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A woman prays during a Mass at the Metropolitan Cathedral in Managua, Nicaragua, Nov. 21,

A woman prays during a Mass at the Metropolitan Cathedral in Managua, Nicaragua, Nov. 21, 2019. (OSV News photo/Oswaldo Rivas, Reuters)



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Nicaragua appears to have frozen the bank accounts of the country's Jesuit university -- marking yet another attack on the Catholic Church and its educational and charitable projects.

The Central American University sent an email to students Aug. 9, stating, "By means beyond our control we are not receiving payments corresponding to fees or services from any of the instances of the university," according to the independent Nicaraguan news organization Divergentes.

Divergentes cited a government source, saying the university's accounts had been frozen. It later reported Aug. 10 that the Nicaraguan government had frozen the university's assets two months ago, acting on orders from the prosecutor's office, but had not advised the Central American University.

The university has not offered an explanation for its problems in receiving payments.

"As a former student of the Central American University, I repudiate the dictatorship's aggression against this education center," Auxiliary Bishop Silvio José

Báez, who is exiled in Miami, wrote on X, the site formerly known as Twitter. "The freezing of its accounts is an outrage against higher education, intellectual freedom, culture and the whole society," he added.

"Freezing its accounts is a direct attack on education and intellectual freedom, putting at risk the continuation of projects, investigations and programs that benefit the university community and Nicaraguan society in general," Alianza Universitaria Nicaragüense, an alliance of university students, said of the actions against the Central American University.

Founded in 1960 as the country's first private university, the Central American University has been a hub of resistance to the regime of President Daniel Ortega and his wife, Vice President Rosario Murillo. Students joined protests calling for Ortega's ouster in 2018, and the university opened its campus to protesters fleeing police and paramilitaries.

The Jesuit provincials of Latin America and the Caribbean in 2020 demanded an end to "the constant financial, economic and physical siege the (university) has been subject to."

The Ortega regime has stripped funding that the school is constitutionally entitled to. Divergentes also reported the school is experiencing difficulties with its government accreditation process.

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The moves against the Central American University come as the church experiences widespread repression in Nicaragua -- with clergy and religious expelled from the country, and the country's most cogent voice against the persecution, Bishop Rolando Álvarez of Matagalpa, languishing in prison.

Álvarez marked the one-year anniversary of his arrest on Aug. 4. It was a year ago when police surrounded his diocesan curia and later removed him and 11 colleagues in a pre-dawn raid. He remains imprisoned, having refused to be exiled from the country.

The bishop has become the face of church resistance in Nicaragua. Eight former presidents of neighboring Costa Rica -- including 1987 Nobel laureate Óscar Arias --

released a letter Aug. 10, nominating Álvarez and Báez for the Nobel Peace Prize.

"The people of Nicaragua, in the midst of their terrible oppression, require the enormous and wonderful encouragement in their struggle for peace and freedom that the Nobel Peace Prize would mean for these two exemplary bishops," the letter said.