

**Nicaragua, the OAS and its
Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts**

Bad faith human rights reporting at its worst

a briefing prepared for

the Alliance for Global Justice
and The Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign Action Group

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Introduction

Two conflicting accounts dominate reporting of the violent crisis in Nicaragua during 2018. The Nicaraguan authorities insist the crisis was driven by a violent failed coup attempt. The political opposition and its foreign supporters argue that a peaceful majority popular uprising suffered brutal murderous repression by the government. The latter version has generally prevailed in large part because it has been categorically adopted by the [Inter American Commission for Human Rights](#) (IACHR), in particular by the its Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts on Nicaragua (GIEI).

However, the work of the GIEI does not even meet generally accepted basic requirements of reporting and documentation. The GIEI has systematically suppressed or excluded from its account of the 2018 crisis in Nicaragua witness testimony, documentary evidence and audio-visual material contradicting its account. This is demonstrably and egregiously so in its reporting of every one of the four incidents it has prioritized in [the internet presentation of its reporting](#) on Nicaragua.

Oblivious to earlier criticisms, the GIEI has now repeated its approach and its mistakes in its latest report on Nicaragua, published on May 30, 2020. This is why an open letter was sent to the IACHR in July 2020 from individuals in Nicaragua and from individuals and solidarity groups across North and South American and in Europe.

The GIEI's fundamental cynical deceit is fourfold.

- the GIEI abused the confidence of the Nicaraguan authorities [violating the terms of its invitation](#) to Nicaragua by failing to coordinate its research and investigation with the [Commission for Truth, Justice and Peace](#) appointed by Nicaragua's legislature
- the GIEI falsely pretend that during the crisis the Nicaraguan authorities did not face deliberate, extremely violent attacks by hundreds of often well-armed opposition activists, when in fact this was very much the case
- the GIEI claims that almost all the victims of the violence were peaceful protesters but omitted, without investigation, well founded reports that over 400 police officers suffered gunshot wounds, 23 officers were killed, a total of over 60 Sandinista supporters were killed and many hundreds injured, as well as over 100 people not directly involved in the conflict being killed and many hundreds more bystanders injured as a direct result of opposition violence
- although failing to take testimony from the many hundreds of victims of opposition violence, by contrast the GIEI have repeated without independent corroboration reports and claims from supporters and members of Nicaragua's political opposition as well as Nicaraguan non governmental organizations explicitly aligned with the country's political opposition and [all funded by the US government](#).

In effect, the IACHR, its parent body the Organization of American States and its subsidiary body the GIEI have all falsely accused Nicaragua's government by

- basing their accusations almost exclusively on reports and testimony from supporters and members of Nicaragua's US -government funded political opposition and their associated organizations and media

- systematically failing to secure genuinely independent corroboration of those accusations
- negligently failing to investigate credible reports and testimony contradicting those false accusations
- deliberately suppressing evidence presented by the Nicaraguan authorities contradicting those false accusations
- evading their duty to explain why they discount or dismiss competing rival versions of the events on which they are reporting.

The open letter and accompanying articles presented here only examine the latest of various incidents highlighted by the GIEI in its reporting on the events in Nicaragua in 2018. However, the material demonstrates beyond question that the Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts on Nicaragua has not acted or reported in good faith.

It is also further confirmation of the broader reality that the OAS as an institution acts deliberately in the service of the United States government's regional foreign policy, as it did for example [in the 2019 Bolivian elections](#), facilitating a US government-supported coup against Bolivia's legitimately elected government. With elections due in Nicaragua in 2021, the propaganda campaign by the US, aided by the OAS and its subsidiary bodies, is certain to continue.

As well as the open letter, the accompanying articles examine the incidents highlighted by the GIEI in its new report and the context for it. John Perry [looks in detail](#) at the research carried out and shows that it contains many errors and omissions. Jorge Capelán [looks at the previous work](#) of the other agency, EAAF (Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team), arguing that it has now lent itself to 'a vile manoeuvre against the Nicaraguan people'. Stephen Sefton [examines the background](#) of one of the agencies commissioned to do this work, SITU Research, and how it operates from questionable principles.

The Alliance for Global Justice (US) and the Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign Action Group (UK) sent the open letter, signed by both those organizations and also by a number of prominent international and Nicaraguan activists and experts. Signatories include Blanca Segovia Sandino Arauz, daughter of General Augusto C. Sandino, Camilo Mejia, Human Rights Activist and former Amnesty International prisoner of conscience, Patricia Villegas, President of TeleSur, Venezuela, S. Brian Willson, war veteran, author, lawyer, and also the four defenders of the Venezuelan embassy in Washington D.C.

Other signatories include Nicaragua's main labour unions and the country's biggest rural workers' organization, as well as numerous individuals and non-governmental bodies from Nicaragua, the USA and Europe.

*Stephen Sefton, Estelí, Nicaragua.
John Perry, Masaya, Nicaragua.
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Revisiting 2018 Mother’s March in Nicaragua: New Report Repeats Old Bias

John Perry, COHA, July 2nd 2020

<https://www.coha.org/revisiting-2018-mothers-march-in-nicaragua-new-rep...>

A report issued at the end of May repeats allegations of government repression in Nicaragua during violent protests in 2018. It was commissioned by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), a body of the Organization of American States (OAS), and revives arguments that the Sandinista government is systematically violating human rights. It purports to provide new evidence, but in reality the facts are more complicated than the report suggests. They warrant careful examination to ensure that the international community is getting the full, unadulterated story.



Pro-government marchers at Mother’s Day March in Managua, May 30, 2018. Photo: El 19 Digital]

In April 2018, violence erupted in Nicaragua as opposition groups began an unsuccessful attempt to force Daniel Ortega’s government out of office. One of the emblematic events of a traumatic three-month period was the so-called “March of the Mothers” on May 30. It is also one of the most contentious, and remains so to this day.

The march took place in the capital, Managua, at the height of the opposition’s influence – many Nicaraguans then still believed false reports that hundreds of students had been killed by police in the preceding weeks, and they were yet to experience the worst of the violence linked to the roadblocks set up across the country by the opposition. Although the main march was largely peaceful, numerous violent clashes afterwards led to eight people being shot and killed with more than 90 injured, including 20 police officers.

Why, two years later, is this still important? The internal threat to Nicaragua’s elected Sandinista government may have abated, with opinion polls showing that most Nicaraguans reject any return to the violence and the damage to daily life brought by the opposition’s tactics in 2018.

But the external threat remains severe: the US and its allies have imposed sanctions and continue to turn the screws on Nicaragua's economy and its access to outside aid, even denying resources needed to fight the COVID-19 pandemic. The US is also increasingly able to isolate Nicaragua within the OAS, where it has more allies among the member nations after regime change in Bolivia and the installation of a fake "representative" from Venezuela.

On June 24, there was yet another attempt to get member states to agree that Nicaragua is violating the OAS's Democratic Charter. Although it was again unsuccessful, it inevitably leads to further investigations and threats of expulsion, which could provide the pretext for more direct US intervention. Nicaragua is falsely portrayed as a pariah state, while gross violations of democratic principles are overlooked elsewhere – for example in Honduras and Bolivia, whose current governments are strong US allies.

Focusing on human rights is a key way of putting pressure on Nicaragua, since evidence of supposed systematic violations encourages other countries to maintain sanctions or impose new ones (invariably, in the case of European governments and regional allies such as Canada, following in the footsteps of the US).

Whatever measures are taken by the Nicaraguan government to reassert its commitment to human rights (e.g. amnesties for so-called "political" prisoners, welcoming back those who sought asylum in Costa Rica in 2018, permitting a virulently anti-government media to operate freely), are never enough to meet US expectations. The political opposition in Nicaragua is alive to this, continuously feeding the media with stories of alleged abuses.

In the IACHR, the OAS of course has its own mechanism "to promote and protect human rights." It, too, has been totally unbalanced in its assessments of Nicaragua since the violence of 2018 and has regularly provided the OAS with biased reports.

Among the worst of these was the work of a six-month mission by a group of "independent" experts which led to a 468-page report, produced for IACHR by [GIEI-Nicaragua](#) (Grupo Interdisciplinario de Expertos Independientes).^[1] It looked specifically at alleged human rights violations in Nicaragua during the period April–May 2018, culminating with the "March of the Mothers."

GIEI's work was notable at the time for its almost exclusive focus on victims of violence allegedly committed by police, paying scant attention to or dismissing evidence that many Sandinistas, bystanders, and indeed police officers were killed or injured during those violent weeks. Many attempts were made by the government to persuade the GIEI investigating team to properly consider the evidence of opposition violence, including attacks on the police on May 30 2018.^[2] Nevertheless the GIEI, reviewing events that day, implied that the injuries suffered by police might have been faked.

Their elaborate and detailed report perhaps had insufficient impact when it was published in December 2018, because GIEI was recalled recently to revisit some of the evidence, focusing on the "March of the Mothers," and publishing a new report this year to coincide with the anniversary of that violent day two years ago.

This time, the GIEI brought in expert consultants. The [Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team \(EAAF\)](#), from Buenos Aires, had worked previously in unraveling the history of the "dirty war" in Argentina and other projects. [SITU Research](#), based in New York, had done videos reconstructing other violent events, including in Ukraine.

However, rather than (as might be hoped) looking with fresh eyes and in greater depth at a confused and confusing sequence of violent incidents, the project continues the practice of highly selective use of the facts and incomplete reporting that characterized GIEI's earlier work.

What could have been a genuinely neutral attempt to “forensically” examine the events, turns instead into another propaganda exercise which concludes that the events were “part of the systematic repression of civilian demonstrations.” The rest of this article shows why this conclusion is justified.

“March of the Mothers” ends in violence

Most of the violence in Managua on May 30, 2018 occurred in the late afternoon, on the north side of the city centre, near to the newly built national baseball stadium. Several groups of protesters, instead of proceeding to the march’s agreed destination (the UCA – University of Central America) headed north towards the stadium.

One of these groups approached along the Avenida Universitaria, where they began to fire at police using homemade mortars and, visual evidence suggests, might also have used conventional weapons. They then retreated slightly to set up two roadblocks. Around 45 minutes later, at 5:25pm that afternoon, three marchers —Jonathan Eduardo Morazán Meza, Francisco Javier Reyes Zapata and Daniel Josias Reyes Rivera—were shot and later died.

Rather than examine the general violence in the stadium area, the new “reconstruction” focuses solely on the incident including these three deaths. The [presentation by SITU/EAAF^{\[3\]}](#) consists of a seven-minute video and two reports by firearms experts – one analyzing some of the gunshots and where they came from, and the other looking at the lethality or otherwise of the homemade weapons (mortars and bombs) used by the protesters. In addition, a [website^{\[4\]}](#) built in 2018 by SITU/EAAF for the GIEI with maps, photographs and other videos, serves as an “archive” for the reconstruction.

Inevitably it is the seven-minute video which has received most attention. Because of its use of architectonic graphics to supplement and embellish the photographic material, it gives the appearance of a professional, “forensic” examination of the events surrounding the three deaths, although in fact it contains little or no new material.

It begins by showing the march and its route, lending an air of authenticity by using phrases such as “videos support testimony that...” to describe completely undisputed facts such as that the march started peacefully. It then describes the making of the roadblocks on the Avenida Universitaria, the positions of the police which it links to the incident, the trajectory of the bullets, and how the three victims were carried away to hospital.

The new evidence is not in the video, but in the report of a US firearms expert called Michael Knox, submitted a year ago. Knox analyses the sounds of shooting captured on different videos filmed at the roadblocks. He concludes that the bulk of the gunfire aimed at the marchers comes from the north, parallel with the Avenida Universitaria and from a distance of 200-300 meters.

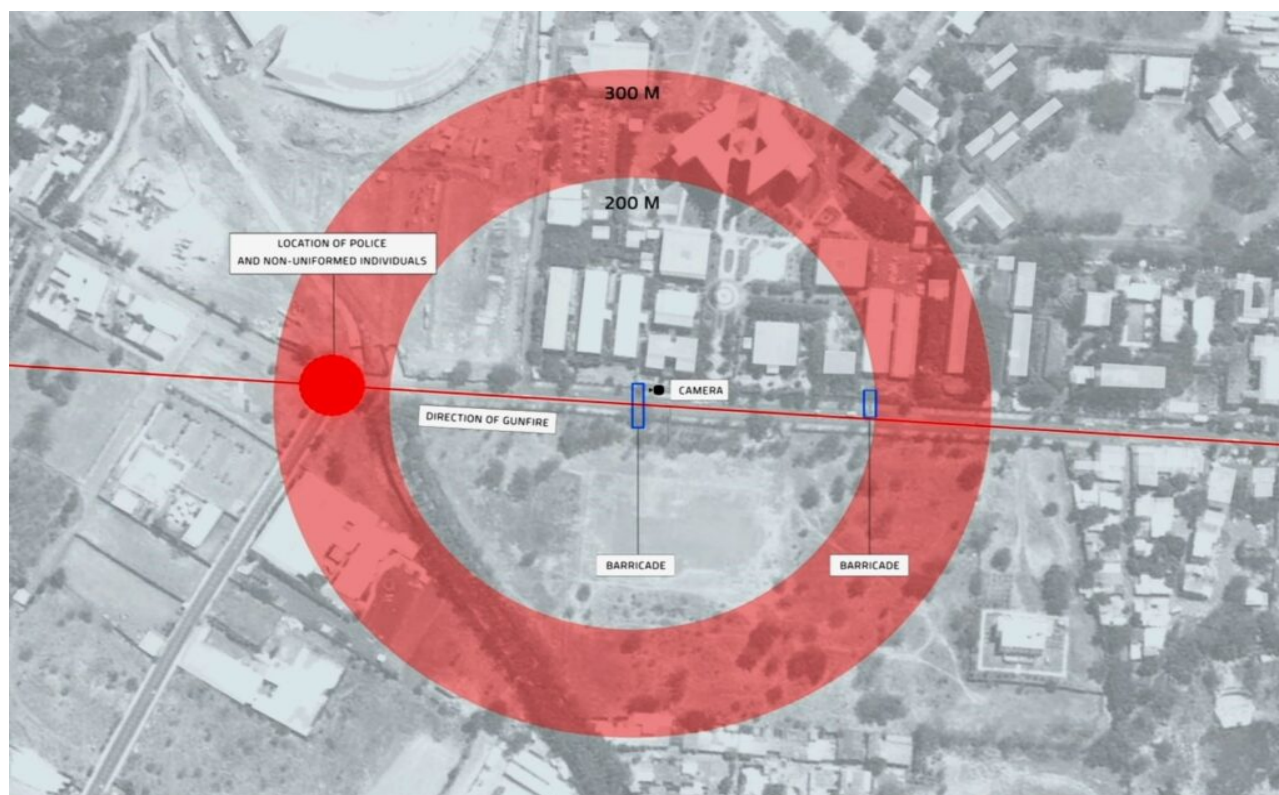
He says there were also shots from “a few hundred meters distant” and “sounds of a firearm being discharged near the camera.” This “could be either a semiautomatic handgun or rifle,” and its shots are distinct from those of hand-held mortars which the demonstrators were also firing towards the police.

Knox’s report is clear, but it only examines where the shooters were positioned, making no assessment of who they were. SITU/EAAF, however, says Knox was “analyzing the weapons of police” and in their video claim to reveal that the shooters were armed police gathered precisely at the mid-point of the distance indicated by Knox as being the likely range of the shots: 250 meters from where the victims were standing.

However, as the map and box below explain in more detail, the video is either in error or has been manipulated to show the police as being 250 meters from the victims when in fact they were considerably closer and, according to Knox’s evidence, could not have fired the shots that hit people at the roadblock.

Knox was asked to comment on this anomaly by the writer of this article but replied, “I was not involved in the production of any maps, drawings, or measurements beyond the two camera-to-firearm distance measurements I calculated based on the audio signals from two of the recorded shots. I believe you will need to address your concerns with the folks at SITU Research.”^[5]

Mistakes in the SITU-EAAF video and map showing the range of the gunshots



In the [video](#) the commentator says (at 03’10” in the English version) that police were stationed approximately 250 meters north of the roadblock where the demonstrators were taking cover.

A photo shows the police “holding firearms,” although in fact the officer shown circled appears clearly to be holding a shotgun used to fire rubber bullets. Later, at 05’40”, the video has a map showing the position of these police officers (see screenshot), putting them halfway across a red band which marks radii of 200 meters and 300 meters respectively from the main roadblock (shown in blue).

Their position appears to tie in exactly with the video’s assertion that they were 250 meters from the three victims, at the midpoint of the range of the gunfire as calculated by Knox.

Another possible explanation offered by Knox is that the deaths resulted from shots from further away, i.e. those “a few hundred meters distant.” The video commentator says at 05’11” that police agents were “reported” to be on the Lomas de Tiscapa (some 650 meters from the roadblock).

However, this and other possible explanations are not examined by SITU/EAAF, nor is any proof offered that there were shooters in that location, much less that any such shooters were police officers. SITU/EAAF concluded that their analysis “strongly suggests that [the victims] were killed by police and/or parapolice forces firing at protesters.” But in fact the combination of Knox’s evidence and the photos shown in the video are, at best, inconclusive and at worst could indicate that it was someone else who was doing the shooting.

Use of firearms by opposition demonstrators is discounted

There is another notable gap between Knox's evidence and the video, in a different respect. Knox's evidence of "a firearm being discharged near the camera" is not pursued. Yet the [GIEI's own 468-page report](#), which included an examination of the same incident, had admitted "the presence of *four* armed persons among the demonstrators"[my emphasis].^[6] That this earlier evidence seems to be confirmed by Knox is clearly crucial. Yet it is ignored by the GIEI report.

Picture the scene as it very likely developed that afternoon. A group of about a dozen police officers, sharing motorcycles and carrying weapons including shotguns for firing rubber bullets, face a roadblock 170 meters away, made from piles of ripped-up paving stones, which had shielded several hundred protesters for 45 minutes. Many protesters were firing mortars (as shown in the photograph below, a still from the video). Among these are also bomb-throwers and (according to Knox) at least one person armed with and shooting "either a semiautomatic handgun or rifle."

While the mortars are said to have a range of only 60 meters, the improvised shrapnel or incendiary material they typically launch can clearly do a lot of damage to anyone approaching within that distance. Their noise and smoke would also provide cover for any conventional gunfire (and indeed in one of the videos on the archive website, police appear to be crouching to shield themselves from such gunfire). In this confusing conflict, the evidence of what happened is far from clear and certainly does not support the GIEI conclusion that this was an "arbitrary and disproportionate use of force"^[7] on the part of the government.

Wider events on March 30 2018 are ignored

A much bigger weakness of the SITU-EAAF video is that it completely ignores the wider context for the events, without which any interpretation of the incident that resulted in three deaths is meaningless. Many opposition leaders, in the weeks before May 30, had spoken openly of the need for lives to be lost in the interest of their cause;^[8] they turned out to be prescient.

On the same day, there was another large, pro-government demonstration taking place in Managua. While those attending the "March of the Mothers" arrived without incident, one of the caravans of vehicles bringing people to the Sandinista march that morning was halted and attacked by gunfire south of the city of Estelí, with one person among the Sandinista supporters killed and 22 injured (one of whom subsequently died of his injuries).^[9]

Much later that day, after the demonstrations in Managua, two more Sandinista supporters – Kevin Antonio Coffin Reyes and Heriberto Maudiel Pérez Díaz – were both shot in the chest in a confrontation with opposition demonstrators only 600 meters to the north-west of the incidents the GIEI describes on the Avenida Universitaria, at a similar time in the late afternoon. GIEI, in their report [p.173], acknowledge that they died but accuse the police of "conspiring against the clarification of these two deaths," simply because in their [preliminary report the next day](#)^[10] the police bracketed them with other deaths and injuries that occurred around the same period of time.

The routes of the two marches were planned so as to keep them more than 2 kilometres apart, to avoid inevitable conflict if the two sides met. Until the time when the opposition march concluded, it had passed without violence. When they deviated from the planned route, the leaders of the group in the Avenida Universitaria must have known they were heading towards the police lines that had been put in place earlier in the day to prevent them from reaching further north. While the video implies they were the only group to break away from the main march, in fact various groups headed north to attack the police and to close in on Sandinista supporters.



A screenshot from the SITU/EAAF video showing the roadblock and protesters in Avenida Universitaria
(photo credit: Screenshot from <http://gieincaragua-cartografia-violencia.org/>)

In part they appeared to respond to rumors (fed by commentators from opposition *Radio Corporación*) that there were sharpshooters stationed in the national baseball stadium, which sits between Avenida Universitaria and Paseo Tiscapa to the east, and whose boundary appears in the SITU/EAAF “reconstruction.” This became the scene of most of the day’s violence. Examples are shown in a different video analysis made in 2019 by [Juventud Presidente](#) (a Sandinista-aligned group).^[11]

Clips from the stadium’s security cameras show the stadium building initially deserted except for its usual security guards. But as early as 4:10pm, a video clip shows fights *between* opposition groups taking place in front of the stadium. Soon, opposition members arrive from the Paseo Tiscapa, some carrying conventional firearms. None of these protesters are shot at from the stadium building, where supposedly the sharpshooters were hidden.

At about the same time, well *before* the incident examined by SITU/EAAF, demonstrators are filmed confronting police in the Avenida Universitaria, north of the point where roadblocks were built at 4:40pm. The different clips, some from opposition *Radio Corporación*, show how opposition groups were firing mortars or throwing Molotov cocktails but also that several had pistols or high caliber firearms. They gained temporary control of the whole stadium area, sacking the stadium offices and firing at police. [Another video](#)^[12] even shows armed protesters firing at *other opposition marchers* who respond with shouts of “we’re the same.”

Over the period between 4:30 and 5:30pm no less than 20 police officers were injured trying to retain control of the stadium area, many [receiving serious gunshot wounds](#).^[13] It is unconscionable that the so-called “forensic” analysis of the shooting of the three marchers at 5:25pm by SITU/EAAF ignores the wider violence in the same area.

In doing so, it ignores plausible explanations either that the police fired the lethal shots but were themselves under attack, or that the lethal shots were “false flag” shots by opposition gunmen coming from the stadium area to the Avenida Universitaria.

The deaths and injuries of police and demonstrators are listed in the preliminary police report on the following day, still available on the Policía Nacional website and of course accessible to SITU/EAAF. ^[14] The confused nature of the violence, and the fact that much of it was perpetrated by opposition marchers, was made clear in [an eye-witness report](#) published 24 hours after the events by Italian journalist Giorgio Trucchi. ^[15]

Why the new video has been released

Roll forward two years, to May 30, 2020, when the SITU/EAAF video is released. Local right-wing media report that “a video reconstruction shows how Daniel Ortega’s police killed at least three people” ([100%Noticias](#)) and that “new forensic evidence” shows the government was responsible for the “massacre” ([Confidencial](#)). ^[16]

These reports contradict each other. *100% Noticias* said that the three marchers whose deaths were examined were killed by paramilitaries stationed only 150 meters away from them; *Confidencial*, on the other hand, claimed the shots were fired “at least 300 metres” from the roadblock where the protesters were killed. As we saw, the confusion may well have resulted from the contradictions in the evidence from the “reconstruction” itself.

By publishing the video on the anniversary of the march, at an online event featuring mothers of the victims, GIEI clearly aims to revive its message that the Sandinista government is murdering innocent Nicaraguans who protest against it. This article has shown that the new evidence is incomplete, misleading, and does not support the conclusions reached. Fair-minded investigations of both violence by state actors and by demonstrators is critical to assessing accountability, but the investigations themselves appear to be so politicized as to undermine such an endeavor.

The SITU/EAAF video was reported internationally by several different media, including [El País](#) and [BBC Mundo](#). ^[17] For both, it was clear where the blame must lie. *El País* emphasized the video’s “forensic” methods, saying that it “reconstructed the horror of the Daniel Ortega regime” while the BBC concluded that the analysis “appeared to leave no doubt” that police or auxiliary police were responsible for the deaths.

In reality, the SITU/EAAF video itself shows nothing new. As we have seen, the firearms analysis, which could have been released a year earlier, is much more revealing and supports none of the video’s categorical conclusions, repeated and amplified in the local and international media. The video clips and photos it uses were readily available, as are others that were never used.

SITU/EAAF appear to have ignored or discounted any material that contradicted their preformed opinion. But their very slick video with its contrived “reconstruction” has done its job, which was to revive the argument that Daniel Ortega’s government is not only repressing the Nicaraguan people, but killing them.

This leaves one wondering why a body of such consequence as the IACHR did not take the time to conduct an objective analysis of the facts. Could it be that the once independent Commission has fallen to the same political bias as the rest of the OAS? Equally disturbing is how the international media, rather than inspecting the evidence, or calling for an authentically independent investigation, merely parroted the self-serving reporting of the Nicaraguan opposition press.

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End notes

- [1] GIEI “Informe sobre los hechos de violencia ocurridos entre el 18 de abril y el 30 de mayo de 2018.”
- [2] The government’s efforts to persuade the GIEI and IACHR to make a balanced assessment of events in Nicaragua were documented in a letter to the OAS from the Foreign Minister, Denis Moncada, on December 19, 2018, at the time when the GIEI report was published (<http://www.tortillaconsal.com/tortilla/node/5152>)
- [3] “Nicaragua: March of the Mothers Reconstruction,” <http://marchadelasmadres.com/#/es>
- [4] <http://gieinicaragua-cartografia-violencia.org/>
- [5] Email exchange between the author and Michael Knox on June 29, 2020.
- [6] GIEI “Informe sobre los hechos de violencia ocurridos entre el 18 de abril y el 30 de mayo de 2018”, p.164.
- [7] <http://gieinicaragua-cartografia-violencia.org/#/1>
- [8] Several clips of opposition spokespeople appear in a video by Juventud Presidente, available on this web page: <http://www.tortillaconsal.com/tortilla/node/9605>
- [9] “Delincuentes de la derecha asesinan a una persona y hieren a otras 22 de Caravana Sandinista en Estelí”, <https://www.el19digital.com/articulos/ver/titulo:77573-delincuentes-de-la-derecha-asesinan-a-una-persona-y-hieren-a-otras-22-de-caravana-sandinista-en-esteli>
- [10] Policía Nacional: Nota de prensa no.33 – 2018 (<https://www.policia.gob.ni/?p=19356>)
- [11] Video available on this web page: <http://www.tortillaconsal.com/tortilla/node/9567>
- [12] See <http://www.tortillaconsal.com/tortilla/node/9567> – first video on page.
- [13] “Criminales de la derecha balean a seis agentes de la Policía Nacional”, <https://www.el19digital.com/articulos/ver/titulo:77582-criminales-de-la-derecha-balean-a-seis-agentes-de-la-policia-nacional>
- [14] Policía Nacional: Nota de prensa no.33 – 2018 (<https://www.policia.gob.ni/?p=19356>)
- [15] “Nicaragua: Cuando las mentiras ganan y se convierten en realidad”, <https://nicaraguaymasespanol.blogspot.com/2018/05/nicaragua-cuando-las-mentiras-ganan-y.html>
- [16] “Una reconstrucción en video demuestra cómo la policía de Daniel Ortega asesinó a al menos 3 personas en la matanza del Día de la Madre de 2018”, <https://100noticias.com.ni/nacionales/101290-asesinatos-marcha-madres-/>; “Nuevas pruebas forenses demuestran responsabilidad del Gobierno en la masacre del Día de las Madres”, <https://confidencial.com.ni/nuevas-pruebas-forenses-demuestran-responsabilidad-del-gobierno-en-la-masacre-del-dia-de-las-madres/>
- [17] “Forenses argentinos reconstruyen el horror de Nicaragua en el régimen de Ortega”, https://elpais.com/internacional/2020-05-30/forenses-argentinos-reconstruyen-el-horror-de-nicaragua.html?ssm=TW_AM_CM; “Así viví ‘la masacre del Día de las Madres’, uno de los episodios más sangrientos de las protestas que sacudieron Nicaragua hace dos años”, <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-america-latina-52833756>

The Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team and Nicaragua - Science or Injustice?

Jorge Capelán, *Tortilla con Sal*, July 5th 2020

<https://www.globalresearch.ca/argentine-forensic-anthropology-team-nicaragua-science-injustice/5718139>

You can't promote human rights by accepting money from the empire that violates them massively and with impunity

The Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team, EAAF¹, created in the mid-1980s, is a very prestigious human rights organization in Argentina and Latin America² for, among other things, having found the mortal remains of the founder of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, Azucena Villaflor, and those of the heroic guerrilla, Ernesto Che Guevara. Even so, this organization has lent itself to a vile maneuver against the Nicaraguan people by endorsing a video produced on behalf of a network of false human rights operators in the service of NATO.



Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo (Photo Cuba Debate)

At the origin of EAAF lies a debate about the very concept of human rights in Argentina and the rest of Latin America and the Caribbean, the current state of affairs of which is illustrated by the example of the anti-Nicaraguan documentary produced by EAAF. The liberal-western concept of human rights may to some extent dissemble its underlying trend but eventually it does lead to outright complicity with the worst crimes against humanity. We will develop this reasoning in parts.

In May 2020, a fanciful "video reconstruction"³ made by EAAF together with the NGO SITU Research, New York, USA, was published about an alleged massacre of "students" carried out on 30 May 2018 by the Nicaraguan police during the violent acts that took place during the defeated "soft coup" attempt perpetrated against that country by the United States between April and July of that year.

As is clearly demonstrated in another journalistic work⁴ this video, far from being a documentary study of what really happened that day in Managua, is in fact a propaganda product which aims to provide legitimacy to the aggressive and destabilizing policy of the United States against the Central American country.⁵

This policy includes illegal, unilateral, indiscriminate coercive measures such as the Nica Act⁶, which affect all Nicaragua's people by boycotting their access to funding from multilateral financial organizations for the fight against poverty.

The failed attempt at a "soft coup" financed by the United States in 2018⁷, with violent roadblocks of highways and city streets which were known in the country as "the roadblocks of death", caused serious damage to the economy of Nicaragua, which, until then, for several years had shown record figures of sustained growth (and poverty reduction in all its aspects). It is worth noting that the prejudicial EAAF video was published in May 2020, in the middle of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The pandemic seriously threatens countries like Nicaragua, which must devote enormous effort and resources to keep their health systems functioning while at the same time being unable to close their economies. The publication of the video in that context is undoubtedly part of a US policy of inadmissible intentions totally incompatible with the vocation of defending human rights that the EAAF claims to support.

A recent important part of this campaign was the request by OAS Secretary General Luis Almagro, in June 2020, that the organization, widely known as "the United States' Ministry of the Colonies in Latin America", apply the infamous "Democratic Charter"⁸ in order to isolate Nicaragua. In Latin America it is an open secret that the words "OAS" and "democracy" do not rhyme at all. From the CIA's overthrow of the government of Jacobo Arbenz in Guatemala in 1954 to the coup against Evo Morales (the latter a product of the conspiracy of the OAS itself⁹) in November 2019, the OAS has sought to justify, where it has not openly supported, all ruptures of the democratic order carried out by interests serving the United States, when the US government has not directly intervened itself.

As of writing, 44 political leaders from Latin America and Spain have rejected the participation of the OAS in the role of electoral observation noting that its notorious and extremely controversial participation in Bolivia's elections essentially triggered the coup d'etat against Evo Morales, nullifying his legitimate electoral victory.¹⁰ OAS institutions lack even minimal credibility given that the United States government is their main funder and refuses to submit to the jurisdiction of the OAS human rights bodies. That alone should be enough to make any respectable human rights organization refuse to cooperate with the OAS.

In the "video reconstruction" referred to in this article, the EAAF collaborated with a body known to be completely biased¹¹ in favour of the opposition coup attempt in Nicaragua, namely the OAS Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts (GIEI)¹², as well as with the New York-based company SITU Research¹³, which specialises in producing virtual images and is associated with pro-Western organisations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, among others.

This video reconstruction was in turn financed by the Soros Foundation¹⁴ (owned by the famous financial tycoon) and by the Oak Foundation (owned by multi-millionaire Charles Feeney), which in turn is a member of the US-based Council on Foundations¹⁵, an association of foundations that have been promoting pro-US policies abroad since 1949 and one of the main exponents of US cultural-philanthropic imperialism.¹⁶ As might be expected, the global dissemination of the EAAF/GIEI/SITU "video reconstruction" was carried out by the Spanish newspaper El País,^{17,18} a medium known for its virulent positions towards the progressive governments of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America, ALBA.

It is undeniable that EAAF's collaboration in this type of activity serves the the United States government's imperialist policies in Latin America, a region whose peoples historically and to this day have been subjected to the most serious human rights violations by that superpower.

Trying to understand how a human rights group like the EAAF that is seen as "progressive" in its country acts in complicity with the US Government that was responsible for supporting a dictatorship in Argentina that left 30,000 people disappeared, we spoke to a close collaborator of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo¹⁹, the most popular political and human rights organization in that country.

This collaborator explained to us that the Mothers do not work with EAAF, nor does the EAAF collaborate with them. They do not criticize the work of the EAAF as such, for example, finding the remains of people who disappeared during the dictatorship, but they do have reservations about the political-social concept of that work.

This is because the Association of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo does not see itself as an organization guided by a liberal concept of "human rights", but as a political organization with very clear principles of identifying with and continuing the transformation project for which their disappeared sons and daughters gave their lives.

These approaches are clearly expressed in three fundamental slogans raised by the organization since the beginning of the 1980s, which we quote below:

"No to exhumations: The Mothers of Plaza de Mayo reject exhumations because our children are not corpses. Our children are physically missing, but they live on in the struggle, the ideals and the commitment of all those who fight for justice and freedom for their people. The remains of our children must remain where they fell. No grave can lock up a revolutionary. A handful of bones does not identify them because after all they are the dreams, hopes and an example for generations to come.

We do not accept that a price can be put on life: Our children taught us the value of life. They put it at the service of all the oppressed, of those who suffer injustice. We, the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo, reject financial reparation and say that life is only worth life. That life is only worth something when we put it at the service of others.

The life of a human being cannot be worth money, much less the life of a revolutionary. What needs to be made good with justice cannot be made good with money. The radicals and Menemists who forgave the murderers now want to cover up their crimes with money.

No one is going to put a price on the lives of our children. The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo will continue to insist that those who accept financial reparations are prostituting themselves.

We reject posthumous tributes: We reject plaques and monuments because that signifies burying the dead. The only possible tribute is to raise up again their banners of struggle and continue on the way they took. Posthumous tributes only serve to allow those who guaranteed impunity to wash away their guilt today. The only monument we can raise is an unwavering commitment to their ideals."²⁰

The issue of exhumations and reparations divided the movement of the mothers and relatives of victims who were fighting for justice after the crimes of the dictatorship, provoking a debate that has persisted to this day.²¹

One part of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo decided to accept the exhumations and reparations, and with them access to resources from the western "human rights" industry, splitting into another organization with the addition of "Línea Fundadora".

Also the Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo, a movement of women looking for their grandchildren who were kidnapped and given up for adoption to other families during the dictatorship, decided to cooperate with groups like EAAF.²²

The debate in Argentina continues, but in the case of Nicaragua what we can see from the example of EAAF's insertion into the human rights industrial complex of NATO country NGOs funded by the wealthiest magnates of Western capitalism, is that embracing a liberal conception of human rights ultimately leads to open incorporation into the oppressive agenda of the greatest violators of human rights in history and the most relentless enemies of Latin America's peoples.

Worse still, even by its own terms of reference, EAAF's documentary video violates the very scientific principles that the organization claims to promote, as it dismisses evidence that contradicts the conclusions presented in its documentary video on Nicaragua. Indeed, EAAF, far from clarifying the truth about the events of 30 May 2018, misrepresents them. So its work on Nicaragua effectively denies justice to the victims of yet one more violent coup attempt against a Latin American people, promoted, as usual, by the US government.

Notes

1 <https://eaaf.org/>

2 De los restos del Che a los de Neruda: los casos que convirtieron al Equipo Argentino de Antropología Forense en un ícono mundial, Infobae, consultado el 24/06/20.

<https://www.infobae.com/sociedad/2019/05/23/de-los-restos-del-che-a-los-de-neruda-los-casos-que-convirtieron-al-equipo-argentino-de-antropologia-forense-en-un-icono-mundial/>

3 <http://marchadelasmadres.com/#/es>

4 <https://www.coha.org/revisiting-2018-mothers-march-in-nicaragua-new-report-repeats-old-bias/>

5 Behind Backdoors, consulted 24/06/20

USAID, from Georgia to Managua

<https://bbackdoors.wordpress.com/2019/03/13/usaid-from-georgia-to-managua/>

How the USAID prepared the conditions for a non-violent coup d'état against the Nicaraguan government. (Part I)

<https://bbackdoors.wordpress.com/2018/11/06/how-the-usaid-prepared-the-conditions-for-a-non-violent-coup-detat-against-the-nicaraguan-government-part-i/>

How the USAID prepared the conditions for a non-violent coup d'état against the Nicaraguan government. (Part II)

<https://bbackdoors.wordpress.com/2018/11/14/how-the-usaid-prepared-the-conditions-for-a-non-violent-coup-detat-against-the-nicaraguan-government-part-ii/>

6 “Pronunciamento oficial del Gobierno de Nicaragua ante introducción de la Nica-Act (ESPAÑOL e INGLÉS)” en El 19 Digital, visitado el 26/06/20

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7 “Live from Nicaragua: Uprising or coup?”, Alliance for Global Justice, junio 2019.

http://www.tortillaconsal.com/live_from_nicaragua_june_2019.pdf

8 Twitter de la cuenta de Luis Almagro revisado por última vez el 26/06/20

https://twitter.com/Almagro_OEA2015/status/1273276618522480641

9 “Derechista admite rol de OEA en golpe contra Evo Morales en Bolivia”, en Prensa Latina visitado el 26/06/2020.

<https://www.prensa-latina.cu/index.php?o=rn&id=346668&SEO=derechista-admite-rol-de-oea-en-golpe-contra-evo-morales-en-bolivia>

10 “Grupo Puebla rechaza a OEA como observador electoral en la región” en Prensa Latina, visitado el 1/07/2020

<https://www.prensa-latina.cu/index.php?o=rn&id=377797&SEO=grupo-puebla-rechaza-a-oea-como-observador-electoral-en-la-region>

“Análisis respecto del rol desempeñado por la Organización de Estados Americanos (OEA) en las elecciones bolivianas de octubre de 2019”, Grupo de Puebla, visitado el 1/07/2020

<https://www.grupodepuebla.org/analisis-respecto-del-rol-desempenado-por-la-organizacion-de-estados-americanos-oea-en-las-elecciones-bolivianas-de-octubre-de-2019/>

“Puebla Group: Analysis Regarding the Role Played by the OAS in the October 2019 Bolivian Elections”, Orinoco Tribune, visitado el 1/07/2020.

<https://orinocotribune.com/puebla-group-analysis-regarding-the-role-played-by-the-oas-in-the-october-2019-bolivian-elections/>

11 “Organismos actuaban como punta de lanza de la intentona golpista” en El 19 Digital visitado el 27/06/2020

<https://www.el19digital.com/articulos/ver/titulo:85459-organismos-actuaban-como-punta-de-lanza-de-la-intentona-golpista>

12 <https://gieinicaragua.org>

13 <https://situ.nyc/>

14 <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/>

15 <https://www.cof.org/about/our-partners>

16 The literature on the use of non profit foundations by Western countries for political intervention is abundant. Here we only cite the seminal work of Robert Arno: “Philanthropy and Cultural Imperialism: The Foundations at Home and Abroad” (Boston: GK Hall, 1980). An interview with the author can be read in: “Foundations and Cultural Imperialism: An Interview with Robert Arno”, in the blog Under the Mask of Philanthropy, of Michael Barker. Last visited 29/05/2020

<https://underthemarkofphilanthropy.wordpress.com/2017/03/12/foundations-and-cultural-imperialism-an-interview-with-robert-arno/>

17 “Forenses argentinos reconstruyen el horror de Nicaragua en el régimen de Ortega”, El País, visited 29/06/2020

<https://elpais.com/internacional/2020-05-30/forenses-argentinos-reconstruyen-el-horror-de-nicaragua.html>

18 On the PRISA Group which owns Spain's El País, the journalist and media researcher Pascual Serrano notes: “Among the eight big shareholders of Prisa, according to its own information, are the US fund Amber Capital (with 29.8%), HSBC, the most regularly fined bank in the world (with 9,1%) ; a Qatari fund (with 5,1%) and two Mexican big businessmen Carlos Slim, to whom Felipe González is linked, and Carlos Fernández. Between them, these big foreign shareholders own 52.3% of PRISA. There may well be other smaller, less important foreign shareholders, but all of them, for various reasons are hostile to the government of Venezuela and one might add, the other ALBA governments like Cuba and Nicaragua. Given that PRISA has been taking losses for a great many years one might well ask why these businesses invest in it. This may be one of the reasons for the disinformation policy of El País.”

En “La manipulación sistemática de El País contra Venezuela” en Rebelión, visited 26/06/20.
<https://rebellion.org/la-manipulacion-sistemica-de-el-pais-con-venezuela/>

For Grupo PRISA's anti-Cuba stance, se: “Cuba, the Media, and the Challenge of Impartiality” de Salim Lamrani, Monthly Review Press, New York, 2015.
<https://books.google.com.ni/books?id=1moFBgAAQBAJ>

19 <http://madres.org/>

20 “Una historia de las Madres de Plaza de Mayo”, de Demetrio Iramain, 2017 ISBN 978-987-4127-36-5

<http://madres.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Una-historia-de-las-Madres-de-Plaza-de-Mayo-autor-Demetrio-Irama%C3%ADn.pdf>

21 “Polémica: Juan Gelman, las Madres de Plaza de Mayo y los ‘comisarios del olvido’”, Revista Sudestada, visited el 29/06/2020

<https://www.revistasudestada.com.ar/articulo/531/polemica-juan-gelman-las-madres-de-plaza-de-mayo-y-los-comisarios-del-olvido/>

22 “36 años de ciencia para la verdad y la justicia”, visited 29/06/2020

<https://www.anred.org/2020/05/26/36-anos-de-ciencia-para-la-verdad-y-la-justicia/>

“Hizo posible saber la verdad”, visited 29/06/2020

<https://www.pagina12.com.ar/diario/elpais/1-249962-2014-07-03.html>

Nicaragua - Virtual reality and human rights

Stephen Sefton, *Tortilla con Sal*, July 5th 2020
<http://www.tortillaconsal.com/tortilla/node/9639>

Ever since January 2007, the Western human rights industry has attacked Nicaragua's Sandinista government for being undemocratic and repressive. For over a decade, Nicaragua's social and economic development and successive democratic elections repeatedly contradicted that mendacious narrative. Frustrated by Nicaragua's embarrassing example of undeniable, sovereign, socialist inspired social and economic progress, the US authorities, over several years, prepared, organized and finally openly supported the violent coup attempt of April 2018.

During that coup attempt and ever since it failed, the North American and European human rights industry has falsely accused the Nicaraguan authorities of having brutally repressed peaceful opposition protests with disproportionate lethal violence. In doing so, reports by human rights organizations have systematically ignored numerous very serious crimes and even massacres by Nicaragua's US supported right wing opposition and their allies.

Between April 18th and July 17th 2018, 23 police officers were killed by opposition activists and 400 officers suffered gunshot wounds inflicted by opposition gunmen. Reports by Western human rights organizations have concealed that deliberate lethal opposition violence by systematically suppressing conventional witness testimony, documentary evidence and audiovisual material.



Armed opposition activists outside Managua's national Baseball Stadium in Managua, May 30th 2018. (still from a video shot by the opposition media outlet Radio Corporación included in the video "[Un Plan para Sumar](#)" by Juventud Presidente)

Conversely, no categorical evidence exists to support accusations of systematic human rights violations by Nicaragua's government. But human rights organizations have lately sought to overcome that absence of evidence by using innovative virtual reality reconstruction. The [Argentinian Forensic Anthropology Team](#) (EAAF) [published a video](#) on May 30th this year resulting from a collaboration between an Organization of American States body, the Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts (GIEI), the EAAF itself and a New York based company called [SITU Research](#), which has previously done virtual reality imaging for [Amnesty International](#), [Human Rights Watch](#), and [Ukrainian prosecuting lawyers](#).

The [GIEI](#), the [EAAF](#) and [SITU Research](#) have all falsely claimed their video documentary proves that Nicaragua's police used unprovoked, indiscriminate gunfire to kill unarmed protesters. However, their video shows no footage of police or Sandinista supporters firing on protesters and omits well known video footage by opposition media of opposition protesters carrying and using lethal firearms.

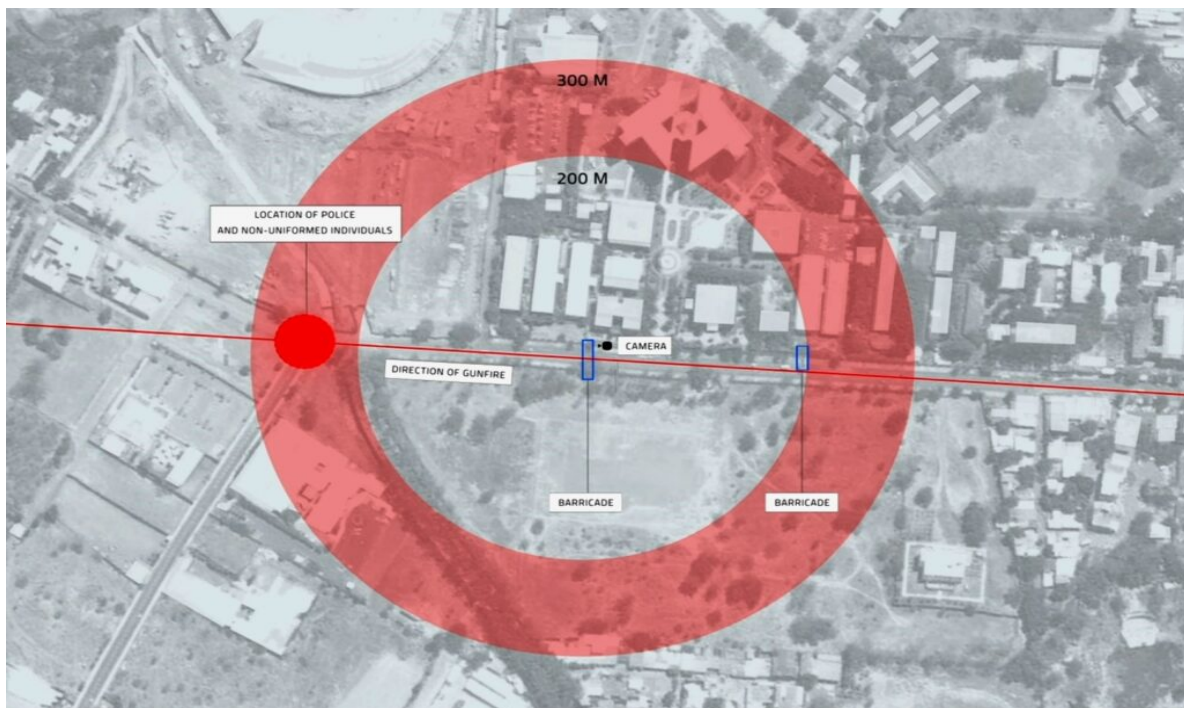
It also omits [essential context](#) of [armed opposition violence](#) related to the events the video covers. Nor does it examine the strong possibility of false flag shootings similar to those that took place at Puente Llaguno in Caracas during the failed coup attempt of April 2002 in Venezuela.

The video was funded with support from corporate funders including the Open Society Foundation, notorious for supporting the coup d'etat in Ukraine and other regime change movements elsewhere.

The EAAF-SITU Research video makes quasis-cientific claims attributing lethal gunfire to police or sandinista supporters making questionable use of professional analysis by [Knox Associates](#) of the sound of the shots fired . As John Perry notes in [his analysis of the video](#), the Knox report makes clear that opposition activists with firearms were among the protesters.

Even the GIEI report acknowledges this. Other readily accessible [video footage](#) shows opposition activists carrying automatic rifles and using automatic pistols in the same places and around the same times as the video claims the Nicaraguan police fired their weapons.

The EAAF-SITU Research video omits this inconvenient information. Likewise, the video's imaging material, put together by SITU Research, inaccurately confuses the distances, supplied by Knox Associates ballistics analysis, from which the shots heard in the video came.



Still from EAAF/SITU Research video. The red radius wrongly suggests the police were further from protesters' barricades than they really were. The actual distances are much less than those in the graphic, which gives the false impression that the police located were at the distance which the firearms expert judged the fatal shots to have come from, which is not the case. ([Research by John Perry](#))

This confusion and inaccuracy by SITU Research has antecedents in their video on the shootings in Kiev's Maidan in Ukraine in 2014. The [SITU Research video](#) depicting some of the Maidan shootings was carefully analyzed by Ivan Katchanovski of the University of Ottawa. [Katchanovski concludes](#) “no expert knowledge or familiarity with the Maidan massacre or Ukraine is needed to see blatant misrepresentation of elementary data in that 3D model”. Among much else, he found that SITU Research's 3D model had moved wound locations to suit the video's conclusions. [Katchanovski's analysis](#) also draws on evidence omitted by SITU Research which contradicts their claims, just as SITU and EAAF have deliberately suppressed evidence contradicting the claims of their video on Nicaragua.

With surprising frankness Brad Samuels, founding partner of SITU Research, has [publicly stated](#) :
“...it's about not allowing these narratives to become the reason that there's no accountability... so that you can focus on what you do know and I just I think that that's at play in all kinds of ways more than it ever has been,... this question of competing narratives, truth claims and facts and that's really what we're, this work is about ”.

Samuels here straightforwardly acknowledges that SITU Research suppresses inconvenient competing evidence contradicting the narrative on which they choose to focus. They did this in the Ukraine video and they have now done so too in the EAAF-SITU Research video about the events in Managua on May 30th 2018. The video documentary on Nicaragua by the EAAF and SITU Research dishonestly reinforces the GIEI's false reports used to justify attacks in the OAS against Nicaragua's government.

Both the video documentary and the GIEI reports systematically exclude or suppress references to audio visual material available [here](#) and [here](#), documentary evidence, witness testimony and press reports [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#), and an on-the-spot report by [a veteran independent journalist](#), all of which challenge their version of events. Nicaragua's case is a text-book example of how genuine human rights research has been subverted so as to produce highly biased reports from organizations like the EAAF and SITU Research, supporting the political agenda of neocolonial institutions like the Organization of American States.

Western populations are practically defenseless against this kind of anti-democratic disinformation tyranny. Co-opted by corporate elites, North American and European non governmental human rights organizations work closely with their counterparts in the corporate and alternative media industry. They support broad NATO country foreign policy and purposefully corrupt the workings of international human rights institutions as needed to support that foreign policy.

In practice, this means they make frequent opportunely scheduled attacks against Western government targets like Syria and Venezuela, and correspondingly less frequent, less critical attacks on, for example, Colombia or Israel. Human rights industry reports are essential reference points for press and media foreign affairs coverage as well as often extremely aggressive messaging on social media. They are also basic inputs into international human rights legal processes, as happened most notoriously in the case of Libya in 2011.

In this way, Western human rights organizations massively extend their market reach and scope, posing falsely as unbiased interlocutors in global human rights institutions. The aura of their messaging influences an enormous number of people who never even read their reports. This messaging aura is a human rights industry product just as important as their actual research. It consolidates their institutional credibility, hugely enhancing their capacity to manipulate news and social media.

This marketing aura is more than mere inauthentic consumer advertising. It facilitates shaping international opinion in favor of the industry's corporate and government investors' agenda, reinforcing the power and influence of Western elites. It radically delegitimizes opposition by implicitly setting limits to opinions and arguments that will be tolerated and ones that will not.

Human rights organizations and leaders achieve this control not through intellectual rigor and legitimate achievement, but by accumulating mainstream prestige via corporate and governmental acceptance expressed in grants and awards. That corporate and government investment endows human rights organizations with money, status and goodwill, facilitating two extremely cynical fundamental strategies.

Firstly, the human rights industry markets itself dishonestly, but very powerfully, as if it were driven by humanitarian concern rather than ideological bias, effectively discrediting and marginalizing legitimate criticism. Secondly, the human rights industry systematically and dishonestly excludes or suppresses evidence discrediting the pretexts for sadistic North American and European economic and military aggression against countries around the world, from Iran and Syria to Cuba and Venezuela.

The false EAAF and SITU Research video documentary on Nicaragua produced for GIEI group reporting to the OAS is the latest example of this reality. It is a pseudo-innovative, neocolonial reprise of conventional imperialist domination abandoning historical truth to favor a narrative serving Western elites. It bears out Rodolfo Walsh's famous remark: "History ends up looking like private property whose owners are the very same people who own everything else". How bitterly ironic that a human rights group from Argentina should collaborate in a project seeking to exonerate US government supported criminals while demonizing their victims.



OPEN LETTER

**to the President of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights
and to
the IACHR Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts on Nicaragua,
the Argentinian Team of Forensic Anthropology
and SITU Research of New York**

**from Nicaraguan civil society and from members
of North American and European networks
in solidarity with Nicaragua's Sandinista Revolution**

8 July 2020

to

IACHR President: Sr. Joel Hernández García

IACHR First Vice-President: Sra. Antonia Urrejola Noguera

IACHR Second Vice-President: Sra. Flávia Piovesan

GIEI members: Sr. Amerigo Incalcaterra, Sra. Sofía Macher, Sr. Pablo Parenti and Sra. Claudia Paz y Paz Bailey

EAAF: Sra. Mercedes Doretti, Directora Programática Centro y Norteamérica

SITU: Brad Samuels, partner

IACHR reports on events in Nicaragua

We are writing to express our concern at what we believe to be very serious shortcomings in the [video documentary](#) your organizations released on May 30th this year, about events leading to the deaths of three Nicaraguan citizens demonstrating against their government two years earlier on May 30th 2018.

While your video documentary acknowledges there is no conclusive evidence, it still argues that circumstantial evidence overwhelmingly suggests that armed police officers or Sandinista supporters indiscriminately killed those three protesters who died that day, as well as other people also shot dead in the same set of incidents.

Your video documentary acknowledges that two Sandinista supporters were also shot dead in related incidents that day, but you have selectively chosen to omit any consideration of how or why they might have been killed.

Your video documentary reinforces the unjust and extremely dishonest claim by Nicaragua's political opposition, repeated, with no serious attempt at independent corroboration, by the [Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts](#) organized by the Inter American Human Rights Commission of the Organization of American States, that the country's Sandinista government deliberately used disproportionate lethal force against peaceful protesters during the violent failed coup attempt between April 18th and July 17th 2018.

We have the following questions about this video documentary and sincerely hope you will respond and answer them in the interests of institutional transparency, democratic debate and genuine accountability.

- Why does the video documentary mention the killing of two Sandinista supporters without noting that they were probably shot dead by armed opposition activists, completely undercutting the video documentary's claim that the opposition protesters were unarmed and peaceful? Surely it then becomes practically impossible to dismiss the probability that the three opposition protesters who are the focus of your video documentary were killed in an exchange of gunfire that began in circumstances involving conflicting versions of the events in question? Why does your video documentary systematically exclude any discussion of that fact?
- Why have you omitted from your video documentary [footage, including video reports](#) from the opposition media outlet Radio Corporación and [other videos](#) of opposition activists carrying firearms including automatic rifles and firing automatic pistols in the late afternoon of May 30th 2018, near the area from which you claim the fatal shots were fired killing the three protesters who are the focus of your documentary?
- Why does your video documentary omit mentioning the wounding by gunfire in the same set of incidents covered in your documentary of [20 named police officers](#), a fact which completely contradicts your suggestion that all the opposition protesters were unarmed and peaceful?
- Why does your video documentary portray the police and volunteer police with weapons without explaining that the reason they are heavily armed is that just two days previously, in the same area as the incidents covered by your video, [one police officer was killed](#) and five police officers wounded by armed opposition activists preventing those police officers from going to the aid of over 20 workers of Nueva Radio Ya which was under attack by armed opposition activists?
- Why does your video documentary show no footage of police use of firearms which might have been presented to show that there were antecedents for what your organizations argue were the events of May 30th 2018, despite the claim in your video documentary that your organizations have reviewed thousands of videos showing examples of police repression?
- Why does your video documentary omit mentioning that various official documents, [press reports and witness testimony](#) contradict the version of events your video documentary presents?
- Why does your video documentary omit the strong possibility of a false flag attack similar to that at Puente Llaguno in Caracas during the failed coup attempt in Venezuela in 2002, since any genuinely scientific account of the events analyzed by your video documentary would have noted such contrary hypotheses and explained why they should be discounted?
- Why does your video documentary not follow up the mention of evidence in the Knox Associates report's sound analysis of the three shootings of "a firearm discharged near the video camera. It's difficult to determine what type of firearm it is, ... It could be a semi-automatic pistol or a rifle", apparently referring to a weapon or weapons used by protesters at the demonstration?

- Why does your video documentary mischaracterize the location of the police confronting the protesters on the Avenida Universitaria? Video footage from May 30, 2018 place them at a road junction 175 meters from the barricade, while a map on your archive website shows the police to be even closer. A comparison of the map in your video with Google maps clearly indicates that it is not to scale, and in fact shows a radius of 145-215 meters, which means that the police were not in the location from which your firearms expert said the fatal shots were fired.
- Why does your video documentary only investigate the three shots supposedly responsible for killing the three protesters on whom you focus, given that Knox Associates' evidence, even though it only covers a few minutes, indicates that there were other exchanges of fire, apparently from both sides?
- In this context, why does the video ignore the admission on page 164 of the original GIEI report, of “the presence of four armed persons among the demonstrators” [GIEI “Informe sobre los hechos de violencia ocurridos entre el 18 de abril y el 30 de mayo de 2018,”], which appears to be referring to the same incident in Avenida Universitaria?
- Why is the investigation portrayed in your video documentary limited to events on the west side of the national stadium when other shootings were taking place on the east side, and these would have influenced the behavior of the police in the entire area of the stadium, especially if they were actually under fire or had recently been under fire, as they had been on May 28th?
- SITU Research and EAAF acknowledge financial support from corporate sources in the United States, including the Open Society Foundations, suggesting a strong ideological component in the production of this video. Who funded your organizations to produce it and how much money did they invest?

We look forward very much to your observations in response to our questions.



**Alliance for Global Justice
(USA)**



**Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign
Action Group(UK)**

And signed by:

Blanca Segovia Sandino Arauz, Daughter of General Augusto C. Sandino, Nicaragua

Camilo Mejia, Human Rights Activist and
former Amnesty International prisoner of conscience, Miami, USA

Patricia Villegas, Presidente TeleSur, Venezuela

S. Brian Willson, war veteran, author, lawyer, Granada, Nicaragua

Margaret Flowers, David Paul, Adrienne Pine, Kevin Zeese
(four Protectors of the Venezuelan Embassy in Washington D.C.)

As well as by the individuals and organisations in Nicaragua, USA and Europe listed below

Adrian Martínez Rodríguez, Secretario General ,
Confederación de Trabajadores por Cuenta Propia de Nicaragua CTCP Nicaragua

Al Burke Editor, Nordic News Network Sweden

Alberto Martínez Vargas, Retired Nicaragua

Alexandra Valiente, Editor Internationalist 360° Canada

Andrea Pérez Espinoza, Political scientist Nicaragua

Andreia Vizeu, Educator USA

Anne Mitchell, Deputy principal (retired) USA

Antonio Espinoza, Confederación Sindical de Trabajadores de la Agroindustria de Nicaragua
CONFEDERACIÓN AGROINDUSTRIA Nicaragua

Arnold H. Matlin, M.D., F.A.A.P., Doctor USA

Augusto Enrique Castillo Sandino, Family of General Augusto C. Sandino Nicaragua

Aurora Elena Baltodano Toledo, Solidarity activist Italy

Becca Mohally Renk, Jubilee House Community Nicaragua

Ben Norton, Writer and editor of The Grayzone USA

Calvin McCoy, Nicaragua Solidarity Ireland Ireland

Carlos José Hurtado Ordoñez, Technical assistant Nicaragua

Carlos José Martínez Hernández, Editor, Radio La Primerísima Nicaragua

Cecilia Herrero, Painter Argentina

Coleen Littlejohn, Development economist (retired) Nicaragua

Committees of Correspondence for Democracy and Socialism, New York USA

Coordinamento Associazione Italia, Nicaragua Solidarity group (Milan) Italy

Courtney Childs, Committees of Correspondence for Democracy and Socialism USA

Dan Kovalik, Human rights lawyer USA

Daniel Hopewell, Director of community development NGO UK

Daniel Shaw, Professor USA

Declan McKenna, Nicaragua Solidarity Ireland Ireland

Diana Bohn, USA

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