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Impact of the current sociopolitical crisis on research and education in Nicaragua. The role of scientific societies.

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Nicaragua is a Central American country historically affected by catastrophes that have caused thousands of deaths and significant economic damages. Natural disasters are usually intertwined with repeated political crises (foreign interventions, dictatorships, armed conflicts and political unrest), which in turn hamper it's economy and make the country even more vulnerable, suffering from severe institutional and geographic vulnerability, further aggravated by the effects of global warming.

Against this adverse background, local scientists have made significant strides in education and science. Serving a highly vulnerable society, in the past 25 years geoscientists and other professionals have been building a more resilient Nicaragua by creating and operating seismic, volcanic, meteorological and hydrological networks, mapping multi-hazards in the most susceptible municipalities, organizing emergency response institutions and developing higher education programs for disaster risk management. In spite of the limited economical resources, geoscientists have embraced a strong commitment and ethical values, working with honesty and a sense of responsibility.

Over the past 12 years the country was submitted to a political regime change that ended up devastating the nascent democratic system and the rule of law, and has led to human right abuses. These long-term problems along with the latest socio political crisis (April 2018) have had disastrous repercussions for the whole society, especially in the educational and scientific sectors.

The government has imposed censorship, intimidation and political interference. Scientists working at state institutions have been replaced by loyal political officials lacking reputable technical background. This has conditioned the scientific research and suppressed the freedom of expression of public servants with devastating consequences on disaster mitigation and response, and the undermining of the credibility of institutions and geoscientists. The negative impacts of these decisions is observed in the limitations of their services and the quality of their scientific results.

The experiences of the Academy of Sciences of Nicaragua will be discussed in its advisory role and impact on Nicaraguan society. Considering the systematic destruction of the rule of law and of human rights, the Academy focused on addressing the issues faced by university students,

professors and scientists, including censorship, harassment, coercion and prosecution.

We will address (1) the Academy's advisory work regarding the environmental risks posed by the Interoceanic Canal Project (considered as the largest engineering project in the world) and (2) the Academy's role in contributing to solving the current sociopolitical crisis.

Used as best practices, these topics may be of relevance to the EGU audience and the scientific community at large. They could be relevant for scientists working under precarious political conditions and where political environments are hostile to scientists and scientific unions, making science advising extremely complicated.

There is an urgent need for the international community to lend their support to finding a peaceful resolution to this desperate situation in Nicaragua. Moreover, the support of global scientific societies will be decisive in the aftermath of the crisis to rebuild institutions and infrastructure for education and science, with specific training programs on geosciences.