

CASE STUDY:

Exiled Nicaraguan Human Rights Defenders in Costa Rica



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ON THE COVER

Nicaraguans living in Costa Rica demonstrate in San José to commemorate the third anniversary of the beginning of the protests against the government of Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega, on April 18, 2021. Nicaragua's political crisis erupted in April 2018, when protests mushroomed into a popular uprising that was met with a brutal crackdown in which hundreds were killed. (Image Credit: EZEQUIEL BECERRA/AFP via Getty Images)

CASE STUDY:

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Executive Summary

Introduction

With a rise in violations of human rights and intimidation and persecution of opposition voices, Latin American human rights defenders (HRDs) and civil society organizations (CSOs) face enormous challenges operating in the region. Continued acts of repression by authoritarian regimes have forced many to flee from Venezuela and Nicaragua. Freedom House recognizes the gap between what support exists currently and the needs of this growing exiled community and seeks to promote programming that offers holistic protection, support, and services, tailored to the needs of defenders of human rights in their host countries.

This case study focuses on Nicaraguan HRDs who fled the country after April 2018, when social activists and community leaders rose in protest against the Daniel Ortega and Rosario Murillo regime. The regime met protests with swift retribution, including threats, intimidation, detention, and physical attacks. The regime's repression compelled more than 100,000 Nicaraguans to flee to Costa Rica, Honduras, Spain, Panama, and the United States. Since the beginning of the writing of this case study (March 2021), the situation in Nicaragua has steadily deteriorated into an even more dangerous environment for HRDs.¹ The Ortega-Murillo regime continues to solidify its authoritarian rule, banning demonstrations, disqualifying political parties, censoring independent media voices, and imprisoning opposition figures, including at least seven opposition candidates

who were planning to run in the November 7 election.² The laws adopted in the past two years specifically target HRDs and journalists, including the “foreign agent law” passed in late 2020 which requires any Nicaraguan citizen working for “governments, companies, foundations or foreign organizations” to register with the Interior Ministry, report monthly their income and spending and provide prior notice of what the foreign funds will be spent on. The law establishes sanctions for those who do not register.³ Also, the “cybercrime law” adopted in October 2020, which criminalizes the publication on social media of information deemed false or misleading by the government.⁴ In December 2020, the National Assembly approved a vaguely-worded law prohibiting “traitors to the homeland” from running for public office, further dimming the prospects for free and fair elections.⁵ In response, the United States and the European Union have sanctioned President Ortega, his wife, Vice President Rosario Murillo, and other key officials for their violations on human rights. The Organization of American States (OAS) issued a swift condemnation on June 15, supported by 26 member states, and raised the possibility of Articles 20-21 of the Inter-American Democratic Charter being applied, suspending Nicaragua from the Organization.⁶ After the results of the November so-called “sham elections,” due to the lack of fair and transparent conditions and a crackdown on all candidates, Ortega and Murillo claimed victory. The fifth term of the regime, will likely be marred by continuing attacks of HRDs.

In addition to the acts of political repression and human rights violations by the Ortega-Murillo regime, Nicaragua has borne the brunt of the COVID-19 pandemic and its government's unorganized and insufficient response has taxed the already weak public health system. Denying that COVID-19 was a threat, Ortega continued to hold large scale public events and fired several of the doctors who spoke out about government mismanagement response and denial of the severity of the virus.⁷ For Nicaraguans, the pandemic has contributed to rising rates of joblessness, limited housing, enforced lockdowns, limited access to services and information, lack of mobility and the closing of the borders. Economic turmoil partly from the damaging hurricanes of Eta and Iota paired with Ortega's increasingly authoritarian policies and repressive actions have pushed many to try to flee over the border to Costa Rica, despite the pandemic. If successful, the conditions they await in Costa Rica are vulnerable and complicated—many struggle to survive, let alone continue their work.

Purpose of the Case Study

The purpose of this case study is to learn about the specific experiences and needs of Nicaraguan HRDs exiled in Costa Rica and provide recommendations to strengthen and expand their support and protection. The case study seeks analyze the availability of support for Nicaraguan HRDs in Costa Rica, existing accompaniment programs, their specific needs, as well as the host government policies and response. By selecting the two most emblematic cases in the region for HRDs, Nicaraguans in Costa Rica and Venezuelans in Colombia, the Freedom House team hopes to contribute to the growing policy dialogue on how to support those forced to flee their countries due to the nature of their work and how best to continue that work once they are relocated.

The focus on the specific cases will help to understand the role of key actors and how they interact and collaborate with each other to support and protect HRDs. The actors are: 1) the host government institutions in Colombia and Costa Rica, at the national and local levels; 2) the Venezuelan and Nicaraguan HRD communities in the host countries; 3) the Colombian and Costa Rican HRDs and CSOs in host countries; and 4) the international governmental and non-governmental organizations in the host country. Moreover, the two cases will help to identify existing approaches to shelter HRDs and democracy activists, the services they receive, and their needs. Furthermore, the analysis and systematization of these two cases should help with initial inputs to develop

and implement in host countries effective, sustainable, and comprehensive approaches to respond to HRDs' needs, and to help the host governments and non-governmental organizations utilize their resources more effectively and efficiently to meet the needs of HRDs in their host communities. At the same time, the focus on these two cases from the perspective of the HRDs will highlight their needs related to health, livelihoods, psychological, education, citizen security, family links, and advocacy opportunities.

Methodology

This case study focused on HRDs and CSOs that specifically defend human rights. Under the definition of the United Nations, a HRD is a "person who acts to promote or protect human rights in a peaceful manner, whether they are an individual or a group, is a defender of human rights."⁸ The methodology guiding the research used to produce this case study included: First, an initial desk study and literature review to synthesize information available in written documents (more than 60 documents, see Annex 2). Second, nineteen (19) semi-structured interviews (between January-March 2021) with 27 key informants and stakeholders (activists, journalists, and human rights organizations) in San José, Upala, and Guanacaste (Liberia and La Cruz), for a non-representative sample. Third, focus groups interviews with five specific stakeholder groups. Fourth, a targeted survey in August 2021 with 20 Nicaraguan HRDs who are currently living in Costa Rica. Finally, based on the information collected, Freedom House produced the case study. Throughout the process, the team met several times to outline themes, review and discuss information and finalize the report.

Although not exhaustive, the case study serves as a starting point to document recent trends, approaches and potential entry points for future Nicaraguan HRD activities and support in Costa Rica. Given time and resources limitations, the case study was limited in its scope. As such, it is not intended to be an impact or capacity assessment; much less an evaluation of specific programs and/or initiatives. Rather, it describes (based on secondary information available and under time constraints) the state of needs to increase support and protection for vulnerable Nicaraguan activists and HRDs in Costa Rica and highlights major areas that merit programmatic attention. It maps out priorities and recommendations.

The interviews were guided by a list of questions around understanding the profile of HRDs, as well as their needs. The case study research inquiry focused on topics related to how

HRDs settle into a safe environment, how they support their families left behind; if they receive training involving extra security precautions, networking, and career development; if they receive medical and psychosocial attention; and if they are able to find sustainable employment to continue their human rights work throughout the time, they are unable to return to their home countries.

Of that population, 60% are men and 40% are women, with the majority being between 20-35 years old with some technical training or university.

Interviews took place with the following:

- **Members of the Costa Rican government:**
General Directorate of Migration and Foreigners, Ministry of Foreign Relations (Areas of Human Rights and External Cooperation), Public Security, National Institute for Women (INAMU), Mixed Institute of Social Assistance (IMAS)
- **International aid groups (government):**
USAID, Embassies of Holland and Switzerland, the European Union
- **International aid groups (NGOs):** Ayuda en Acción, Hivos, RET, IRI, Pan Para el Mundo
- **Municipalities leaders/mayors:** San José, Desamparados, San Carlos, Los Chiles o Upala, La Cruz
- **UN Agencies:** UNDP, UNHCR, IOM
- **Migrant and refugee aid services:** Jesuit Migration Services, SOS Human Rights, Ticos y Nicas somos hermanos (Costa Ricans and Nicaraguans friendship organization) CENDEROS, Fundación Mujer, CEJIL, Centro de Derechos Laborales sin Fronteras (Center for Labor Rights without borders)
- **Organizations of Nicaraguans in Costa Rica:** UNE, UNAB Costa Rica, Movimiento Campesino, MESART – CR, Nicaragua Nunca Más, otros
- **Migration research organizations:**
FLACSO, UCR, UNA
- **Organizations for HRDs:** CENDIH, Iniciativa de Defensoras de Derechos Humanos en Nicaragua, Consejo Permanente de Derechos Humanos (CPDH)

All participants were asked for consent before agreeing to the interview, as well as for consent to be recorded and have their information utilized in the report anonymously.

Focus groups included the following:

- Experienced HRDs
- Female HRDs in exile
- LGBTQ+ HRDs
- Youth activists in San José Metropolitan Area
- Youth activists in the north of Costa Rica
- *Campesinos* (Land defenders)

Each focus group was made up of 5-7 people. The sessions were guided by a list of questions and discussion of themes. All focus group participants were asked for their consent to be recorded and have the information discussed utilized in the report. Measures were taken in the writing of this report to preserve the identity and confidentiality of the sources.

The Freedom House Team members who produced the case study included expert and specialist Ana Quiros Viquez; Gerardo Berthin, Freedom House Director for Latin America and Caribbean Programs; Alessandra Pinna, Freedom House Deputy Director for Latin America and Caribbean Programs; Caitlin Watson, Senior Program Officer; and Olivia Magnanini, Freedom House Research/Program Associate.

Findings in Brief

This case study focused on the most current wave of migration of HRDs and CSOs who were forced to flee after anti-government protests in April 2018, which despite a consistent flow of migration between the two countries in the past, represents the most significant movement in decades.

Since the initial protests, the government's reaction has been fierce and has further restricted opposition voices from speaking out or defending human rights that continue to be in peril at the hands of the Ortega-Murillo administration. The Nicaraguan government continues to violate freedoms of expression, assembly and information and thwart the work of HRDs, including journalists and CSOs. Ortega-Murillo's recent actions against potential presidential candidates and opposition figures demonstrate that the country will continue to see an outpouring of critics, activists, and HRDs to Costa Rica, among other countries. Nicaraguans continue to flee based on the attacks and harassment they face as HRDs and members of CSOs that champion democracy and human rights. Of those 20 Nicaraguan HRDs who were surveyed,

almost 90% stated that harassment and surveillance was a primary reason for leaving Nicaragua, followed by violence (65%) and threats (50%).

Costa Rica provides comparatively ample protection for migrants, and recently launched a new asylum category for those fleeing from authoritarian regimes in Venezuela, Cuba, and Nicaragua.⁹ The flow of migration since 2018 has persisted until March 2020 when the border shut due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet, migrant flows have begun to increase in recent months. However, Costa Rica is struggling to recover economically from the pandemic, particularly within the tourist, service, and commercial industries where most migrants and refugees find work. Most Nicaraguan refugees find themselves in a precarious economic situation, unable to find steady work, forcing many to resort to informal work with low salaries. HRDs are often not recognized as having different needs or characteristics from the larger refugee population, either by organizations or the Costa Rican population in general. Even for those who continue to work in human rights describe their ability to continue work is difficult, and many express experiencing severe trauma as an exile, with remorse for not being able to stay and remain fighting for human rights at home. However, many Nicaraguan HRDs try to carry out their work by investigating the laws and procedures in Costa Rica, accompanying their compatriots in their efforts, sharing knowledge, and giving advice.

There are support and protection options for HRDs and CSOs in exile in Costa Rica, including a network of organizations and institutions facilitated by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) that provide access to vital services. These organizations include CENDEROS, la Fundación Arias and SOS Derechos Humanos as well as various Costa Rican municipalities. In our findings, only CEJIL and the Shelter City Program work specifically in supporting HRDs in exile. CEJIL works on filing complaints and reporting while Shelter City offers an integrated program with housing, medical and psychosocial support, training, and capacity building. All available support and protection options for Nicaraguan HRDs are operating at full capacity and cannot keep pace with the growing demand. We believe that it is necessary to seek support and accompaniment mechanisms for HRDs that facilitate their subsistence and enhance the implementation of their work to defend the human rights of exiles and other Nicaraguan migrants who lack mechanisms for complaint and demand for their rights in Costa Rica.

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Nicaraguan diaspora group ‘Juntos por Nicaragua’ living in exile in Costa Rica demonstrate with national flags outside the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR) in San José, on August 27, 2021, demanding it to intercede in the arrest of opposition politicians in their country. (Image credit: EZEQUIEL BECERRA/AFP via Getty Images)

Nicaraguan Human Rights Defenders in Costa Rica: Brief Context

Historic attacks against HRDs and CSOs

Since the beginning of a second non-consecutive presidential term of Daniel Ortega in 2007, there has been a gradual but steady policy of persecution over the past 14 years of those who have expressed criticism of the Ortega-Murillo regime, especially against HRDs and CSOs. In particular, there have been measures implemented by the Ortega-Murillo regime to close spaces for activism and implement various forms of harassment and persecution such as the investigation against

nine feminist activists for more than a year in 2007; the investigation and accusation of five organizations together with the raid on the Autonomous Movement of Women and the communication body CINCO; and at different times, impeding marches and mobilizations of different sectors of civil society and political movements.

Under the Ortega-Murillo regime repression of protestors has posed a persistent threat, and activists have had to devise ways to circumvent infringement of their freedoms

of expression, assembly, and association, often mounting parallel demonstrations in the same places where they were denied the permit. Notable demonstrations include women rights and feminist groups, demonstrations denouncing electoral fraud in 2008 municipal elections and 2011 national elections, the LGBTIQ+ march since 2008 and the major demonstration in 2013 organized by a *campesino* group against the construction of the interoceanic canal and against the exploitative extractive mining practices in Santo Domingo and León. The government's approach has been to use civilian groups—usually government or municipal employees—against protesters, often backed by the police.¹⁰

CSOs have also been threatened by the Ortega-Murillo regime, particularly feminist and human rights groups, facing frequent acts of persecution. Measures against freedom of association including harassment of tax institutions, discretionary requirements of the Department for Registration and Control of Associations (DRCA), investigations and fines by the Institute of Nicaraguan Social Security (INSS), withholdings of donations or equipment by the General Directorate of Customs (DGA), delays in the delivery of certificates of compliance or letters of legality, cancellation of the frequencies of community radios owned by civil organizations and confiscations of equipment by telecommunications authorities (TELCOR). In recent years, some of the CSOs have been denied the annual Certification of Compliance despite having delivered all the requirements—the certification is required by banks for funding, particularly when requesting external funds.

Journalists and independent media outlets have also suffered persecution, solidifying the government's rejection of an independent media in the country. Some have reported being barred from official information sessions and press briefings, and face accusations and lawsuits, as well as barriers to access to inputs for production, such as paper or ink for newspapers.

April 2018 protests

The April 18, 2018, protests represented a watershed moment for the Ortega-Murillo regime and the Nicaraguan people. After a fire broke out in the *Indio Maiz* reserve, thousands of Nicaraguan citizens across different parts of the country protested the government's mismanagement. Protests lasted for several months after the initial April protests and were harshly suppressed by the government. In less than a year, the government was responsible for

320 assassinations, hundreds of arbitrary detentions, thousands injured and tens of thousands fleeing for safety in neighboring Costa Rica.¹¹

Under pressure and feeling threatened, the Ortega-Murillo prohibited any future protests and attacked independent media outlets, such as Radio Darío, whose headquarters was later attacked by a paramilitary pro-government group and set on fire with journalists still inside.¹² Not soon after the protests, the Nicaragua government arbitrarily cancelled the legal status of nine CSOs, expelling them from their offices and taking over their property.

Since 2018, the opposition movement has continually been subject to violence and repression—characterized by harassment, attacks, threats, persecution of opponents, leaders, communicators and journalists, political prisoners, HRDs and activists. Throughout the year, arbitrary detentions of opposition figures continued for short periods, all for purposes of intimidation. As of July 13, 2021, there are still 136 political prisoners resulting from the April 2018 protests.¹³ Some have been charged while others are awaiting their trials, usually under sham charges such as drug trafficking and weapons possession.

Legal framework - Laws and reforms used to reinforce persecution and violence against the opposition

Since the beginning of the crisis, the Ortega-Murillo regime, with assistance of the National Assembly, has approved several laws that are structured in enforcing repressive measures and government control, using different powers of the state. Most notably since April 2018, they have approved a series of laws that have solidified their control including:

- Law 976, Law of the Financial Analysis Unit¹⁴
- Law 977, Law Against Money Laundering, Terrorism Financing and Financing the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction and its regulations¹⁵

Both laws reconceptualize the notion of “terrorism,” a familiar tactic of authoritarian regimes, allowing for a broad interpretation of the concept to prosecute opposition voices. Under reforms to articles 394 and 395 on the Penal Code, the Nicaraguan government rejects the international conventions on the matter and does not comply with the guidelines established by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF)¹⁶ for

the adoption of measures in the fight against these crimes, adapted to different circumstances. An “Amnesty Law,” Law 996¹⁷ was approved which was to address perpetrators of crimes related to the April 2018 protests through June 2019, prosecuting both political crimes and related common crimes, including those who committed murder, rape, torture, and other crimes.

During 2020 and the first months of 2021, the government continued to tighten the space for opposition figures to work, toughening repression and control over the media, CSOs and private companies. The following are key laws:

- Law 1040, Law for the Regulation of Foreign Agents, approved on October 15, 2020.¹⁸
- Law 1042, Special Law on Cybercrimes, approved on October 27, after the Executive published Decree 24-2020 establishing the National Cybersecurity Strategy 2020-2025, a month before.¹⁹
- Law 1055, called Law for the defense of the rights of the people to independence, sovereignty, and self-determination for peace, approved on December 21, 2020.²⁰
- Law 1057, Reform of Article 37 of the Political Constitution to incorporate the penalty of life imprisonment, approved in the second legislature on January 18, 2021. In theory it seeks to punish “hate” crimes, which include those committed by political opponents.²¹

The clear objective of these laws, particularly Law 1055, is to eliminate the rights of people to be elected and serve in public office, limiting the possibility to participate in a democratic system and leaving opposition candidates out of the process. Considering the lack of independence of the judiciary, demonstrated in different occasions by international organisms of human rights organizations, the application of these laws will be used exclusively to further repress and take repressive measures against CSOs and opposition groups.

Rise in migration to Costa Rica since 2018

Since 2018, Nicaraguan political opposition figures, civic activists, HRDs and journalists have confronted escalating repression, attacks, assassinations,²² and persecution by

the state. This has prompted 108,000 to leave their homes and families behind for the safety of neighboring Costa Rica, up until March of 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic closed the borders.²³ The closeness and shared history of migration between Nicaragua and Costa Rica has made it the primary destination for those fleeing repression, although others have migrated to Mexico, the United States, Panama, and Spain.

While many Nicaraguans fled during the initial protests in April 2018 and later, the first weeks of May 2021, the most migrated from the state-led operations to push out opposition voices in the departments of Carazo, Masaya, Matagalpa, and Estelí in July and August of 2018. As the Ortega government continued to repress and persecute critics, according to data from the General Directorate of Migration and Foreigners of Costa Rica (DGME), from December 31, 2020 the country had registered nearly 370,000 Nicaraguan residents, about 66 percent of the total number of foreigners living in Costa Rica. To add to this number, there are thousands of Nicaraguans who have already been nationalized and an estimate of 350,000 with an irregular immigration status.

Nicaraguans in Costa Rica, January 2021	
Category	Quantity
RESIDENTS OF DIFFERENT CATEGORIES	367,984
SPECIAL CATEGORIES	45,356
TEMPORARY RESIDENCY	8,406
PERMANENT RESIDENCY	314,222
REFUGEES & ASYLUM SEEKERS	121,366
APPROXIMATE TOTAL	489,350
Source: DGME	

Pressure by the Ortega-Murillo regime on the growing opposition movement will continue, as well as the threats against political opponents, social leaders, journalists, HRDs and CSOs. Consequently, with the formal opening of Costa Rica's land borders with Nicaragua, the flow of Nicaraguans fleeing persecution and violence will continue to rise.



Protestors march in Granada, Nicaragua in May 2018 in response to the government's repressive tactics used against human rights defenders and activists in April, 2018. (Image Credit: Riderfoot / Shutterstock.com)

The Case of Nicaraguan Human Rights Defenders

Understanding the historical context of Nicaragua and recent waves of migration since 2018, helps to put into perspective the case of Nicaraguan HRDs in Costa Rica. In this section, we will highlight trends, models, and patterns of approaches to defend and protect Nicaraguan HRDs and pro-democracy CSOs who have recently settled in Costa Rica.

Our study found that most of those Nicaraguans who were forced to leave for Costa Rica considered themselves to be HRDs. Most have been forced to leave after the April 2018 events, fearing repression and retaliation by the government. While there is no exact number or even an estimate, over the past 3 years several Nicaraguan HRDs have made their way into Costa Rica in self-exile. There is no public data

available about the profiles of Nicaraguan HRDs in Costa Rica, but through analysis, interviews, focus groups and a target survey of Nicaraguan HRDs in Costa Rica conducted as part of the case study, here are the most important characteristics we found:

Initial Profile of Nicaraguan HRDs in Costa Rica

- Both men and women
- Many are students who participated in the protests in 2018 and took over university campuses
- Most were civil society members
- Others belong to the *Movimiento Campesino*

- Most have participated in protests since 2018
- Many helped with the provision of food, supplies, safe houses, and medicines
- They are doctors and other health personnel
- They made public complaints about the authoritarian behavior of the regime
- Some are journalists
- Some are former soldiers and police officers who refused to participate in the repressive acts ordered by the government

Our case study also found that Nicaraguan HRDs in Costa Rica fall into two main clusters. First, those who worked in defense of human rights prior to April 2018, such as women defenders, activists, members of CSOs, and leaders of social movements (women's movements, trade unions, peasant leaders, activists of the LGBTQ+ communities and journalists). Second, those who can trace back their human rights work to the *Indio Maíz* protests and April 2018, who are mostly students, youth from *barrios* and urban neighborhoods, doctors and healthcare workers, and former military and police.

According to the interviews and focus groups, Nicaraguan HRDs in Costa Rica came from practically all over the country, but mainly from three municipalities (Masaya, Carazo, and Managua). Although there were also some HRDs from the so-called canal zone (area where the interoceanic canal would supposedly be), like Rivas, Lago of Nicaragua, Río San Juan, Chontales, and Zelaya Central.

While Venezuelan HRDs in Colombia fled their homes for a range of reasons (humanitarian crisis, violence and direct threats), most of the Nicaraguan HRDs in Costa Rica have left to escape direct threats by the government for doing their work. As such, these case studies nourished a hypothesis that Venezuelan migrants in Colombia, including HRDs more often prioritize finding any source of income

“I consider myself a human rights defender for my work defending citizens who have been criminalized for political reasons and for pointing out the acts of repression exercised by the government against its opponents.”

(Nicaraguan HRD in Costa Rica.)

to achieve economic stability and redress from Venezuela's critical economic crisis. Nicaraguan HRDs in Costa Rica who fled political persecution directly, on the other hand, are more likely to search specifically for work related to the defense of human rights and civic activism. Future inquiries of the two phenomena, can corroborate this hypothesis and further investigate the impact in the lives of the HRDs in exile. The interviews with over 20 HRDs, focus groups with 24 HRDs, and the survey conducted with 20 Nicaraguan HRDs in Costa Rica revealed that the vast majority reported they experienced direct threats. The most common type of threats were harassment, potential of violence, and warnings (see Graph 1 below).

How do HRDs settle in Costa Rica?

HRDs coming from Nicaragua first must interact with Costa Rican authorities as they cross the border and when they settle into their new surroundings. Those who cross over the land borders often apply as a refugee, under the new category announced in December 2020, or

“Currently I work in the defense of human rights of migrant populations, especially of political refugee seeking asylum in Costa Rica. My work is in documenting cases of human rights violations to victims of torture in the context of protests in Nicaragua.”

(Nicaraguan HRD in Costa Rica.)

“Human rights defenders are anyone who defends Nicaraguan people and defends their rights.”

(Nicaraguan HRD in Costa Rica.)

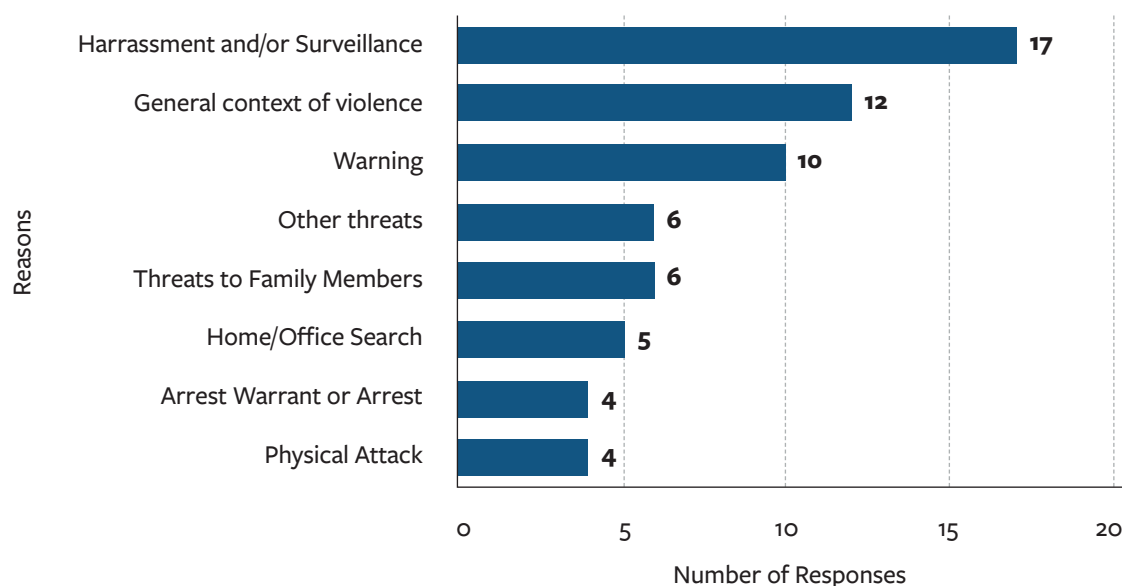
“Here we are all defenders because we do not limit ourselves to defending or demanding my right, but we work for all.”

(Nicaraguan HRD in Costa Rica.)

under other visa categories such as student, professional, technical, or visiting researcher, as well as a resident category when they can prove ties to Costa Rican ancestry or relatives. The process to obtain legal status in the country is cumbersome and takes a long time, more so with constraints brought by the pandemic. Since being legal also means able to work and stay in the country, the length of time needed for the process is an obstacle

to HRDs continuing to work. In interviews and focus groups, Nicaraguan HRDs reported that between the phone call and the first date, the waiting time could be anywhere from a few months to more than two years in extreme cases. As can be seen in Graph 2, eight out of ten Nicaraguan HRDs plan to return home one day, and see the refugee status as the best option to remain in Costa Rica temporarily.

GRAPH 1: REASONS FOR NICARAGUAN HRDS EXILE TO COSTA RICA

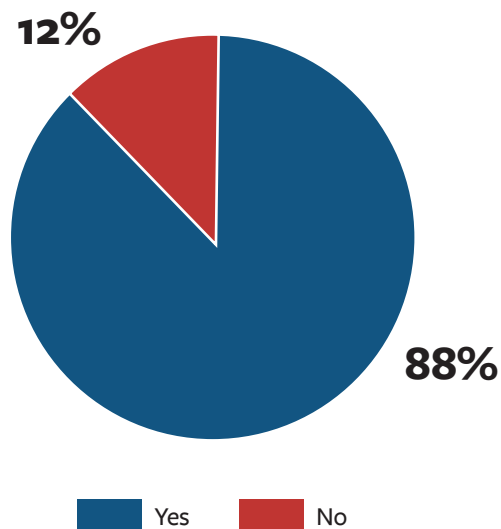


Regularization process for Nicaraguan HRDs in Costa Rica

In Costa Rica, there are numerous regulations and public policies related to migration in general, particularly for those applying for refugee status. The General Law on Migration and Foreigners, Law 8764, approved in 2009 explicitly states, “respect for human rights and constitutional guarantees of all foreigners who enter and remain in the country,” and “full respect for international obligations on human rights and the international protection of refugees.”²⁴

Refugee applicants face long waiting periods in the process of regularizing their status or obtaining refugee status, some waiting up to two years. Some HRDs interviewed highlighted that while they arrived in 2019, they had their first appointment the first months of 2021. At that first appointment, they schedule their “eligibility” interview with the Visa and Refugee Commission. Nicaraguan HRDs, like the general migrant population, received their work permit on average after three months of the first appointment. This allows them to seek employment, but in the interim they must find a way to survive and support themselves and their families. In our interviews, Nicaraguans HRDs described the review of paperwork as slow, and many perceived prejudice by authorities against them, particularly when the HRD is poorer and less educated. In our survey to Nicaraguan HRDs, about half indicated that they had received treatment that impacted their rights while in Costa Rica, including xenophobia and discrimination.

GRAPH 2: NICARAGUAN HRDS IN COSTA RICA – ARE YOU PLANNING TO RETURN TO NICARAGUA?



Are the HRDs able to find sustainable employment to continue their human rights work throughout the time they are unable to return to their home countries?

Despite Costa Rica’s welcoming policy and commitment to offering refuge, Nicaraguan HRDs face challenges to integrating into society. Not only are services for HRDs scarce, but support mechanisms are operating at full capacity and are unable to be responsive to increased demand. Many Nicaraguan HRDs leave everything behind and exhaust their savings to survive in the initial period of exile. With time, and after regularizing, some exiled HRDs have managed to be employed by continuing to work for their respective CSOs, continuing their profession (e.g., journalists), or doing small temporary work.

In our non-representative survey with Nicaraguan HRDs in Costa Rica, over 90% mentioned they have continued to work in exile as HRD. Below are some of the factors they mentioned to be key when living in exile:

HRDs interviewed also mentioned the support of organizations, such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and International Organization for Migration (IOM), Costa Rican NGOs, Nicaraguan organizations operating in Costa Rica, and other international NGOs. However, while more than 90 percent of those Nicaraguan HRDs who responded to the survey said they were able to work, the broader interviews and focus groups point to other challenges as was the case of Venezuelan HRDs in Colombia. For example, work they find is often voluntary, unpaid work. As a result, they face economic hardship while waiting for legal work status or refugee status and confront xenophobia. Upon arrival, Nicaraguan HRDs encounter a limited network of informal and formal resources that provide the necessary immediate information and some resources. Once they have resettled and are awaiting regularization, HRDs face additional

“I have not been able to find work since I do not have the document that makes me legal in the country.”

(Nicaraguan HRD in Costa Rica.)

challenges The case study also found disparities in terms of services and support between the border territories in the north (Upala and San Carlos) and the greater San José metropolitan area. In general, the needs for HRDs in the north are more basic, such as food, shelter, and health services, while in the capital the needs are more long-term, such as employment opportunities, education and training, housing and medical attention. The security issue for all Nicaraguan HRDs is paramount. The HRDs interviewed and surveyed mentioned security as a main fear.²⁵

The HRDs interviewed and those that participated in focus groups judged their economic situation as being very difficult. Indeed, in exile, most HRDs have experienced a significant drop in their standard of living, often going from being breadwinners of their families to being dependent on the financial support of family members, friends, and organizations. Some women with young children interviewed and that participated in the focus groups highlighted having specific challenges as they do not have family members to support them in the caretaking of children, nor the resources to pay for domestic help, thus remaining excluded from professional opportunities and human rights activities.

Our case study found that the majority of Nicaraguan HRDs in exile, are underemployed and have trouble paying the higher cost of living in Costa Rica. In the case of young HRDs, access to education and the possibility of completing their studies is one of their main aspirations. A study in 2019, found that nearly 40 percent of Nicaraguan youth in Costa Rica

“I never thought I was going to experience this situation. I never considered exile either. But I soon realized that my only option was to live in another country to survive and sleep without fear of the police arriving at my house. I feel emotionally and physically drained.”

(Nicaraguan HRD in Costa Rica.)

WHAT FACTORS HAVE CONTRIBUTED POSITIVELY TO YOUR WORK IN COSTA RICA AS A HRD IN EXILE

- “Technology (computer, cell phone) allows me to be in contact with my colleagues.”
- “Support from cooperation agencies and commitment to defending human rights.”
- “The solid alliances and networks we have been building.”
- “The fact that human rights activities can be carried out safely without fear or persecution and the ties that have been forged with victims’ organizations, communicators and other human rights organizations.”

identified the lack of employment as the main problem and 20 percent pointed out to economic limitations.²⁶ In the end, many Nicaraguans exiled in Costa Rica, including HRDs, end up working informal jobs with low pay because they cannot find work in their areas of expertise.

Costa Rica has not been spared by COVID-19, and the economy was hit hard. While the government’s prompt response helped avoid a deeper health crisis, the fiscal impact was significant. In 2020-2021, the economy shrank by 4.5%, partly thanks to the reduction in tourism, while the fiscal deficit rose to 8.1% of GDP, up from 6.7% in 2019. Public debt reached 68% of GDP, and unemployment rose to 18%, from 12% last year.²⁷ This situation has affected opportunities for Nicaraguans exile in Costa Rica.

While a majority of Nicaraguan HRDs in Costa Rica who participated in the survey said they had plans to return home “one day” (Graph 2 preceding page), the majority of the Nicaraguan HRDs in Costa Rica who were interviewed and participated in focus groups, did not consider an early return to Nicaragua. One in 10 stated that a member of their family had returned to Nicaragua and 1 in 5 indicated that they were considering doing so motivated by lack of employment in the host country (90%) and because they did not have anything to eat (40%).

GRAPH 3: WHO PROVIDES SUPPORT AND RESOURCES IN COSTA RICA TO NICARAGUAN HRDS

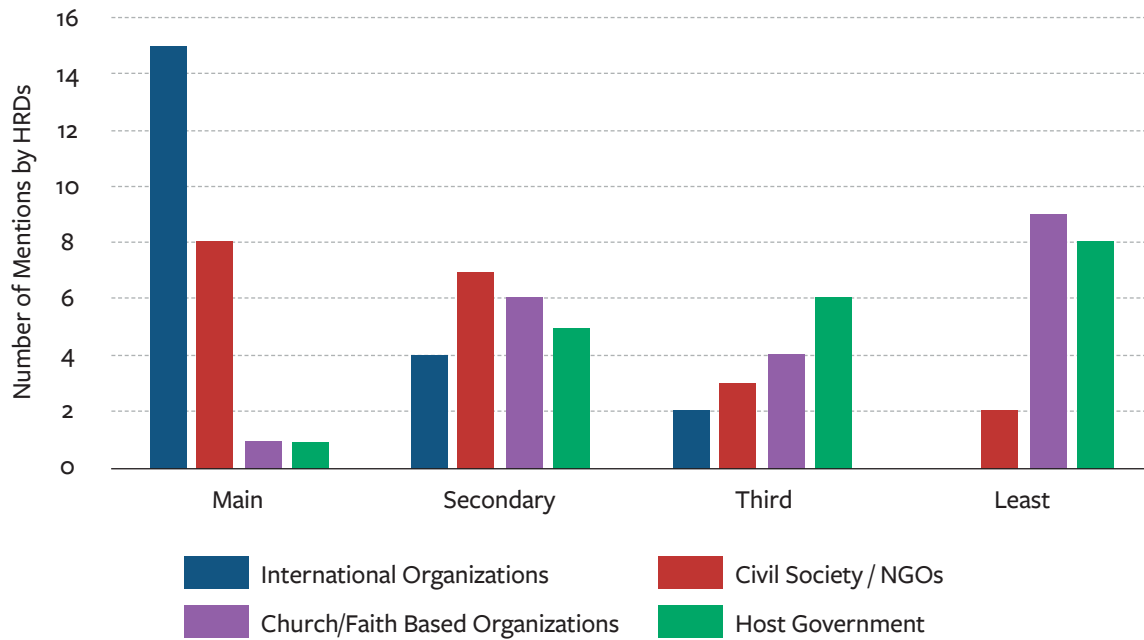


FIGURE 2: WHAT ARE THE MOST URGENT AND/OR IMMEDIATE NEEDS FOR NICARAGUAN HRDS IN COSTA RICA?



Source: Survey of Nicaraguan HRDs in Costa Rica, 2021.

In our survey to 20 Nicaraguan HRDs, we asked them to rank by priority the actors who offer support and resources to them while in Costa Rica. As can be seen in Graph 3 above, international multilateral/governmental or intergovernmental organizations were ranked as primary providers, followed by CSOs and NGOs, Church and faith-based organizations, and last government institutions.

As we can see in Figure 2, Nicaraguan HRDs in Costa Rica have multiple urgent and immediate needs, such as: financial support for subsistence; humanitarian assistance (Shelter, housing, and food); professional development; resources to do their HRD work; support services (medical attention, psychological support, legal assistance; protection and physical security; and networking and alliances. As in the case of Colombia, in Costa Rica the supply for HRD services is also heavily outweighed by the growing demand.

Do the HRDs receive medical and psychosocial attention?

HRDs experience extreme psychological pressure not only in the process of exile and migration to a new country, but from suffering persecution and reprisal for their work. For those who came after April 2018, most HRDs have directly suffered and experienced violence at the hands of the government and paramilitary groups. Many have witnessed murders of fellow protestors and were themselves attacked and injured, arrested, and detained. They face stress in the refugee application process, and despite the assurance from the Costa Rican government that it will not expel Nicaraguans seeking refugee status, many report suffering depression and anxiety from the struggle to acclimate to their new surroundings and find security and stability in their lives. This creates a need for psychosocial attention and care in the host country.

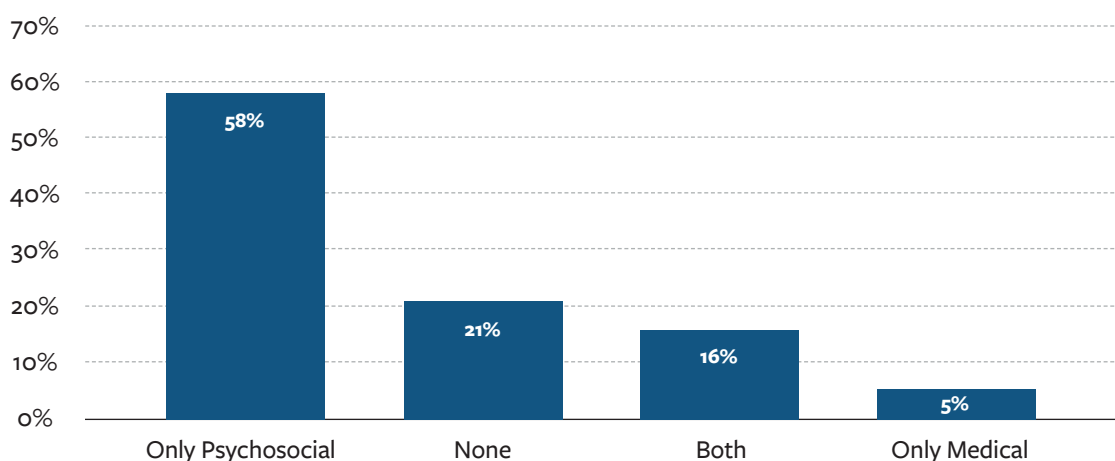
As can be seen in Graph 4, Nicaraguan HRDs in Costa Rica received a diverse set of services. According to the survey results, only 16% of the HRD respondents said they received both medical and psychosocial attention, while 21% said they did not receive either medical or psychosocial attention. Similarly, nearly two-thirds of the HRD respondents said they received only psychological services, while 5% said they received medical only. Moreover, the providers of these services are diverse. For example: private doctors and psychologists, NGOs (e.g., CENDEROS, SOS Nicaragua, People in Need, *IM Defensoras*, RET, *Fundación Mujer*, CEJIL), faith-based organizations (e.g., Lutheran Church, Jesuit Service

for Migrants), universities (e.g., University of Costa Rica-UCR), international NGOs (e.g., World Organization Against Torture), and international organizations (e.g., UNHCR).

In Costa Rica, psychological support for Nicaraguan HRDs is provided by CSOs that support migrants in general (e.g., CENDEROS, Fundación Acceso, Doctors without Borders while they were in Costa Rica, Peace Brigades International, SOS Nicaragua, among others). Some HRDs received individual attention, but the majority mentioned therapeutic and self-help groups, as well as ludo therapy. Sometimes, psychosocial teams from the UCR and Association of Psychologists lend a hand.

HRDs recognized that while rights in Costa Rica are violated, the intensity and intent is unlike what they experience in Nicaragua. Nicaraguan HRDs mentioned that they often experience xenophobia, particularly when they try to integrate into communities. Some have mentioned that when they speak with a distinguishable different accent than the locals, they have experienced verbal attacks or derogatory comments. Also, Nicaraguans HRDs in Costa Rica mentioned that when they are looking for a house or temporary shelter, only because they are Nicaraguans the requirements and conditions are often difficult to fulfill (rigid contracts, restrictions on the number of people that can be in the house, and higher than normal prices). Similarly, Nicaraguan HRDs mentioned that they are often asked to leave their homes without giving them much time to find another place, in violation of Costa Rican laws.

GRAPH 4: HAVE YOU BEEN ABLE TO RECEIVE MEDICAL AND PSYCHOSOCIAL SERVICES IN COSTA RICA?



According to interviews and focus group results, the housing and shelter situation is one of the most difficult ones for Nicaraguan HRDs in terms of psychological stress. Moreover, there are not many institutions or organizations in Costa Rica that can support this type of cases with an integrated approach to deal both with legal and psychological support specifically for HRDs.

When the large number of Nicaraguans living in Costa Rica permanently saw the seriousness of the situation emerge after 2018 with their compatriots, they decided to organize themselves

to provide support and humanitarian assistance. Three well known examples are SOS Nicaragua, the Union of Nicaraguans in Exile (*Unión de Nicaragüenses en el Exilio*- UNE-CR) and the Coalition of Nicaraguans Abroad (*Coalición de Nicaragüenses en el Exterior*). These organizations are responsible for providing humanitarian aid such as food, clothing, medical care, school supplies, among others. While their support is welcomed, these services target the larger migrant and refugee populations, and as such it is not enough for the growing needs of Nicaraguan exile HRD population in Costa Rica.

WHO OFFERS SUPPORT SERVICES FOR NICARAGUAN MIGRANTS, REFUGEES AND HRDS IN COSTA RICA?

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR): A very relevant service is the Medical Insurance Program-UNHCR – CCSS.²⁸ The program targets refugees and asylum seekers with serious health conditions. Funded until December 31, 2021, 10,000 people will have access to this health insurance. Until February 2021, it was reported that 60% of the insurance had been assigned and it was projected to reach its limit before December 31. There are no actual numbers reported, but while Cubans and Venezuelans also seek asylum and refugee status in Costa Rica, Nicaraguans are by far the largest group and presumably would be the majority of beneficiaries. UNHCR also works with a network of partner organizations and groups in Costa Rica to provide other services and assistance such as: social and economic, legal, employment and integration.

Refugee Education Trust (RET) International: Provides humanitarian aid to families in vulnerable situations, works with young people in violence prevention and promotes their integration into the educational system. RET manages the UNCHR-CCSS Insurance program. They are also responsible for managing economic support from government institutions (e.g., IMAS, PANI, INAMU, CONAPDIS, CONAPAM, CEN-CINAI, all acronyms in Spanish), as well as NGOs.

CENDEROS: Operates two shelters, one in San José for women and another one in Upala for both men and women. It provides psychosocial care to migrants, humanitarian aid, training on a variety of topics relevant to the target populations, such as how to request refugee status, rights for Nicaraguans while in Costa Rica, and health care for women. CENDEROS works mainly with HRDs, especially women and LGBTIQ people.

Jesuit Service for Migrants: Provides free legal advice and support in the process of changing immigration status, identity documents and naturalization, as well as information services and outreach programs, including a radio program to share relevant information and news.

Fundación Mujer: While their original work targeted only women and still prioritizes women in all their activities, today the Foundation works with both men and women between 18 and 65 years of age, primarily migrants. They assist with training for economic self-sufficiency. It supports the integration of refugees into Costa Rican society through economic and productive initiatives that allow their self-sufficiency in the country.

HIAS (Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society): Provides free legal assistance and has offices in San José and Liberia, as well as staff in La Cruz, Los Chiles, Paso Canoas, Peñas Blancas and Upala.

La Salle Legal Clinic: Provides legal advice to refugees and applicants for refugee status in the necessary steps to effectively access their rights.

SOS Nicaragua in particular has a lot of credibility among exile groups. They identify themselves as a self-managed organization that facilitates the channeling of aid and donations from private companies, organizations, churches, among others. Its actions focus on the larger migrant and refugee Nicaraguan population in Costa Rica, which includes HRDs. They coordinate humanitarian assistance, such as: food, clothing, medical and psychological assistance, guidance in immigration and refugee procedures and other humanitarian needs. They maintain close communication with different groups of Nicaraguans, whether they are organized or not, in San José and other cities in the country, in order to distribute humanitarian assistance, a task that they generally carry out on weekends. They have a fairly extensive database of exiles, which is constantly updated. Everyone who works in this organization is a volunteer.

UNE-CR is made up mainly of Nicaraguan doctors, a good part of them living in Costa Rica for a long time, but other exile organizations collaborate. One of its most important actions has been to provide medical assistance and provide medicines to the exiles. To do this, they established an assistance center, however, due to lack of resources and increased demand, they were unable to sustain it over time. Another of its tasks is to help facilitate medical assistance for priority cases before public health institutions.

There are several other relevant organizations, many of them run by Nicaraguans that had been forced to flee their country and seek refuge in Costa Rica. These organizations often provide some support to Nicaraguan HRDs in exile, including psychosocial and medical services. For example, the human rights organizations *Nicaragua Nunca Más*, Del Rio Foundation, Hagamos Democracia, CISAS, and the *Asociación Nicaragüense Pro-Derechos Humanos* (ANPDH). Other international and Costa Rican organizations that can be highlighted for supporting Nicaraguan HRDs in Costa Rica are People in Need (PIN), Center for Justice and International Rights (CEJIL its acronym in Spanish), the Arias Foundation for Peace and Development, and Shelter City.

How do HDRs support their families left behind?

Like the Venezuelan HRDs, when Nicaraguan HRDs are forced out to leave their home country, they do so without their families. Many HRDs were the breadwinners of their families

before they were forced into exile. In the case of Nicaraguans HRDs, there is a long history and presence in Costa Rica. Many of the HRDs are binational or have relatives in Costa Rica. Several families have members of both nationalities and move frequently in the two countries; they live in one place, work in the other, they study and receive health care in Costa Rica, and do business in Nicaragua. The borders are extremely porous and, in some places, almost non-existent. This aspect facilitates family reunification in Costa Rica (often temporary), although the costs of relocation for families is still high. According to interviews and the focus groups results, those who can reunite with their families or are relocated with their families, still face challenges in exile such as supporting them and providing for basic costs, such as food and housing. Support for Nicaraguan HRDs who are relocated in Costa Rica, generally does not include support for family members. Nonetheless, the government economic support programs cover families of refugees and in situations of poverty.

When Nicaraguan HRDs in Costa Rica were asked in the survey, the needs of the family members that were left behind, their responses could be categorized in three areas:

Security

- Advice for risk analysis and physical and digital assistance.
- Emergency plan that allows family reunification in case of emergency.
- Security training, strategies, precautionary measures, security plan.
- Moving them to safe places.

Economic

- **Financial Assistance.**
- Financial help to move internally to somewhat safe places in the country.
- Training on entrepreneurial initiatives.

Psychosocial

- Psychological and monetary support.
- Online psychological support.



Members of the local Cuban, Nicaraguan and Venezuelan diaspora, activists and local sympathizers protest on Saturday, September 11, 2021, in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, outside the Alberta Legislature building during the 'Freedom for Latin America' demonstration. (Image Credit: Artur Widak/NurPhoto/Shutterstock)

Some Emerging Lessons and Challenges for the Future

Overall, the situation for Nicaraguan HRDs and CSOs in Costa Rica is complicated, as exiles struggle to acclimate to a stable and secure life in Costa Rica. Despite the country's broadly open migration policy for the region and history of Nicaraguan migration in the past, the reality for HRDs in exile is complex and multidimensional. HRDs face long wait times to achieve regularization, which affects their ability to find stable employment, secure housing, and economic stability. This ultimately impacts their ability to continue their work in human rights issues related to their country Nicaragua, which has adverse consequences for the country and the HRD. With the outpouring of CSO and HRDs over the last couple of years and continued persecution of those who work to support these initiatives in Nicaragua, the few remaining human rights workers and pro-democracy CSOs fight to continue their work in an ever-shrinking civil space. This "brain drain" of talented human rights workers represents a dire situation for those who champion human rights in Nicaragua.

In conversation with HRDs and CSOs in our focus groups and interviews, one of the most important takeaways was the lack of support mechanisms or specific programming for HRDs. Aid organizations or state agencies tend to prioritize refugee status based on other characteristics such as social groups or level of vulnerability, but not on the condition of being a human rights defender. This approach can ignore certain needs particular to the situation of HRDs and CSOs.

In December 2020, Resolution DJPUR-0190-12-2020-JM of the DGME of the Ministry of the Interior and Police was approved, which establishes the Special Temporary Category of Complementary Protection for Venezuelans, Nicaraguans, and Cubans to whom their refugee claim has been denied. This opens a new possibility for people who have been denied refugee status if they meet the new requirements. Until now, it is little known and has not been widely used by Nicaraguans yet, but it may open the door for activists and HRDs.

Strategic Recommendations for Programming

It is essential that the need for a sustainable strategy and programs to support Nicaraguan HRDs and CSOs in Costa Rica. Nicaraguan HRDs in Costa Rica expressed their desire to continue promoting and defending human rights of their compatriots back home as well as the rights of others in their host country of Costa Rica. There are already some programs and initiatives in Costa Rica, many funded by international donor organizations. The recommendations presented in this section are meant to be complementary to existing initiatives, and should help donors, international organizations, and the government to establish programmatic and funding priorities; identify coordination mechanisms; and find appropriate entry points for supporting HRDs. One of the most important activities or options is the need to identify appropriate methodologies to assess and measure quantitatively and qualitatively the impact of programs and activities.

The following are some strategic recommendations for future programming based on our findings from the case study.

Strengthening the Protection Ecosystem for HRDs in Exile

Local NGOs and CSOs and international organizations should take the lead and coordinate efforts.

Illustrative Activities

- Promote comprehensive support responses that start from the recognition of urgent and strategic needs and incorporate aspects such as:
 - Health care
 - Psychological attention
 - Assistance in regularization of stay in the host country
 - Training and capacity building
 - Recreational and occupational therapy activities
- Plans for digital, physical, and legal security, among others
- Social integration activities that include cultural education of the host country
- Engage in policy dialogue with key stakeholders. For comprehensive support actions to be effective, it is necessary that the work be carried out with various actors:
 - HRDs
 - Nicaraguan exiles and migrants
 - Costa Rican CSOs that work with HRDs
 - Universities
 - International aid organizations (donors)
 - Municipalities and local authorities of the communities with the greatest agglomeration of exiles and migrants
 - Government institutions that interact with HRDs
- Promote a deeper reflection and understanding of HRDs in exile.
- Support research efforts to understand better the HRD community and its needs, to counteract perceptions that HRDs are a uniform and homogenous community and provide inputs for a not “one size fits all” strategy and response.
- Develop short- and medium-term strategies to support HRDs that go beyond physical relocation and assume no immediate return.
- Explore ways to expand shelters to support integrated approaches that include psychological, digital, and physical security, as well as capacity building and employment referral. If needed, support should include the safe return of those HRDs who want to return to their country of origin. Approach should also include support for basic needs that include shelter, food, immigration regularization, health, and education, among others.

Communication, Advocacy, and Information Exchange

With CSOs that work with HRDs, communication, advocacy and information exchange with migration authorities should be supported to improve their practices and their effectiveness in regularizing their status. Local NGOs, CSOs, and universities already working with the larger migrant Nicaraguan population could take the lead.

Illustrative Activities

- Promote and strengthen relationships between groups and organizations and networks that work to support HRDs in exile.
- Increase awareness and monitoring of human rights violations both in Costa Rica and Nicaragua. This includes documenting violations, enhancing visibility of the situation of HRDs at risk, listing relevant legislation and monitoring case law, developing support networks and research; and offering spaces for information sharing and awareness-raising.
- Promote spaces for HRD dialogue and meetings, where Nicaraguan HRDs can exchange and share. Human rights organizations should be invited as well.
- Further examine the role of universities in promoting integration of HRDs. Build on the expertise and resources of current and exiting programs and initiatives.
- Establish alliances with the Costa Rica media and human rights organizations to serve as sources of information about Costa Rica, as well as to raise awareness about the need to protect HRDs, highlight collaboration and exchange as means to further integration.
- Hold meetings with human rights defenders from other countries to update themselves on the issues and learn how different challenges and opportunities for HRDs in exile are being addressed in other countries.
- Engage municipalities and local authorities with a high concentration of HRDs and Nicaraguan exiles to promote actions and facilitate integration, dialogue, and exchange, as well as raise awareness about the work of HRDs.
- Support Training of Trainers (ToT) initiatives for HRDs so they become agents of multiplication and spread information and capacity building in topics such as:
 - Training in Human Rights, gender violence and non-discrimination
 - Production of printed and electronic information materials

- Prioritizing HRD agenda items and topics for engagements and advocacy.
- Support HRD initiatives that tackle the prevention, approach, and treatment of gender-based violence and violence against children, such as:
 - Raise awareness about the origins, causes and manifestations of gender-based violence and sexism.
 - Develop training on the laws and institutions that address both issues.
 - Ensure knowledge of mechanisms and procedures for addressing and preventing violence.
- Promote educational actions about the culture of peace, gender equity, equality and the rights of women and children.
- Incorporate in the action of HRDs the accompaniment and protection of victims of gender violence and against children.
- Integrate the support actions into the generation or identification of spaces so that HRDs can carry out their work of accompaniment, defense, and denunciation of human rights.

Expand and Strengthen Existing Support, Services and Networks for HRDs

Illustrative Activities

- Train HRDs to be able to support, accompany and advise compatriots with their paperwork and procedures.
- Work on the definition of plans and protocols that accompany the voluntary return of HRDs and other exiles so that it is as safe as possible and, if possible, has the monitoring of international organizations and institutions.
- Establish with CSOs, HRDs and mechanisms to monitor the situation of HRDs and other exiles.
- Facilitate knowledge, collaboration, and exchange of experiences with groups and organizations that carry out support work for HRDs and CSOs in Costa Rica and in other countries.
- Promote meeting and reflection spaces for HRDs so that they can exchange experiences.
- Establish and support Nicaraguan HRDs and CSOs to help compatriots safely return home.

Annex 1: List of Interviews

No.	Interviewees	Sector/organization
1.	Daguer Hernández	Dirección General de Migración y Extranjería
2.	Rita Hernández	Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores – Cooperación
3.	Mercedes Álvarez Rudín	HIVOS Costa Rica
4.	Gabriela Núñez	HIAS Costa Rica
5.	Carlos Huezo/Desireé Ayón, María Elizondo, María Asunción Dangla	SOS Nicaragua
6.	Marisa Hinkelamert	CENDEROS San José
7.	Emelda Bravo	CENDEROS Upala
8.	Marcela Montano	CEJIL
9.	Karina Hernández	Fundación Acceso
10.	Milton Moreno/Kelleen Corrigan	ACNUR
11.	María Fernanda López	Municipalidad de Desamparados/OIM
12.	Evelyn Campos	Municipalidad de La Cruz
13.	Yamileth López (alcaldesa) ausente Wilson Espinoza – Vicealcalde Sandra Álvarez – Responsable Oficina de Migrantes	Municipalidad Upala
14.	Wendy Flores/Gonzalo Carrión/Braulio Abarca	Colectivo Nicaragua Nunca Más
15.	Nurys Segura Ramírez	Movimiento Campesino
16.	Margarita Quintanilla	Iniciativa Nicaragüense de Defensoras
17.	Carolina Herrera	DGME – Unidad de Refugio Upala
18.	Christiane Eppelin Ugarte	RET Costa Rica
19.	Oscar Andrés Vargas	Periodista independiente del Norte de Costa Rica

List of Participants in Focus Groups

Established Defenders	
#	Name
1	Dulce Maria Porras Aguilar
2	Ariel Alberto Paniagua Llanes
3	Marvin Alejandro Melanio
4	Mildred Telica Castillo
5	Marling Membreño Carcache
6	Rommel Mlendez Morales
Women defenders	
1	Brenda Dolores Rocha
2	Alba Patora Mojica
3	Olga Miriam Siles
4	Judith Perez
5	Maria Jose Rivas
6	Marlubi Omely
7	Nacha Lobante

LBTBIQ+ defenders	
1	Jacob Ellis Willians
2	Rigoberto Perez Acuña
3	Roxana Athiany Larios
Upala	
1	Francis Montenegro
2	Willian Ramirez
3	Silvia Sirias
4	Angela Nuris Sequeira Ramirez
Liberia	
1	Johana Guitierrez
2	Charon Melendez
3	Karla Guitierrez
4	Carlos Galan

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Endnotes

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