

by the Inter-American Dialogue think tank in Washington. # When the protests erupted in April, " the civil society had awakened. The press was really playing a fundamental role in energizing the population in its search for freedom, " Maradiaga said. # The government's foreign-press spokesman and other Nicaraguan officials did not respond to requests for comment. But the government has said the protests amounted to a " soft coup " supported by its opponents, including those in civil society groups and the media. Among those it is seeking to arrest is Maradiaga, charging that he financed and trained the protesters. He denies the allegations. # The most recent government actions target some of the country's most prominent civic and media institutions, many of whose leaders have historical ties to the Sandinista movement. For example, Confidencial, an independent news site, is run by Carlos Fernando Chamorro, a scion of one of Nicaragua's most famous political families and the onetime editor of the Sandinista newspaper Barricada. It was shut down Dec. 14. A week later, the cable TV station 100% Noticias was forced off the air, and two of its editors were jailed. # La Prensa continues to operate, but its publisher, Jaime Chamorro -- the uncle of the Confidencial director -- said it is being strangled financially by the government. # " On top of everything, they have blocked our imports of paper and ink, " he said. " We only have enough to operate for two months. " # Supporters of President Daniel Ortega's government besiege journalists at a police station in Managua on Dec. 22. (Maynor Valenzuela/AFP/Getty Images) # Growing pressure on Ortega # Eight months after they started, the anti-government protests