

NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

1312 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE, N.W.  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

October 6, 1978

President Jimmy Carter  
The White House  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I write on a subject which is a cause of grave concern within the Catholic community in the United States; namely, the fratricidal conflict in Nicaragua. In response to requests from the Church in Nicaragua, we sent a mission to Nicaragua to confer with the Archbishop of Managua and other officials of the Nicaraguan Bishops' Conference. Their message is strikingly clear, one which they have asked us to transmit to you.

It is the strong conviction of the responsible and informed Church leadership in that country, that the conflict will inevitably persist while the present leadership remains in power. It is their further conviction that the U.S. has both the power and the responsibility to play a more decisive role in achieving resolution of this grave problem.

I recognize that these convictions pose complex choices for U.S. policy. I am aware of what has been done thus far and I appreciate the effort to avoid an interventionary posture which would simply repeat an earlier and unfortunate U.S. role in Nicaragua. Precisely because of this previous history and the continuing relationship it has produced, the Nicaraguan people have certain firmly-held convictions and expectations about the proper U.S. role in the present crisis. One of these is that our country bears a unique responsibility to assist the process of enabling Nicaragua to move speedily to a more just society. Related to this is their belief that more decisive and substantive moves in this direction are both possible and necessary. A decision to deny all forms of U.S. military and economic assistance would be seen as a symbolic gesture aimed at redefining our relationship with Nicaragua. In addition, the direct involvement of the United States in the mediation efforts offers opportunities for the legitimate use of diplomatic and political influence in the present conflict.

My purpose in this communication has been both to bring directly to your attention, Mr. President, the sentiment of Church leadership in Nicaragua, and to indicate the support of our episcopal conference for vigorous U.S. action to foster, in

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the name of human rights, both greater political participation and economic justice in the war-torn nation of Nicaragua.

Conveying to you my prayers and best wishes, I am

Respectfully yours,

*+ John R. Quinn*

Most Rev. John R. Quinn  
Archbishop of San Francisco  
President, NCCB/USCC