

UN chief welcomes start of Church-mediated national dialogue in Nicaragua

The United Nations chief has welcomed the start of a national dialogue in Nicaragua between civic groups and the government, following deadly clashes between security forces and people protesting the country's planned social security reforms.

"The Secretary-General welcomes [the start of a national dialogue](#) led by the Catholic Church in Nicaragua," said UN Deputy Spokesperson Farhan Haq, in a statement issued on Friday.

"At the same time, the Secretary-General remains concerned about recent violence and calls on all Nicaraguans to abide by the rule of law, respect for human rights and the peaceful resolution of differences," he added.

According to media reports, demonstrations that started in mid-April swelled into a nationwide revolt against President Daniel Ortega's 11-year rule after they were met with lethal repression by pro-government forces, and the talks mediated by Nicaragua's Roman Catholic Church were attended by the President.

Human rights groups reported that at least 65 people, many of them student protesters, have been killed so far.

Mr. Haq said the Secretary-General also saluted the arrival in the country of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights – an organ of the Organization of American States – whose mission is to promote and protect human rights in the American hemisphere.