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## Nicaragua: Human rights defender Freddy Alberto Navas López sentenced

On 10 February 2022, the Nicaraguan Public Prosecutor's Office convicted peasant farmer leader and human rights defender Freddy Alberto Navas López on charges of "conspiracy to undermine national integrity and treason". The defender was charged by the Nicaraguan Public Prosecutor's Office on 1 September 2021 after 59 days of being held incommunicado in the "El Chipote" Judicial Aid Directorate. Elements of the Nicaraguan National Police violently carried out his arbitrary detention on 5 July 2021.

[Freddy Alberto Navas López](#) is a peasant leader, human rights defender and coordinator of the Movimiento Campesino y Aliados de Nicaragua (Peasant Movement and Allies of Nicaragua), which was originally founded in 2013, with the aim of stopping the Nicaragua Grand Inter-oceanic Canal project. The human rights defender's work in the defence of the land and in favour of the rights of peasants has been prominent for the last eight years. From 2018 to date, Freddy Alberto Navas López has been involved in protests seeking the democratisation of Nicaragua.

The guilty verdict against Freddy Alberto Navas López was given behind closed doors by the judge of the Third Criminal Trial District who requested 10 years in prison for the human rights defender. The sentence is scheduled to be read on 18 February. The events take place in the midst of a worrying [context](#) of criminalisation and trials against more than 40 people, including human rights defenders, journalists, communicators, opponents of the government, and seven presidential candidates, all accused of similar crimes regulated in articles 410 and 412 of the Penal Code.

Front Line Defenders recalls that Freddy Alberto Navas López has suffered a long list of harassment by the police since he was first arrested on 17 November 2018 in reprisal for his participation in the protests. The human rights defender was subjected to ill-treatment and was subsequently released on 11 June 2019 under the Amnesty Law. Since October 2020 he has been prevented from exercising his right to free mobility as for several months elements of the National Police prevented him and his wife from leaving their home. On 14 September 2019, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) granted precautionary measures in favour of the human rights defender on the grounds that he was at imminent risk as he had been subjected to further surveillance and interrogation by the police following his release.

On several occasions Front Line Defenders has [expressed](#) its deep concern for the health and integrity of Freddy Alberto Navas, who must have access to medication and adequate medical care as he is suffering from severe lower back pain aggravated by the ill-treatment he suffered during his initial detention in 2018, as a result of his peaceful human rights activities in Nicaragua. In September 2021 Freddy informed his relatives that he has been subjected to long interrogations in the early hours of the morning, that his health had deteriorated and he has lost considerable weight.

Front Line Defenders reiterates that the detention and criminalisation of the human rights defender is part of a strategy of judicial harassment against human rights defenders, as since 2018, human rights defenders and opponents of the government in Nicaragua have reported being the target of constant harassment by the Nicaraguan National Police.

**Front Line Defenders urges the Nicaraguan authorities to:**

1. Immediately and unconditionally release the human rights defender Freddy Alberto Navas López and drop all charges against him, on the grounds that they are motivated solely by his legitimate and peaceful work in defence of human rights;
2. Conduct an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the judicial harassment against Freddy Alberto Navas López, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
3. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity and security of Freddy Alberto Navas López, as well as that of his family in constant consultation with them;
4. Guarantee that all human rights defenders in Nicaragua are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free from all restrictions, including judicial harassment.