



**GENDER-BASED
POLITICAL PERSECUTION
IN NICARAGUA:
NO SILENCE,
NO OBLIVION**

Consulting Team

Diana A. Silva, Patricia Lindo,
Andrea Suárez and Evelyn Recinos

**EXECUTIVE
SUMMARY**

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IM-DEFENSORAS

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The Global Women's Institute



FAU LAC

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América Latina y el Caribe

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CENTRE

Context and methodology

This report examines the repression carried out by the State of Nicaragua against the Women's and Feminist Movement between 2018 and 2025, situating it within a broader historical framework that extends back, at least, to the late 1990s. Far from constituting a circumstantial reaction at the particular juncture of the social uprising of 2018, the violence documented herein forms part of a prolonged process of stigmatization, criminalization, and gradual exclusion of organized women and of anyone who has challenged the patriarchal and authoritarian order consolidated under the Ortega-Murillo regime.

The central aim of this report is to determine whether the documented patterns of violence and repression establish the existence of persecution on gender grounds, understood as a crime against humanity under international criminal law. To that end, the analysis builds upon a premise already recognized by various international mechanisms: since the social unrest that erupted in April 2018, Nicaragua has been the scene of a widespread and systematic attack against the civilian population. On this basis, the report focuses its examination on the specific elements that define persecution on gender grounds, particularly the identification of the Women's and Feminist Movement as a targeted group and the existence of a discriminatory intent based on gender.

From a methodological perspective, the report relies on a qualitative and legal methodology using a feminist approach based on human rights, gender, and intersectional perspectives. The analysis is substantiated through the examination of 120 emblematic cases documented between 2018 and 2025, selected for their representativeness, diversity of profiles and victimization patterns, as well as the availability of verifiable information. The research is based on both primary and secondary sources, including interviews with victims, relatives, and experts; analysis of judicial case files and documentation used in international complaint proceedings; and a review of reports issued by international mechanisms and human rights organizations.

The legal analysis aimed to identify any serious deprivations of fundamental rights, consistent patterns of state conduct, and indicators of a discriminatory motivation based on gender, in accordance with the standards of international criminal law. The conclusions are formulated based on the threshold of reasonable grounds to believe, without prejudging individual criminal responsibility.

Main Factual Findings

The Identification of the Women's and Feminist Movement as a Targeted Group

The report demonstrates that the Women's and Feminist Movement was progressively conceived by the State as a specific group to be neutralized, not only due to its political opposition but also because of its structural challenge to the patriarchal order promoted by the Ortega-Murillo regime. From the movement's public support for the 1998 sexual violence complaint filed against Daniel Ortega, to its opposition to the absolute criminalization of abortion and to patriarchal political pacts, through to its active role during the 2018 social uprising, feminist women were identified as an autonomous, disruptive, and dangerous social actor.

This process of identification was reflected in: official discourse denying their status as women ("activists with women's names"); stigmatization campaigns portraying them as enemies of the family and of the nation; and serious repressive measures directed in a discriminatory manner against feminist organizations and women leaders. An illustrative example: the first organization to be cancelled after the 2018 social uprising was a feminist organization dedicated to sexual and reproductive health and rights. Far from being coincidental, this marked the beginning of a mass cancellation of women's organizations, many of them devoted to addressing gender-based violence, thereby evidencing the targeted nature of the attack.





Gender-Based Discriminatory Intent

One of the central findings of the report is that the documented violence was not neutral but rather marked by a specific discriminatory intent based on gender, as evidenced by the selectivity of victims, stigmatizing discourse, and differentiated forms of punishment.

Women were persecuted for exercising political and community leadership, participating actively in protests and resistance networks, defending sexual and reproductive rights, and challenging traditional models of motherhood, femininity, and sexuality.

For example, during arbitrary detentions, women were subjected to sexually charged insults (“whores,” “sluts,” “bitches”), linking the punishment to their status as women and to alleged moral transgressions. In several cases, authorities used threats against daughters and sons, including threats to take them away or harm them, as a method of psychological torture, exploiting socially imposed gender roles. The detention conditions for some detained women differed from those of men, and these conditions were intended to silence their political voice. Lesbian women and trans women were additionally punished for their sexual orientation or gender identity, including their incarceration in male facilities as a form of humiliation and correction.

Documented Forms of Violence: A Pattern of Cumulatively Severe Rights Deprivations

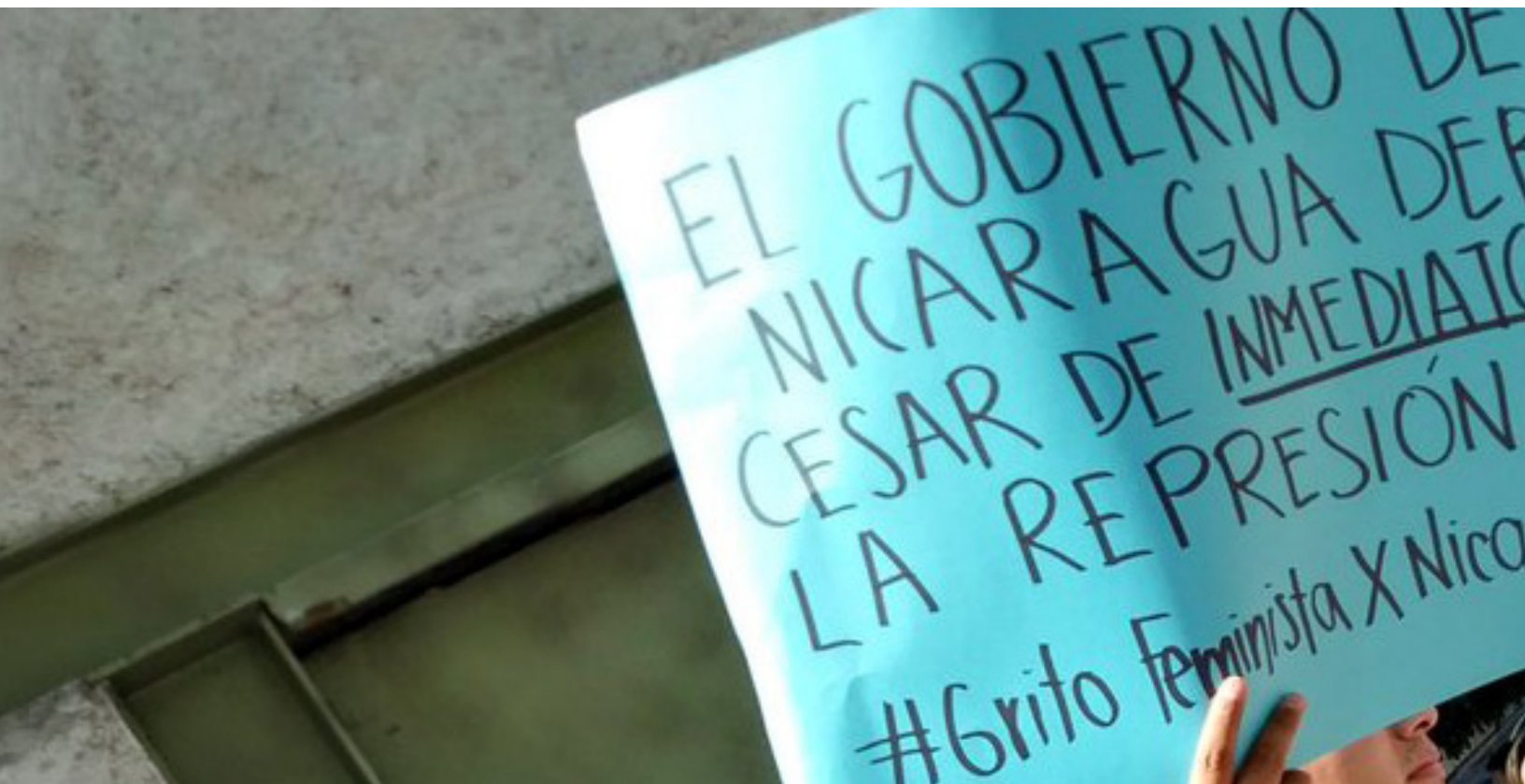
The report documents a broad and coherent set of serious violations of fundamental rights, which must be analyzed cumulatively, in accordance with the standards of international criminal law.

Among the main modalities are arbitrary detentions and forced disappearances, often without judicial order and accompanied by prolonged periods of custody incommunicado; torture and cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment, applied in a differentiated manner to women political prisoners; sexual violence under state custody, including rapes, forced nudity, threats of rape, and sexual humiliation during interrogations; prolonged solitary confinement, applied disproportionately to women, especially political and feminist leaders; mass cancellation of feminist organizations' legal status, with confiscation of assets and closure of spaces for supporting women victims of violence and defending women's rights in general; and arbitrary deprivation of nationality, forced exile, and permanent surveillance, as forms of extended punishment.

For example, the report documents cases of detained women who were forced to remain naked during interrogations, subjected to sexual violence, and threatened with the rape of their daughters if they reported the incidents. These practices evidence a deliberate sexualization of punishment, characteristic of persecution on gender grounds.

The Continuum of Persecution: From Historical Stigmatization to Total Repression

The facts analysed here are not isolated episodes. The report demonstrates the existence of a continuum of persecution on gender grounds, which began years before 2018 through smear campaigns, selective criminalization, and dismantling of public policies for the protection of women's rights, all of which intensified after the social uprising. This ongoing process reinforces the conclusion that the violence was part of a sustained state policy, implemented through legal, administrative, police, judicial, media, and digital instruments.



Main Conclusions

Based on the factual and legal analysis, the report concludes that there are reasonable grounds to believe that:

- the Women's and Feminist Movement was identified as a target group by the State;
- the repression was guided by a discriminatory intent based on gender;
- serious, systematic, and cumulative deprivations of fundamental rights occurred;
- and said conduct was committed in connection with other crimes against humanity, within the framework of a widespread and systematic attack against the civilian population.

Consequently, the documented facts are juridically subsumable under the crime against humanity of persecution on the grounds of gender (gender persecution), pursuant to Article 7(1)(h) of the Rome Statute and the customary international law, which Article 7(1)(h) codifies.





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CUANDO AGOSTO
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CUANDO DEL 2018

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