

# *Nicaragua: Peace dialogue announced for Wednesday*

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Managua, May 15 (RHC) Cardinal Leopoldo Brenes, the Archbishop of Managua and head of the Nicaraguan Bishops Conference, announced the start of peace talks for Wednesday, although circumstances for the dialogue are not ideal. The Catholic church is acting as a mediator.

"After hearing the clamor from the vast majority of society and the gravity of the situation in our country, we are announcing the talks," Cardinal Brenes told a news conference.

The conversations will start at 10:00 AM local time at the Our Lady of Fatima church in Managua.

The Episcopal Conference will act as a mediator and witness to the talks but says it does not have all the solutions for the particular questions that may arise. However, Cardinal Brenes said that the proposals that best respond to human dignity and the common good are the best to be translated into political action.

In addition to the Catholic church, representatives from student associations, business associations, and the government are expected to participate in the talks.

Brenes asked all sectors - the government and all of society - to support the dialogues and maintain an environment of respect and tolerance and he asked all Nicaraguans to refrain from resorting to violence.

Peaceful protests began in April demonstrating against the government's announcement to increase workers' and employers' monthly contribution to the state social security system. Demonstrations were immediately hijacked by right-wing factions that were asking President Daniel Ortega to resign. At least 50 people have died over the past month during the demonstrations.

Ortega backed down from his initial proposal and massive demonstrations remained peaceful until the past several days when anti-government protesters set fire to a municipal building in the city of La Concepcion and attempted to set fire to a Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) party headquarters in the same city.

Ortega announced on Monday that the government will allow an investigation by Inter American Commission of Human Rights (ICHR) into the deaths of several demonstrators and expressed his hopes that the probe the commission conducts is objective.

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