

Statement by Sir Ronald Sanders, Ambassador of Antigua and Barbuda
on Declaration on the worsening situation in Nicaragua
at the Special Meeting of the Permanent Council of the Organization of American
States
to consider the Situation in Nicaragua
on Friday, February 18, 2022

Mr Chairman

Antigua and Barbuda has actively participated in the Declaration that 27 of the OAS member states are issuing today, and to which we are drawing the attention of this Permanent Council.

We are doing so, Mr Chairman, because it is the right thing to do.

Human lives and human liberty are what is at stake here.

Nothing is more precious.

We are appalled at the compelling and disturbing testimony that we heard today from the distinguished speakers, Bianca Jagger and Mrs Berta Valle with whose anguish over her imprisoned husband, Felix Maradiaga, we sympathise and empathise.

Antigua and Barbuda could not allow the death in prison of Hugo Torres to pass without joining his family and friends in mourning his death and expressing anguish at the circumstances in which he died.

We could not allow his death to pass without joining an outcry at the inhumane conditions he was compelled to endure.

No one should believe for a moment that the circumstances of his detention and death are in any way condoned. Indeed, they are profoundly condemned.

There is, Mr Chairman, widespread revulsion over this development, and all those responsible for it should understand this message clearly.

It is especially alarming to my country where political, civil and human rights are respected and upheld, including the right of political dissent, that there are more than 160 prisoners of conscience now detained.

All of us, as representatives of our countries to this Organization of American States, should be especially concerned that one of the persons arrested is a former Ambassador to this Organisation.

He is Egdar Parrales who served here from April 1982 to October 1986. He is 79 years old.

Reportedly, he was charged for commenting adversely on the decision to denounce the Charter of this Organization.

Apart from all the violations of international law, and the treaty obligations that we can cite, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the American Convention on Human Rights and the Inter-American Democratic Charter, at the bottom line this situation involves human life and human liberty – two rights that the peoples of all our nations hold dear.

We, in Antigua and Barbuda – and in the countries of CARICOM of which Antigua and Barbuda is a staunch member – arose out of slavery, exploitation and the deprivation of human, civil and political rights.

We fought to attain those rights, and we treasure them.

Just as we strongly uphold them for ourselves, we stand up for them everywhere.

There are no circumstances, Mr. Chairman, that justify arbitrary arrest and imprisonment of any persons in inhumane conditions, particularly the elderly who depend upon regular medication.

It is deeply troubling that the detained persons have not had normal medical visits- something that is routine in my country and other member states of CARICOM.

Mr. Chairman, my delegation is deeply concerned about the well-being of each of the more than 160 persons now held in prison and their treatment.

We are equally concerned about the nature of the charges brought against these persons and the manner of the trials that have started against them.

These charges and trials lack the basic standards of due process and would not be tolerated in Courts in countries of CARICOM.

Therefore, Mr. Chairman, we join in calling for an end to these sham trials, for the release of persons clearly arbitrarily arrested and detained for their political views, and for their immediate release.

In the words of the inspirational urging by the revered Nicaraguan Poet, Ruben Dario, in his Poem, Pax:

“Do not seek darkness, do not pursue chaos

And do not water our fertile land with blood”.

Thank you, Mr Chairman