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SALVADORAN WOMEN URGE GOVERNMENT TO SHUN ORTEGA



San Salvador, El Salvador: Members of women's rights groups in El Salvador are speaking out in support of feminists in Nicaragua, who they contend are being unfairly persecuted by the government of Daniel Ortega.

The women of CEMUJER and other Salvadoran groups held a press conference Oct. 5, denouncing Mr Ortega's actions against women and calling on Salvadoran President Antonio Saca to cut ties with the Nicaraguan leader and ban him from the upcoming XVII Presidential Summit on Oct. 29-31. Mr Ortega is accused of threatening women's leaders in his country, and of sexually abusing his stepdaughter during the 1980s.

"We denounce and reject the visit of Daniel Ortega to El Salvador; a rapist should not receive presidential honors nor sign a presidential declaration," said Ima Guirola of CEMUJER. "We request that the government of El Salvador declare Ortega as 'persona non grata.'"

The press conference, hosted by CEMUJER, was widely covered on major television news channels and in the El Diario de Hoy and El Mundo newspapers. CEMUJER is a partner of The Advocacy Project (AP).

According to CEMUJER, Mr Ortega has prosecuted women leaders and made speeches encouraging his supporters to lynch and attack members of Nicaragua's women's movement. On Sept. 26, Mr Ortega incited violence, calling for "divine mobs" to use sticks, stones, machetes and mortars against women leaders. Groups that have been targeted include the

Autonomous Women's Movement of Nicaragua and the Network Against Violence Against Women.

Mr Ortega, who rose to prominence during the Sandinista revolution in the 1980s and was elected to a second presidential term in 2006, has also approved the detention and search of vehicles in Nicaragua. He has attacked the media, calling them "puppets of the empire," and promised war against independent civil society.

With his message of fear and repression, CEMUJER believes Mr Ortega is seeking to quiet women's voices, isolate members of the women's movement and question their credibility. His policies have created an unsafe environment for women's groups in Nicaragua, promoting a hostile atmosphere conducive to murders and disappearances of women.

Mr Ortega also stands accused of sexually abusing his stepdaughter, Zoilamerica Narvaez, during her childhood. He denies the allegations, but refused to give up his parliamentary immunity to be tried in Nicaraguan courts.

Minister Selma Estrada, the former Director of Honduras' National Women's Institute, resigned her post in August in opposition to an official visit Mr Ortega made to Honduras. Alba America Guirola Zelaya, Founder and Director of CEMUJER, recently sent a letter to Ms Estrada praising her for her actions.

In addition to asking their president to declare Mr Ortega a "persona non grata" in El Salvador, the women of CEMUJER are appealing to Amnesty International to tell its members about the oppressive conditions in Nicaragua.

CEMUJER is joined in its appeal by members of the Institute for Human Rights of the Central American University (IDHUCA), the Feminist Collective for Local Development, Women Transforming, Las Dignas, AMUSAMECO, Las Mélidas, and Economic and Social Micro-Region.

AP has sent Peace Fellow Hannah McKeeth, who studied at Trinity Western University in British Columbia, to volunteer with CEMUJER this fall.

- Read the [blog](#) of AP Peace Fellow Hannah McKeeth
- Read [CEMUJER's press release](#)