OPEN LETTER

to the President of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and to the IACHR Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts on Nicaragua, the Argentinian Team of Forensic Anthropology and SITU Research of New York

from Nicaraguan civil society and from members of North American and European networks in solidarity with Nicaragua's Sandinista Revolution

8 July 2020

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EAAF: Sra. Mercedes Doretti, Directora Programática Centro y Norteamérica

SITU: Brad Samuels, partner

IACHR reports on events in Nicaragua

We are writing to express our concern at what we believe to be very serious shortcomings in the video documentary your organizations released on May 30th this year, about events leading to the deaths of three Nicaraguan citizens demonstrating against their government two years earlier on May 30th 2018.

While your video documentary acknowledges there is no conclusive evidence, it still argues that circumstantial evidence overwhelmingly suggests that armed police officers or Sandinista supporters indiscriminately killed those three protesters who died that day, as well as other people also shot dead in the same set of incidents. Your video documentary acknowledges that two Sandinista supporters were also shot dead in related incidents that day, but you have selectively chosen to omit any consideration of how or why they might have been killed.

Your video documentary reinforces the unjust and extremely dishonest claim by Nicaragua's political opposition, repeated, with no serious attempt at independent corroboration, by the Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts organized by the Inter American Human Rights Commission of the Organization of American States, that the country's Sandinista government deliberately used disproportionate lethal force against peaceful protesters during the violent failed coup attempt between April 18th and July 17th 2018.

We have the following questions about this video documentary and sincerely hope you will respond and answer them in the interests of institutional transparency, democratic debate and genuine accountability.

- Why does the video documentary mention the killing of two Sandinista supporters without noting that they were probably shot dead by armed opposition activists, completely undercutting the video documentary's claim that the opposition protesters were unarmed and peaceful? Surely it then becomes practically impossible to dismiss the probability that the three opposition protesters who are the focus of your video documentary were killed in an exchange of gunfire that began in circumstances involving conflicting versions of the events in question? Why does your video documentary systematically exclude any discussion of that fact?

- Why have you omitted from your video documentary footage, including video reports from the opposition media outlet Radio Corporación and other videos of opposition activists carrying firearms including automatic rifles and firing automatic pistols in the late afternoon of May 30th 2018, near the area from which you claim the fatal shots were fired killing the three protesters who are the focus of your documentary?

- Why does your video documentary omit mentioning the wounding by gunfire in the same set of incidents covered in your documentary of 20 named police officers, a fact which completely contradicts your suggestion that all the opposition protesters were unarmed and peaceful?

- Why does your video documentary portray the police and volunteer police with weapons without explaining that the reason they are heavily armed is that just two days previously, in the same area as the incidents covered by your video, one police officer was killed and five police officers wounded by armed opposition activists preventing those police officers from going to the aid of over 20 workers of Nueva Radio Ya which was under attack by armed opposition activists?

- Why does your video documentary show no footage of police use of firearms which might have been presented to show that there were antecedents for what your organizations argue were the events of May 30th 2018, despite the claim in your video documentary that your organizations have reviewed thousands of videos showing examples of police repression?

- Why does your video documentary omit mentioning that various official documents, press reports and witness testimony contradict the version of events your video documentary presents?

- Why does your video documentary omit the strong possibility of a false flag attack similar to that at Puente Llaguno in Caracas during the failed coup attempt in Venezuela in 2002, since any genuinely scientific account of the events analyzed by your video documentary would have noted such contrary hypotheses and explained why they should be discounted?

- Why does your video documentary not follow up the mention of evidence in the Knox Associates report's sound analysis of the three shootings of "a firearm discharged near the video camera. It's difficult to determine what type of firearm it is, ... It could be a semi-automatic pistol or a rifle", apparently referring to a weapon or weapons used by protesters at the demonstration?

- Why does your video documentary mischaracterize the location of the police confronting the protesters on the Avenida Universitaria? Video footage from May 30, 2018 place them at a road junction 175 meters from the barricade, while a map on your archive website shows the police to be even closer. A comparison of the map in your video with Google maps clearly indicates that it is not to scale, and in fact shows a radius of 145-215 meters, which means that the police were <u>not</u> in the location from which your firearms expert said the fatal shots were fired.

- Why does your video documentary only investigate the three shots supposedly responsible for killing the three protesters on whom you focus, given that Knox Associates' evidence, even though it only covers a few minutes, indicates that there were other exchanges of fire, apparently from both sides?

- In this context, why does the video ignore the admission on page 164 of the original GIEI report, of “the presence of four armed persons among the demonstrators” [GIEI “Informe sobre los hechos de violencia ocurridos entre el 18 de abril y el 30 de mayo de 2018,”], which appears to be referring to the same incident in Avenida Universitaria?

- Why is the investigation portrayed in your video documentary limited to events on the west side of the national stadium when other shootings were taking place on the east side, and these would have influenced the behavior of the police in the entire area of the stadium, especially if they were actually under fire or had recently been under fire, as they had been on May 28th?

- SITU Research and EAAF acknowledge financial support from corporate sources in the United States, including the Open Society Foundations, suggesting a strong ideological component in the production of this video. Who funded your organizations to produce it and how much money did they invest?

We look forward very much to your observations in response to our questions.

Chuck Kaufman

Lowell Richards

Alliance for Global Justice (USA) **Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign Action Group (UK)**

And signed by:

Blanca Segovia Sandino Arauz, Daughter of General Augusto C. Sandino, Nicaragua

Camilo Mejia, Human Rights Activist
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And by the individuals and organisations in Nicaragua, USA and Europe listed overleaf

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