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Changes introduced by the government to the Comprehensive Law against Violence against Women raised serious concerns. The total ban on abortion remained in place.

Background

Amendments to the Constitution entered into force in February, allowing the President to be elected with a simple majority. Restrictions on consecutive presidential re-election were also lifted.

In May, the UN Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture expressed deep concern at the situation of people deprived of liberty in the country. Nicaragua's human rights record was assessed under the UN Universal Periodic Review (UPR). The state accepted recommendations relating to discrimination against Indigenous Peoples and people of African descent but rejected calls for the decriminalization of abortion and to accede to additional international human rights instruments.

On 19 July, people travelling home after attending the Sandinista revolution anniversary celebrations were shot at in two separate incidents. Five people died and 19 were injured. In October, 12 men were tried and sentenced to between two and 30 years' imprisonment for the attack. Three of them testified in court that they were tortured and forced to give a confession, raising concerns about the investigation and the fairness of the trial.

Women's rights

Reforms passed in September 2013 weakened the effectiveness of the Comprehensive Law against Violence against Women (Law 779), introduced in 2012. As a result of the reforms, women who filed complaints about domestic violence may be offered mediation with their attackers in cases involving crimes punishable by less than five years' imprisonment, such as actual bodily harm, the abduction of children, and threats. This means that women may find themselves having to face their attackers in the mediation process, while those accused of committing abuses may avoid being held to account for their crimes. According to the NGO Women's Network against Violence,

seven of the 47 women killed in the first six months of 2014 had been in mediation with their abusive partner. An executive decree issued in July further reinforced the mediation aspect of the law and reduced the definition of femicide to killings of women within relationships. The executive decree raised concerns around the use of mediation to redress violence against women. Numerous legal challenges against the decree were submitted to the Supreme Court of Justice.

The total ban on all forms of abortion remained in place. Since the total ban was introduced in 2006, dozens of appeals against it have been submitted to the Supreme Court of Justice. However, the Court had yet to rule on these appeals.

On 8 March, International Women's Day, a peaceful demonstration to highlight gender inequalities and violence against women was blocked by police. Women human rights defenders claimed they had obtained the necessary permission for the event and feared it marked a further limitation on independent civil society movements.

Freedom of assembly

No progress was made in investigating alleged beatings of students and senior citizen demonstrators in Managua in June 2013 by what appeared to be government supporters, while the police stood by. More than 100 students supported the protest by senior citizen groups to demand a minimum state pension.

Indigenous Peoples' rights

In March, Indigenous, Afro-descendant and other groups expressed concern at the government's decision to grant a licence for the construction of a major infrastructure project known as the Gran Canal Interoceánico, a channel connecting the Atlantic Ocean and Pacific Ocean. Among other concerns, the groups claimed that the licence was granted without the free, prior or informed consent of the Indigenous groups whose territory the canal would cut across. Works started in December, amid protests that resulted in clashes with protesters and included reports of police beatings of detainees.

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