

Act now to end violence, Zeid urges Nicaraguan authorities

The Nicaraguan authorities should “take real steps” to prevent further loss of life in the country amid ongoing protests and violent repression by pro-Government “armed elements”, the UN’s top [human rights](#) official said on Thursday.

Noting in a [statement](#) that “approximately 250 people, many of them young persons”, had been killed since mid-April in demonstrations against President Daniel Ortega’s Government, Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein highlighted a “climate of intimidation and insecurity” on the streets.

Thousands of people had also been injured in the violence and 12 police officers had also been killed, according to official sources, the High Commissioner said.

Although the “excessive use of force” by police officers against demonstrators had decreased, violence by “pro-Government elements has continued to escalate”, he insisted.

Those targeted include communities that have erected barricades or roadblocks, with “signs of selective repression” against demonstrators and their families, human rights defenders and members of the church.

I now urge the authorities to take real steps to recognize the seriousness of the situation – *High Commissioner Zeid*

More than 700 people are also reported to have been arbitrarily detained and some have been allegedly subjected to ill-treatment, while cases of disappearances have also been reported, according to Zeid’s statement.

Amid an atmosphere of “widespread fear”, the UN official urged the State to “recognize the seriousness of the situation” and adopt “appropriate measures to protect the population and prevent further deaths”.

The High Commissioner’s comments follow a visit to Nicaragua by a team from the UN Human Rights Office, OHCHR, from 26 June to 3 July.

Their mission was to carry out human rights monitoring and support the work of a State commission tasked with disarming “pro-Government elements” and encourage the dismantling of barricades.

“While I am grateful to the Nicaraguan Government for inviting the UN Human Rights Office to the country, I now urge the authorities to take real steps to recognize the seriousness of the situation,” Zeid said.

In addition, Zeid called for “meaningful steps” to address impunity and guarantee justice for victims, noting that the “violence and repression” in Nicaragua were products of the “systematic erosion of human rights over the years”.

“I call on the Government to cease State violence and to dismantle the pro-Government armed elements that have been increasingly responsible for repression and attacks,” he said. “Those who have instigated or permitted such armed elements to act must also be held to account.”

After urging the authorities to preserve any “evidence” that might be used in future investigations, the High Commissioner indicated that his office will stay in Nicaragua and coordinate its activities with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.