

Prayer Diary: Nicaragua

14-20 May 2023



Bishop Álvarez

‘Nicaragua has become a prison state...’ – David, an exiled defender of freedom of religion or belief

Over the past five years, President Daniel Ortega has cracked down on all critical voices as he consolidates power.

Religious leaders, especially those the government views as critical of its actions, have been a particular target. One of them told CSW that even preaching about unity or justice, for example, can be considered criticism of the government and therefore treated as a crime.

Several religious leaders were among the 222 political prisoners removed from prison on 9 February – but stripped of their citizenship and expelled to the United States. Then on 15 February a further 94 political prisoners, including nine religious leaders, had their citizenship removed; most were already in exile. Others, like Bishop Rolando Álvarez, remain unjustly imprisoned in Nicaragua.

Read more on p.7 of the April issue of Response magazine, or visit csw.org.uk/nicaragua

Sunday 14 May

Lift up in prayer the political prisoners who were released from prison, but forced into exile with their citizenship removed, including Roman Catholic priests and lay leaders. Ask God to help them as they navigate an uncertain future in an unfamiliar land – with a different language and far from their families.

Monday 15 May

Among those expelled from Nicaragua was Pastor Wilber Alberto Pérez – a Protestant pastor who was falsely convicted of selling illegal drugs. In reality, he was targeted for promoting the campaign ‘Christmas without political prisoners’ in 2020, and was held for a prolonged period in solitary confinement with no natural light. Pray for his emotional and physical recovery.

Tuesday 16 May

Give thanks for courageous Nicaraguans like Bishop Álvarez, another human rights defender, who refused to be exiled to the US and the next day was handed an unjust 26-year sentence. He is being held in solitary confinement in a punishment cell with very little light. Pray that his sentence would be overturned, and that the chains of all political prisoners would break.

Wednesday 17 May

Confidential sources told CSW that paramilitaries threatened three priests who mentioned Bishop Álvarez in their prayers on the Sunday following his sentencing. Pray protection over all who call for the freedom of Bishop Álvarez and other political prisoners and support them in prayer, that this would not be treated as a crime.

Thursday 18 May

The infamous El Chipote prison has been described by human rights activists as a ‘torture centre’. Two Catholic priests are currently held there: Father José Leonardo Urbina Rodríguez and Father Manuel Salvador García Rodríguez. Pray for increased scrutiny on such facilities – that it would be impossible for anyone to be held in inhumane conditions.

Friday 19 May

Political prisoners are not allowed a Bible or other religious literature in prison. Pray that this will change, and ask the Holy Spirit to inspire unjustly imprisoned Christians with verses like Ephesians 3:16-21, which speak of God’s power and love.

Saturday 20 May

Mighty God, who sees every heart, we pray for President Ortega, his wife and Vice- President Rosario Murillo, and the whole of the Nicaraguan government. Change their hearts, that they would end the crackdown on independent voices, and instead work to uphold the fundamental freedoms of all. Amen.