

RENACER Act: U.S. Congress to Expand Nicaragua Sanctions

As we [reported recently](#), Nicaragua is being targeted yet again with a new sanctions bill by the US. The latest move appears to be a deliberate attempt to sabotage Nicaragua's November elections in light of the fact that all recent polls indicate that Daniel Ortega and the FSLN are widely anticipated to win the elections scheduled for November. A national *M & R Consultores* [poll](#) conducted in March, found that 6 in 10 Nicaraguans support the government, while 2 out of 10 respondents support the opposition, and 2 out of 10 said neither.

The *Reinforcing Nicaragua's Adherence to Conditions for Electoral Reform* (RENACER) Act (full text of the bill [here](#)), introduced in March, would require the US government to increase sanctions coordination with Canada and the European Union and proposes new immediate measures against the Nicaraguan government and officials ahead of Nicaragua's November elections, all under the guise of promoting democratic elections.

A House companion bill to the *RENACER* Act, with the same wording of the bill to be voted on in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, will be brought to the House Foreign Affairs Committee any day now—potentially speeding up the process. It is possible that, as with the NICA Act, the bill will be passed by unanimous consent, without a formal vote. The bill is intended to reinforce the [Nicaragua Investment Conditionality Act](#) (Nica Act) of December 2018 whose purpose was to cut off access to development financing.

The Senate bill's sponsor, Democratic Party Senator Bob Menendez, says the legislation will expand oversight of international financial institutions' lending to Nicaragua and will add Nicaragua to the list of Central American countries subject to corruption-related visa restrictions. The legislation would require "classified reporting on corruption perpetrated by President Ortega's government and family, as well as Russian government activities in Nicaragua; and requires reporting on human rights abuses committed by Nicaraguan security forces in rural and indigenous communities."

This latest piece of legislation follows a [leak](#) in July 2020 indicating that a new interventionist plot to overthrow the Sandinista government was in the works and that a new coup attempt, organised and financed by the United States, could soon be expected. In April 2018, a violent US-inspired and financed attempted coup was defeated by the Nicaraguan people. What was framed as a peoples' uprising by foreign corporate media was and Nicaragua's opposition press was in fact two months of wanton violence and destruction carried out by right wing opposition groups financed and backed by the US. Using the same playbook which has been used to destabilise Venezuela in recent years, and in Nicaragua two years ago, the reused script included lines on "free, fair and transparent elections" and made claims that the FSLN government was curtailing press freedoms, obstructing rights to demonstrate and persecuting political opponents.

During the past 14 years, Nicaragua has dramatically reduced poverty from 48.3% to 24.9% and extreme poverty from 17.5% to 6.9%, while drastically reducing its illiteracy rate to under 5%. International organisations like the World Economic Forum have recognised Nicaragua for leading gender equity (5th in the world) and material and infant mortality have been reduced by more than half since 2007.

Despite its stellar social and developmental achievements, the U.S. Department of Defence has testified that Nicaragua poses a threat to the national security of the United States, and particularly with increased China cooperation in Latin America.

Nicaragua's right-wing has attempted to create an issue of the government's handling of Covid-19, though the country has produced some of the lowest numbers of infections and deaths per capita in the region and world.

Aggression towards Nicaragua has continued uninterrupted through the change of U.S. administrations evident with the RENACER Act, led by Democratic Senator Bob Menendez, with the support of four other Democrats: Tim Kaine, Dick Durbin, Ben Cardin, and Chris Murphy, as well as Florida Republican Senator Marco Rubio.

The government of Nicaragua has firmly rejected unilateral coercive measures against Cuba, Venezuela and all other countries, calling them illegal and a violation of human rights. A poll by *M&R Consultores* in 2020 revealed that 71.9% of respondents in Nicaragua disapproved of the Nica Act and 78.3% said that the sanctions would only bring harm to democracy and the economy. 83.1% reject meddling by foreign governments and international organisations.

Participating in a virtual meeting called Sanctions Kill, Nicaraguan Ambassador to the UN Jaime Hermida, stated that the programmes, projects and achievements of the Nicaraguan government have been negatively impacted by the unilateral coercive measures imposed on the Nicaraguan people, adding that sanctions present an obstacle to the right to development, particularly the eradication of poverty.

A new stage of aggression by the OAS and Nicaraguan opposition against the Nicaraguan government is being prepared for the month of May, as the electoral calendar advances.

Article by Camila Escalante with input from Chuck Kaufman, Kawsachun News 30 April 2021