



NICARAGUAN ELECTIONS 2021

Introduction

With presidential and National Assembly elections scheduled for 7 November 2021, the overarching goal of the Nicaraguan Government has been to create the conditions for a greater degree of participation of all sectors of society. Every effort has been made to ensure maximum citizen participation and to guarantee the peaceful celebration of the elections.

Yet as the election grows closer, the United States is intensifying its efforts to sabotage the elections and achieve its ultimate aim of regime change. In addition to illegal coercive measures (sanctions) imposed against the country by the US, the groundwork is being laid by the US and opposition forces to denounce the elections as fraudulent before even the first vote has been cast.

Electoral Reforms

A series of reforms to Nicaragua's electoral law was approved by the National Assembly on 4 May 2021. Their main purpose was to modernise, strengthen and complement the existing law and to make it more transparent, accountable, equal and fair. This included bringing the electoral law into line with other legislation that affected the electoral law's provisions, for example in terms of gender equality where the new law mandated that all electoral structures of participating parties must comprise 50% women. The law also introduced measures controlling foreign funding of political parties aimed at preventing interference in the country's elections (bringing Nicaragua into line with the great majority of other countries including the US and UK) and included clauses relating to respect for sovereignty, self-determination and independence.

Supreme Electoral Council

Nicaragua's Supreme Electoral Council (SEC) is an autonomous public body responsible for organising elections. With a historic representation of the multi-ethnic Caribbean Coast and 60% of women, ten new magistrates of the SEC were sworn in on 6 May 2021, seven full and three alternate magistrates. With six women, four of them full members and two within the substitutes, the SEC has gender equity for the first time in its history.

Latest polls

With approval ratings for the government of Daniel Ortega and the FSLN (Sandinista National Liberation Front) consistently high, it is looking increasingly likely that they will be re-elected. A national M & R Consultores poll conducted in August found that the predisposition to vote for the FSLN is 66.7% as opposed to 20.5% for the opposition. 66.6% of respondents stated that an FSLN government would be best for the country, with only 10.9% in favour of an opposition government. The rating of the work done by President Ortega was 70.6%. 76.8% considered that there is respect for fundamental rights in Nicaragua and 60.3% stated that they are satisfied with the functioning of democracy.

Electoral roll

The Supreme Electoral Council has reported that the definitive electoral roll includes 4,478,334 voters (out of a population of 6.3 million). There will be 3,106 voting centres made up of 13,459 polling stations each

with one trained volunteer electoral monitor. The President of the SEC and the Health Minister have highlighted that there must be strict compliance with sanitary protocols during the electoral campaign. Article 16 of the Electoral Law establishes that the Municipal Electoral Councils appoint the members of the polling stations' boards.

Political parties

In addition to the FSLN Alliance, the following legally constituted political parties are standing in the elections:-

Constitutional Liberal Party (PLC)
Christian Path Party (CNN)
Nicaraguan Liberal Alliance Party (ALN)
Alliance for the Republic Party (APRE)
Independent Liberal Party (PLI)
Yatama (Caribbean Coast Party)

With the exception of Yatama, each has with their own candidate for President and Vice President. Yatama are a regional party contesting seats for the National Assembly in the northern and southern autonomous regions only.

US Aggression

Since the return to power of the FSLN in 2007, Nicaragua has again become caught in the hypocrisy and cross currents of global political power struggles. For US governments whether Republican or Democrat, the Sandinistas represent unfinished business from the Cold War and are regarded as constituting a major threat to the security and foreign policy of the US. Destabilisation tactics have varied over time, but the goal remains the same: oust 'unfriendly' governments by whatever means; prop up 'friendly' governments however corrupt and incompetent.

In 2018 the US enacted the NICA Act with the intention of blocking economic and social development loans to Nicaragua through international lending institutions. As the elections approach the pressure of other well-funded overt and covert measures has become more intense.

The most recent direct attack is a new package of sanctions called the RENACER (Reinforcing Nicaragua's Adherence to Conditions for Electoral Reform) Act passed by the US Senate under unanimous consent. In the House, the Act has been voted out of one committee but not another committee which has to approve it before sending it to the House floor for a final vote. The Act would require the US government to increase sanctions in coordination with Canada and the European Union and proposes new immediate measures against the Nicaraguan government and officials ahead of the elections, all under the guise of promoting democracy.

In addition to the RENACER Act, a document called Responsive Action in Nicaragua (RAIN) was leaked from the US Embassy in Managua in August 2020. This document sets out a well-orchestrated plan to destabilise Nicaragua and to launch a further coup d'état attempt either in advance of or following the elections should the FSLN win.

Conclusion

The vast majority of Nicaraguans want only to live in peace and to continue to benefit from the last 14 years of economic and social progress seen in the country. The defence of national sovereignty remains paramount, and it must be for the Nicaraguan people and the Nicaraguan people alone to elect a government of their choosing.