



NICARAGUA SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN ACTION GROUP (NSCAG) Annual Report 2018

Introduction

Much of NSCAG's work during 2018 was taken up with dealing with the impact of a US-inspired attempted coup which brought a period of chaos and instability to Nicaragua. A country which prior to April 2018 had made transformational steps in terms of poverty reduction, gender equality, climate change and social and economic progress was suddenly engulfed in violence and destruction. The consequences of the attempted coup were felt most of all by workers, cooperatives and community groups who suffered some 120,000 job losses. Increasing hostility towards Nicaragua saw the US impose wide-reaching sanctions against the country, with the poorest and most vulnerable in society suffering the most. The country's economic growth forecast fell from 4.5% to around 1%.



The economic damage to households was severe, as was the social impact. What's more, the majority of self-employed workers depend on tourism, business and transport: the economic activities worst affected by the failed coup. – Adrian Martinez, General Secretary, Self-Employed Workers' Union CTCPC

Our work throughout the year focussed on campaigning against US aggression and sanctions. We issued a number of briefings and statements in defence of Nicaragua's right to defend its sovereignty and against US intervention in the country's internal affairs. We wrote articles for various magazines and social media and lobbied the Foreign Office and MPs on the issue. We also launched a petition. Dissemination of information reflecting the views of Nicaraguan trade unions was particularly important in light of the unrelenting bias and distortions of media coverage of Nicaragua. Work towards the end of the year and on into 2019 supported dialogue and initiatives designed to bring about peace and reconciliation in the country.

We are grateful to our trade union affiliates and supporters for their constant and unwavering support throughout this period. As always in these situations, international solidarity was crucial in terms of sustaining the Nicaraguan trade unions through the troubled times.

Thankfully, Nicaragua has quickly recovered from last year's events and has been at peace for the past nine months. Nicaraguan people, who largely reject the opposition's violence, want this to continue. At the time of writing, a Government initiated peace process is underway and it is to be hoped that this will succeed in restoring harmony to the country.

UK Trade Union Solidarity

In September, we were pleased to welcome Valdrack Jaenstchke, Nicaraguan Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs. During his stay in the UK, Valdrack spoke at a meeting of trade union representatives in London and attended a joint UNISON regional international seminar held in Belfast and organised by UNISON Northern Ireland, Scotland, Northern and North West regions. His schedule also included a number of political meetings organised by the Nicaraguan Embassy.

In December, we were delighted to receive a visit from Dr Florence Levy, member of the health union FETSALUD and President of the National Assembly Commission for Indigenous Peoples, Afro descendants and Autonomous Issues. Florence spoke at the plenary session of the Latin America Adelante Conference,

where she received a standing ovation (see photo above). She also had an extensive programme of meetings and visits; this included meetings with UNISON North West and West Midlands regions, Wales NSC and UNISON City of Edinburgh branch. She also spoke at an international seminar organised by the National Education Union. In addition, meetings took place with the All Party Parliamentary Group on Central America and with Helen Goodman MP.

As in previous years, we were present at all the major trade union conferences.

The Winter Raffle raised £2480, which is one of the highest amounts ever raised. Many thanks to RMT for donating the first prize of £400.

Our appreciation

We would like to thank all those who have contributed to NSCAG's work, whether a trade union individual, branch, region or national office. We are also extremely grateful to the volunteers who have staffed our stalls at trade union conferences around the country and to those who have assisted us with translation work throughout the year. A full copy of the NSCAG accounts is available on request from the office.

Affiliations

Eleven national unions were affiliated at the year-end: ASLEF, BECTU, BFAWU, CWU, FBU, GMB, NEU-NUT Section, RMT, UNISON, UNITE and USDAW. **Stella – you need to put the figures in from this point on** The number of affiliated branches and regions was the same as that of last year, 114; this takes into account both lapsed branches and regions and new ones.

There were 16 new branches and regions over the year compared to 9 last year. Of the 16 new ones, 6 were from UNISON, 5 from UNITE and 5 from GMB. Four trades councils are also affiliated.

I spotted that there is a 0 next to USDAW for 2017. Is this right?

Affiliation breakdown by union:

	Dec 13	Dec 15	Dec 16	Dec 17	Dec 18
ASLEF	1	1	1	1	1
CWU	13	15	12	12	
GMB	2	5	5	9	
NUT	6	8	8	9	
RMT	1	1	1	1	
UNISON	24	24	36	38	
UNITE	18	57	51	45	
USDAW	1	1	1	0	
TOTALS	65	117	114	114	

Staff: Louise Richards

NSCAG Executive Members: Dave Auger, Dave Cosgrave (Chair), Ruby Cox, Francisco Dominguez, John Drewery, Rita Drobner, Mark Glover, Bob Hardie, Julie Lamin, David McKnight, Ken Rustidge, Steve Sweeney

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