

# **To the European Parliament: Award Sakharov Prize to Dr. Vilma Núñez and Bishop Rolando Álvarez**

Friday 29 September 2023, by [SOS Nicaragua Europa](#), [Petition / Sign-on Letter](#) (Date first published: 28 September 2023).

**The signatories to this petition welcome the nomination on September 20<sup>th</sup> 2023 of Dr Vilma Núñez de Escorcía and Bishop Rolando José Álvarez Lagos of Nicaragua for the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought of the European Parliament.**

We call on all Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), and in particular the Foreign Affairs and Development Committees of that Parliament, to support the candidacy of Dr Vilma Núñez de Escorcía and Bishop Rolando José Álvarez Lagos in the upcoming decisions on whom to grant the Sakharov Prize on 12<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> October.

In accordance with the International Federation of Human Rights, we believe that the joint nomination of Dr. Vilma Núñez and Bishop Rolando Álvarez *“is a valuable recognition of the serious situation that exists in Nicaragua and the efforts made by Nicaraguan civil society for freedom in the country. Vilma Núñez and Monsignor Rolando Álvarez have decided to remain in Nicaragua despite the risk to their lives and integrity. They are one of the most courageous symbols of the struggle for the defense of human rights in the country.”*

To award the Sakharov Prize to Dr Vilma Núñez and Bishop Rolando Álvarez is to recognize the longing of the entire Nicaraguan people to recuperate their right to freedom of conscience, thought and religion and all other human rights that have been brutally stripped away by the Ortega-Murillo dictatorship.

## **Background**

Vilma Núñez de Escorcía, when a student opposed the Somoza dictatorship for which she was arrested. She was the first Nicaraguan woman appointed Vice-President of the Supreme Court of Justice in 1979. She is co-founder and has been president of CENIDH for 33 years, one of the most emblematic human rights organizations in the country, which has led numerous struggles for the advancement of freedom and democracy. In December 2018, CENIDH was arbitrarily deprived of its legal status and assets. Vilma is currently FIDH Deputy Secretary. Since the protests of 2018, CENIDH has documented and denounced the serious repression and accompanied thousands of victims of human rights violations - murders, arbitrary detentions, persecution, torture - in the documentation and advice of their cases, and in the search for justice. On February 15, 2023, without any trial, the regime declared her a “traitor to the homeland” and a fugitive from justice”, stripped her of her nationality, her property, etc. leaving her stateless in her own country, subject to multiple violations of her human rights.

Monsignor Rolando José Álvarez Lagos, since 2018, has been a victim of persecution for prompting in his homilies reflection on the country’s crisis, state repression and on the victims of human rights

violations. In August 2022, he was arbitrarily placed under house arrest. On February 9<sup>th</sup>, 2023, the regime banished 222 political prisoners. Monsignor Álvarez refused to board the plane and was therefore transferred to prison. On February 10<sup>th</sup>, without charge or trial, he was arbitrarily sentenced to 26 years in prison and his nationality was withdrawn, among other penalties. Since that day he has been imprisoned, stateless, and held in one of the country's torture centres, and his physical and psychological welfare is unknown, in flagrant violation of all his human rights.

Data taken from Nicaragua: [Nicaragua: Vilma Núñez and Monsignor Álvarez nominated for the European Parliament's Human Rights Prize](#)

**SOS Nicaragua Europe, the network of civil society organizations of the Nicaraguan community in 14 countries in Europe, demands the freedom of Monsignor Rolando Álvarez and more than 90 political prisoners held by the Ortega-Murillo dictatorship.**

**SOS Nicaragua Europa**

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**P.S.**

• To sign:

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