

For Partners Only

ILEANA

NICARAGUAN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER

Ileana is a freelance journalist from the Caribbean coast of Nicaragua, publishing for media such as La Prensa, Nicaragua Investiga, Teletica Canal 7 and Canal 15 (recently closed by the government of Ortega, the director and press officer have been imprisoned). During the last twenty years she has participated voluntarily with different initiatives and organizations in defense of the rights of women, children, indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants. She belongs to a group of independent journalists who promote social mobilization, advocacy and campaigns in defense of freedom of expression, respect for women's rights, non-violence, territorial law of indigenous peoples and afro-descendants, amongst others. Since the country's sociopolitical conflict started in April 2018, this group of journalists along with a group of other people called "autoconvocados Azul y Blanco" led the peaceful protests against the dictatorship of Ortega Murillo in the Nicaraguan Caribbean area.

The government of President Daniel Ortega has begun a sweeping crackdown against the free press and activists in Nicaragua. Police and armed pro-government groups have harassed, intimidated, brutally assaulted, and arbitrarily detained several journalists since April.¹ Hundreds of people have been killed and thousands injured in Nicaragua since 18 April in what has become a popular uprising against the Central American country's president, Daniel Ortega, and his government.²

Since 2007 Ileana has been facing threats, which mainly arose at the time of publications made in national media ('Canal' and newspaper 'La Prensa') and the organization of citizen marches against police corruption and drug trafficking. On April 21 2018 a march took place in the city of Bluefields, which ended with a police attack, killing Ileana's colleague and friend. She communicated the tragedy through various means of national and international communication and identified the police as the main suspect for the murder of the journalist, after which Ileana has been facing the strongest threats.

Since April 2018, 12 media outlets have been closed, 1 journalist has been murdered, 2 have been imprisoned and 65 journalists have been forced into exile. Families of journalists have also been facing threats and persecutions.

During her stay in the Netherlands, Ileana hopes to acquire new tools, energy and knowledge applicable to her pursuit of strengthening human rights in Nicaragua. Furthermore she wishes to expand her contact network so she may be exposed to new ideas, projects and perspectives.

¹ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/12/14/nicaragua-government-crackdown-media-activists>

² <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-44398673>

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SHELTER CITY

Shelter City is a country-wide initiative by Justice and Peace Netherlands, in cooperation with Dutch cities and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which aims to protect human rights defenders. Human rights defenders stand up for their own rights and those of others. This is a difficult struggle. Often, they run great risk: they are silenced, arrested, tortured, and sometimes simply disappear.

When human rights defenders are threatened severely because of their work, they are eligible for a three-month stay in one of the Dutch Shelter Cities. Besides providing rest and respite, their stay in the Netherlands allows human rights defenders to continue their work in a safe environment. In addition, they enlarge their professional network of civil society organizations and political connections in The Hague, Brussels, and elsewhere. Furthermore, the human rights defenders participate in training courses to develop relevant skills. Moreover, through public events and workshops, they contribute to raising awareness about human rights among the citizens of the Shelter Cities.

Ileana will be hosted in Utrecht, with the support of the municipality of Utrecht, Peace Brigades International, and Utrecht University.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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