



Public sector union UNE celebrates 42<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary, July 2021

## **NICARAGUA SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN ACTION GROUP**

### **Annual Report**

#### **Introduction**

2021 was a critical year for Nicaragua with elections for the Presidency and National Assembly taking place on 7 November. The overwhelming victory of President Ortega and the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) with almost 76% of the popular vote was met with increased hostility and aggression by the United States which imposed further sanctions and other coercive measures on the country, at the same time continuing to fund and support Nicaragua's right-wing opposition. In response, NSCAG intensified our campaigning work in defence of Nicaragua's sovereignty and right to self-determination. We produced a series of briefings and updates on the elections and co-hosted several webinars with Alliance for Global Justice on topics including sanctions and the ongoing efforts of the United States to effect regime change. Earlier in the year, we also organised a joint webinar on US sanctions with the Cuba and Venezuela Solidarity Campaigns.

We continued to send out monthly updates and reports on current developments and social progress in the country, highlighting the many achievements of the Nicaraguan government since 2007 in terms of implementing social and economic programmes designed to improve the lives and livelihoods of the poorest and most vulnerable in society.

At the same time, we responded to the inaccurate reporting and misinformation put out by corporate media. We enjoyed continued support and solidarity from our trade union affiliates and were invited to speak at a number of trade union regional and branch meetings, most of which were held remotely due to ongoing Covid restrictions. In October, we attended the UNITE policy conference where the Nicaraguan Ambassador to the UK and Ireland spoke at a joint fringe meeting with the Cuba and Venezuela Solidarity Campaigns. We also participated in the Latin America Conference *Adelante* held in December where we organised a successful seminar on the Nicaraguan elections.

Unfortunately, several planned activities had to be postponed because of the travel restrictions related to Covid. This included the National Education Union teacher exchange with Nicaragua, although by the end of the year it was possible to start planning for the exchange to take place in 2022.

#### **Obituaries**

We were deeply saddened during the year to learn of the passing of two shining lights of the solidarity movement.

Dawn Downes, UNISON branch secretary at George Eliot Hospital and Assistant Regional Convenor for UNISON West Midlands Region, passed away on 25 February. Dawn was instrumental in establishing a twinning between George Eliot Hospital and the Nilda Patricia Hospital in Ciudad Sandino, Nicaragua and between UNISON West Midlands Region and the Nicaraguan health trade union FETSALUD. Dawn's commitment to international solidarity was unwavering. She hosted many visits from Nicaraguan trade

unionists and was the driving force behind the organisation of a delegation from George Eliot Hospital to Nicaragua in 2015. Dawn was an inspiration, bringing joy to everyone who met her.

*We will always remember Cllr Dawn Downes for her amazing spirit of solidarity, and as a wonderful and committed friend of the people of Nicaragua, as she created the link between George Eliot Hospital NHS Trust and the Ciudad Sandino Hospital, which has saved and transformed countless lives for the better. We are honoured to have known her big, splendid and generous heart. Our heartfelt condolences to all her friends and colleagues at George Eliot Hospital, and to her loving family. Our thoughts and prayers are with all of you at this sad moment." - Guisell Morales, Nicaraguan Ambassador to the UK and Ireland.*

On 28 December, we learned of the death of Chuck Kaufman, National Co-ordinator of the Alliance for Global Justice. Chuck made a tremendous impact during his decades of anti-imperialist work, organising to change US-Latin American foreign policy. We worked together with Chuck on a number of joint AFGJ/NSCAG initiatives. He was a joy to work with, always willing to offer his support and such a kind and generous man. In a tribute written by Alliance for Global Justice, they said '*Chuck was a true leader, a visionary, a master strategist and above all, a loving and kind comrade and friend. Through his wise stewardship Alliance for Global Justice grew to become a major force in building the capacity of grass roots organizers throughout the Americas to confront imperialism, neoliberalism and oppression in all forms and to strive to curb U.S. violations of human rights, both within and outside its borders.*'

### **UK Trade Union Solidarity**

As indicated above, we are grateful to our trade union affiliates and supporters for their constant and unwavering support throughout this period. International solidarity remained crucial in sustaining Nicaraguan trade unions through a particularly difficult year which saw Nicaragua faced not only by the COVID-19 pandemic and two devastating hurricanes but also by continuing US aggression and efforts to undermine the country's sovereignty, bring about regime change and return Nicaragua to the dark days of neoliberalism.

Income from our raffles amounted to £4,320 and our two appeals raised £5,285. This income makes a huge difference to our ability to carry out our work successfully and effectively and we are extremely grateful for the support received.

### **Affiliations**

Our national affiliates are: - ASLEF, BFAWU, CWU, FBU, GMB, NEU, RMT, TSSA, UNISON, UNITE and USDAW. We also have affiliations from TUC London, East & South East Region, TUC Northern Region, Battersea & Wandsworth TUC, Crewe & District TUC, Merseyside Cuba Solidarity and Caribbean Labour Solidarity.

By the end of 2021, 119 branches and regions were affiliated to us, a small increase on the previous year. Whilst this is to be welcomed, we still need more support from regions and branches and hope that we can redouble our efforts to encourage more affiliations during the coming year.

We would like to thank all those who have contributed to NSCAG's work, whether a trade union individual, branch, district, association, region or national office. A full copy of the NSCAG accounts is available on request.

A breakdown of current branch and regional affiliations by union is shown below.

**Branch & region affiliation breakdown by union:**

	<b>Dec 17</b>	<b>Dec 18</b>	<b>Dec 19</b>	<b>Dec 20</b>	<b>Dec 21</b>
ASLEF	0	0	0	0	0
CWU	12	9	10	7	13
GMB	9	10	9	13	10
NEU	9	7	9	7	10
RMT	1	1	1	1	1
UNISON	38	45	45	44	55
UNITE	45	46	38	30	30
USDAW	0	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>119</b>

**Staff:** Louise Richards

**NSCAG Executive Members 2021:** Dave Auger, Tony Burke (appointed July), Rabiah Chohan, Dave Cosgrave (resigned July), Ruby Cox (Chair), Francisco Dominguez, John Drewery, Bob Hardie (resigned July), Farzana Jumma (appointed July), Julie Lamin, David McKnight, Ken Rustidge, Ann Seuret

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