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Deborah Tyroler

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Nicaragua: Four Opposition Activists Arrested; U.N.o. Blamed For Disturbance

by Deborah Tyroler

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On the evening of Jan. 16 in Granada, police arrested four activists of the National Opposition Unity (UNO) for "aggression, offenses and lack of respect" regarding President Daniel Ortega as he was leaving a political rally, according to a statement by the Interior Ministry on Jan. 17. An Interior Ministry communique said Ortega was leaving the rally for a dinner at a hotel about six blocks away when UNO sympathizers started the disturbance. "The Sandinista police exhausted its persuasive resources in order to make them desist from their aggressive attitude, without result," it said. The communique said police were "forced to proceed with energy to dissolve the provocateurs and detain the main instigators." AP cited unidentified diplomats who witnessed the incident as saying that UNO was responsible for the fracas. The "diplomatic sources" requested anonymity. UNO spokesperson Luis Sanchez Sancho said police used tear gas to break up the demonstration of UNO supporters in Granada. He admitted that the UNO organizers had not obtained authorization from the police to hold the rally. Julia Mena, 36, UNO candidate for National Assembly deputy for Region 4, said about 1,000 supporters had gathered for the rally on a street about three blocks from the hotel where Ortega was to dine. At about 6 pm, riot police arrived and ordered the crowd to disperse, but stayed about a half-block away, she said. According to Mena, police then threw tear gas canisters to break up the crowd, and people dispersed at about 6:30 p.m. Mena said, "Later I found out there were some people arrested." The government identified those arrested as Pedro Rafael Guzman, Roger Rafael Rocha, Alberto Jose Roman and Pablo Valencia Mora. A riot Dec. 10 in Masatepe led to eight political parties signing a code of conduct on Dec. 15 calling on party activists to respect political opponents and avoid violence. UNO did not sign. (Basic data from AP, 01/17/90)

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