

## US Sanctions Four Top Ortega Officials in Nicaragua

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OFAC punishes the President of the Assembly, Minister of Transportation, Director of Telcor and the Minister of Health



Gustavo Porras, Sonia Castro, Orlando Castillo and Oscar Mojica. Photos: Confidencial

**For the first time, the United States invokes the Nica Act law, to sanction the president of the Parliament and the Minister of Health**

HAVANA TIMES – The US Treasury Department [issued new sanctions](#) on Friday against officials of the Ortega-Murillo government in Nicaragua. This time they punished the president of the Parliament, Gustavo Porras; the Minister of Health, Sonia Castro; the director of telecommunications (Telcor), Orlando Castillo; and retired general Oscar Mojica.

The sanctions came through the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) of the Treasury Department, as has happened in previous individual sanctions. Likewise, for the first time the United States invokes the Human Rights and Anticorruption Law of Nicaragua of 2018 known as the Nica Act.

“Today’s action is aimed at Nicaraguan government officials who persecute Nicaraguan citizens who exercise their fundamental freedoms, enact repressive laws, silence the media and deny medical attention to the Nicaraguan people,” says the OFAC statement. .

Gustavo Porras, the president of the National Assembly, is one of the leaders of the Ortega shock forces and paramilitaries. Health Minister Sonia Castro is the subject of a series of accusations about her orders to public hospitals not to attend to injured protestors. The most emblematic case of such negligence was that of the teenager Alvaro Conrado.

In the case of Orlando Castillo, he has been in charge of censoring the media through the Nicaraguan Institute of Telecommunications and Postal Services (Telcor). Castillo gave the order to censor 100% Noticias last April, when the protests against the regime began. Then, he coerced Canal 12 to take the programs Esta Semana and Esta Noche, directed by Carlos Fernando Chamorro, off the air. In addition, he pressured Channel 10.

General Oscar Mojica is the minister of Transport and Infrastructure (MTI), former director of the Army investment emporium, of the Institute of Military Social Security, and is linked to the business environment of the Venezuelan-Nicaraguan conglomerate Albanisa, already under heavy sanctions from Washington for corruption and money laundering.

The United States assures that the general “promoted” on national television the strategy of “exile, jail or death” of the Ortega regime to silence the opposition, “a policy that has left hundreds of dead, thousands of wounded and tens of thousands of people imprisoned, exiled or internally displaced.” In addition, they affirm that Mojica administers a significant part of the personal and official finances of President Ortega and Vice President Murillo, including investments in coffee plantations and hotels.

### **Clear path of constitutional succession**



Gustavo Porras embraces Daniel Ortega after his inauguration for another term as president, in 2017. Photo: Carlos Herrera / Confidential.

With the sanctions against Porras, and with Vice President Rosario Murillo already sanctioned, the path of constitutional succession in the National Assembly is cleared, and now any other deputy could exercise the power of the Executive in a transitory manner, in the case of early elections being called.

According to the Treasury Department, the “Government of Nicaragua continues to violate the human rights of the Nicaraguan people, implementing laws of exploitation and violence and keeping hundreds of people as political prisoners.”

The United States describes Porras in the following way: “He is the most important political operator of President Ortega and exercises significant control over the Social Security Institute and the Ministry of Health with the approval of Vice President Rosario Murillo.”

“The United States is sending an unequivocal message to President Ortega and his inner circle: we support the Nicaraguan people in their calls for reform and return to democracy,” said Undersecretary of Finance for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence, Sigal Mandelker. “We will not hesitate to take action against those who perpetuate oppression or shore up the Ortega regime at the expense of the Nicaraguan people.”

From these sanctions, all property and interests in the property of these individuals and of any entity owned by them, directly or indirectly, and located in the United States or in the possession or control of US citizens are now blocked and must be reported to the OFAC.

“OFAC regulations generally prohibit all business dealings by persons from the United States or within (or in transit) of the United States involving any property, or interest in any property, of sanctioned or designated persons,” explains the US Treasury.