy Alberto Navas López into a van and taking him away, police officers remained at his home for at least two hours, during which time they kept his wife tied up and took various personal items including his medicines, passport, mobile phone, money and computers. So far, the human rights defender remains incommunicado at the "El Chipote" Judicial Aid Office.

The detention of human rights defender Freddy Alberto Navas López takes place in the context of arbitrary arrests and harassment of opposition and social movement leaders, as well as presidential candidates. According to information from the [Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights \(OHCHR\)](#), from 2 to 21 June 2021, the National Police and the Public Prosecutor's Office detained at least five people who had made their intention to run for president public, another five women leaders and three political leaders. The arrests were carried out under ambiguous criminal concepts based on two laws adopted in July 2018 and October 2020, respectively, the "Law No. 977 against Money Laundering, Financing of Terrorism" and the "Law No. 1055 for the defence of the rights of the people to independence, sovereignty and self-determination for peace".

In this context, the press release [published](#) by the National Police on the arrest of defender Freddy Alberto Navas López details that the detainees are being investigated for acts related to the murder of four police officers in the municipality of Morrito, department of Río San Juan in 2018. They are also being investigated for allegedly carrying out acts that undermine independence, sovereignty and self-determination, inciting foreign interference in internal affairs, and organizing with funding from foreign powers to carry out acts of terrorism and destabilization, according to the Law for the Defence of the Rights of the People to Independence, Sovereignty and Self-Determination for Peace.

The arrest of the human rights defender is not an isolated case. Since 2018, human rights defenders and government opponents in Nicaragua have reported being targets of harassment. Freddy Alberto Navas López was harassed by the police in 2018 and was first detained on 17 November 2018 in retaliation for his participation in protests that year. The defender was subjected to ill-treatment and was subsequently released on 11 June 2019 under the Amnesty Law. Since October 2020 he has been prevented from exercising his right to freedom of movement, as for several months representatives of the National Police have prevented him and his wife from leaving their home.

On 14 September 2019, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) granted precautionary measures in favour of the human rights defender on the grounds that he was in a situation of imminent risk after experiencing police surveillance and interrogations after his release. This was the case on 12 August 2019 upon his return from the farmers' march in Costa Rica, where he was detained by riot police in Managua for over an hour and questioned about his political ideologies and alleged funding of the farmers' march.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned for the health and integrity of human rights defender Freddy Alberto Navas López, as he must have access to medication and adequate medical care due to having severe lower back pain aggravated by ill-treatment during his first detention in 2018, as a result of his peaceful activities in defence of human rights in Nicaragua.

As part of the [International Observatory on the Situation of Human Rights in Nicaragua](#), Front Line Defenders has repeatedly [denounced](#) the violent repression of human rights defenders in Nicaragua. This context of profound violence and repression against human rights defenders in the country makes it increasingly difficult for human rights defenders in Nicaragua to carry out their work.

Front Line Defenders urges the Nicaraguan authorities to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally release the human rights defender Freddy Alberto Navas López and drop all charges against him, on the grounds that they are motivated solely by his legitimate and peaceful work in defence of human rights;
2. Conduct an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the judicial harassment against Freddy Alberto Navas López, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
3. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity and security of Freddy Alberto Navas López, as well as that of his family in constant consultation with them;
4. Guarantee that all human rights defenders in Nicaragua are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free from all restrictions, including judicial harassment.