

21 April 2021

Nicaragua: Detention and assault of women human rights defenders from the Asociación Madres de Abril (AMA)

On 20 April 2021, officers from the Nicaraguan National Police detained, physically assaulted and threatened woman human rights defender **Francys Valdivia Machado**, her mother Francisca Machado and her friends Stephanie Martínez, Ana Rivera and Marcos Silva in the municipality of Estelí. The five were detained during a commemoration of the third anniversary of the murder of Franco Valdivia, Francys Valdivia Machado's brother, during the national protests in 2018.

[Francys Valdivia Machado](#) is a woman human rights defender, who advocates for justice and accountability for the relatives of individuals who have been killed by the authorities. She is currently the president of the Mothers of April Association (AMA) of Nicaragua, created on 19 April 2018, in response to the first killings of those participating in the protests against the government that began at that time.

On 20 April 2021, woman human rights defender Francys Valdivia Machado was detained by police officers, along with her mother and others attending the commemoration of the murder of her brother Franco Valdivia in the Estelí Cathedral. The police officers beat, kicked, verbally assaulted and threatened the woman human rights defender, her mother Francisca Machado, Stephanie Martínez, Ana Rivera and Marcos Silva, whilst detaining them. The officers released Francys Valdivia Machado's mother but continued to detain the woman human rights defender, and her three friends. The four were detained in Estelí police station for one hour, during which time they continued to be physically and verbally assaulted, before being released. They were not informed of the reason for their detention.

Front Line Defenders expresses its deep concern regarding the detention and violence against woman human rights defender Francys Valdivia Machado, her mother Francisca Machado, Stephanie Martínez, Ana Rivera and Marcos Silva, in reprisal for exercising their legitimate right to honour and remember the lives of their relatives.

As part of the [International Observatory on the Situation of Human Rights in Nicaragua](#), Front Line Defenders has repeatedly [denounced](#) the violent repression of human rights defenders in Nicaragua. This context of profound violence and repression against human rights defenders in the country makes it increasingly difficult for human rights defenders in Nicaragua to carry out their work.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Nicaragua to:

1. Conduct an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the detention, threats and verbal attacks against Francys Valdivia Machado and Francisca Machado, Stephanie Martínez, Ana Rivera and Marcos Silva, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
2. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity and security of Francys Valdivia Machado, as well as the other persons attacked and other members of the Mothers of April Association in constant consultation with them;

3. 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.