



## NSCAG STATEMENT AND BRIEFING OCTOBER 2018

This statement and briefing is an update on the statement and briefing issued on 23 July 2018. A link to this earlier statement can be found at

<http://www.nscag.org/news/article/248/NSCAG-statement-and-briefing:-July-2018>

### **United States' inspired attempted coup has been defeated**

The US-inspired attempted coup which began in April of this year has, for the time being at least, been defeated. The aim of the coup was to overthrow Nicaragua's democratically elected Government and derail the Sandinista model of economic and social development. The road blocks which were put in place by right wing led groups have been dismantled and Nicaragua is gradually returning to normal. Schools and hospitals are functioning normally and people are once again able to travel freely and go to work. There have been hundreds of mass meetings and rallies with tens of thousands of participants supporting national reconstruction, calling for peace and reconciliation and supporting the efforts of the Government to deal with those involved in violence, including acts of torture and murder. Economic damage has however been huge – with over 120,000 jobs lost and many public buildings and institutions, including schools, health centres and municipal offices, destroyed. The Nicaraguan government is now engaged in major public works programmes with the aim of restoring confidence, tackling unemployment and rebuilding and repairing the economy.

In the face of all this, US aggression has escalated. With support from the US, the right wing led opposition, unable to win power at the ballot box, continues to spread fake news on social media and to engage in widespread acts of violence designed to instil fear among the population, provoke further instability and sabotage efforts to build peace and reconciliation. National and international corporate media continues to espouse the opposition narrative and to fan the flames of conflict by publishing heavily biased and wildly inaccurate reports blatantly siding with Nicaragua's opposition.

*'The opposition created virtual realities, which didn't exist on the ground. And the national and international media – with their vested interests – reproduced these images. And it's not the first time. It's not just Nicaragua. Remember the non-existent WMDs that served as a pretext for the Iraq war!' – Jose Antonio Zepeda, General Secretary, Nicaraguan teachers' union ANDEN.*

### **Statement**

The Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign Action Group (NSCAG) is calling on members, affiliates and supporters to:

- Support all efforts to achieve peace and reconciliation
- Call for an immediate cessation of violence by the right wing led opposition

- Oppose any foreign intervention in the internal affairs of Nicaragua, especially by the United States, as a violation of international law and an aggression against the principle of national sovereignty
- Oppose any US sanctions and threats which will not help resolve the situation and will only fan the flames of conflict
- Support Nicaragua's trade unions in their efforts to help members affected by the fallout from the attempted coup
- Oppose any attempts to oust the elected government of Nicaragua by undemocratic and violent means
- Defend the right of the Nicaraguan people to defend their national sovereignty and determine their own future free from any external interference and aggression
- Pressure the UK government to review its policy on Nicaragua and recognise the right of the Nicaraguan people, their elected Government and their constitution to oppose attempts at coups and violent regime change

### **Wave of violence**

Almost the only people who have died in Nicaragua since mid-July have been Sandinistas targeted by opposition activists who continue to perpetrate acts of violence against anyone even suspected of being pro-government. In spite of this, international organisations such as the Inter American Commission of Human Rights, the Organisation of American States and the UN Commission for Human Rights continue to blame the government for all acts of violence, basing their testimony on hearsay from social media and opposition groups.

Many of the perpetrators of violent crimes have been arrested and are being dealt with in accordance with the law. Their crimes include kidnapping, torture and murder, sexual assault, looting, theft and the destruction of public and private buildings including municipal offices, health centres, historical places, private homes, schools and pre-schools, universities, police stations and public and private transport units. Investigations are ongoing into the violence committed from mid-April to early August, and people against whom there is evidence will be tried for crimes they have committed and, if found guilty, sent to jail. Yet in its recent 'Urgent Action' campaign, Amnesty International denounced the 'wave of detentions of students and activists in Nicaragua' and referred to the perpetrators of violent crimes as 'political prisoners', completely ignoring the fact that those detained are not victims but the perpetrators of violent crimes. They failed to mention the murder of Nicaraguan citizens, including 23 police officers, one of whom was tortured and his body burned on a public road.

### **US Aggression Escalates**

*'All nations of the world should resist socialism and the misery that it brings to everyone,' - Donald Trump, UN General Assembly, September 2018*

Over the past four years, opposition organisations in Nicaragua have received some \$35m in funding from US AID and the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). This has supposedly been for 'training on governance, private enterprise, human rights and democracy'. In effect such funding has been targeted and used to pay for an internal

opposition to the Sandinista Government. The right wing led opposition has made effective use of social media to spread fake news and whip up opposition to the Government, even manipulating the death toll to justify its call for regime change. The NED have even been described by a supporter as “laying the groundwork for insurrection” against Nicaragua’s government and opposition NGOs and so-called ‘student’ leaders have made frequent visits to Washington to seek help to oust the Government.

<https://www.thecanary.co/global/world-analysis/2018/07/02/us-meddling-machine-boasts-of-laying-the-groundwork-for-insurrection-in-nicaragua>

Successive United States administrations have consistently done everything they can do crush Nicaragua. Forty years ago, during the Thatcher-Reagan cold war era, the United States launched a mercenary war against Nicaragua, known as the *contra* war. The war cost some 30,000 lives and devastation to the Nicaraguan economy. An intense media campaign which bears striking similarities to what is happening today depicted Nicaragua as a communist totalitarian dungeon with troops poised to storm the Texan border.

Under the Trump administration, the US vendetta against Nicaragua has continued. As far back as 2016, in a move which can almost be regarded as a precursor to the attempted coup and in a clear attempt to undermine and influence the Nicaraguan elections, the US House of Representatives passed the Nicaraguan Investment Conditionality Act, known as the NICA Act. The bill proposed blocking Nicaragua from obtaining loans from international financial institutions unless the country ‘is taking effective steps to hold free, fair and transparent elections’. Running at US\$250 million annually, these loans are being invested by the Nicaraguan government in education, social programmes, electrification, roads and other infrastructure initiatives.

The provisions of the NICA Act have now been integrated into a broader, more draconian companion bill called the Nicaragua Human Rights and Anti-Corruption Act. The new bill was approved by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on 26 September and is due to be debated by the Senate very soon. The Act has little to do with US so-called concern for human rights, democracy and the rule of law and everything to do with escalating the regime change agenda of the Trump administration. It will serve only to deepen the poverty of the poorest and most vulnerable in society. Extreme poverty, which had been reduced from 14.6% in 2009 to 6.9% in 2016 is likely to increase as the economy suffers.

### **Economic Damage**

Before the events of April this year, Nicaragua had won international plaudits, including from the UN, for its commitment to social justice and economic development. Poverty and extreme poverty had been halved, as had maternal mortality. Priority was given to health and education and the development of programmes designed to help the poorest and most vulnerable. In what the World Bank described as a ‘remarkable economic turnaround’ GDP had increased by an average of four to five per cent annually, inflation had dropped to low single figures, exports had doubled, and Foreign Direct Investment had quadrupled. Nicaragua had one of the highest growth rates in the region at 4.9% for 2015 and a forecast of 4.2% for 2016. The forecast for 2018 was around 4.5%.

More information can be found here:-

<http://www.nicaraguasc.org.uk/resources/NSC%20Electionbriefing2016final.pdf>

The economic damage caused by the attempted coup has been huge and will take a long time to overcome. Business closures and attacks on the public sector have left some 120,000 people without jobs. The forecast for economic growth has been lowered to around 1% and some 1.3 million of Nicaragua's 6.2 million people risk falling into poverty. The effects have been felt in particular in the informal sector where some 70% of Nicaragua's population work and in tourism, which had been growing for the last decade with more than a million visitors a year and which was a major factor in creating jobs.

Efforts are being made by the Government to boost tourism now that the country has returned to normality but these continue to be hampered by the US and UK governments, both of which continue to warn about repression and refuse to change their travel advice which warns against all but essential travel to the country.

The public sector has been particularly affected by job losses, and trade unions such as public sector union UNE and teachers' union ANDEN now face the task of helping with the task of rebuilding the economy, helping their members back into employment and helping the families of their members who have been victims of opposition violence and destruction.

### **What Next?**

Although the attempted coup has failed for the time being, pressure from the US and right wing led opposition for regime change will continue. The actions of the opposition have shown that they have no regard for their fellow citizens' rights to health, education, housing and decent work. For most Nicaraguans, the desire is for life to return to normal and for peace and stability to be restored. This is particularly true of the social movements in the country. The country now begins the long process of repairing the immense damage done by the extremist opposition. Across the country, municipal authorities are working tirelessly to repair the damage done and restore regional economies. According to the Nicaraguan Institute of Municipal Development, 90 per cent of businesses inside the zones affected by violence are on course to return to normality and tourists are starting to return.

As for the future, the Nicaraguan people have a choice. In 2016 they elected a government which would deliver for the poorest and most vulnerable in society. The vast majority of Nicaraguans have no desire to return to the neo-liberal years prior to 2007, when education and health were privatised and many people could not afford to feed their families or send their kids to school. Whatever future the Nicaraguan people choose, it must be the Nicaraguan people themselves who must be allowed to determine their own future, free from US and foreign aggression and interference. They did so in 2016 and they will do so again.

*'We will continue to support the government and the revolution in order to keep building alternatives to escape the poverty that previous neoliberal policies forced upon us and in which workers had no alternatives. – Jose Antonio Zepeda, General Secretary, ANDEN*