

Organization of the American States

The Nicaraguan Crisis

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INTRODUCTION

The people of Nicaragua are currently experiencing one of the, if not the worst, political crisis in the country's history. The violent nature of this crisis, taken by both the people and the government, has made international awareness about the future of Nicaragua and how this crisis will be managed. The nation of Nicaragua has been embroiled in political unrest for the majority of the current year, with violent protests and changes in politics taking the attention of international nations and leaders. (*Around the World, 2018*).

The Nicaraguan Crisis has the power of not only affecting the people of Nicaragua itself but also other bordering countries and those that have political accords with this government drastically. The several strikes that have been made all over this Central American nation are taking the attention of many, with comparisons about Nicaragua proceeding and ending like Venezuela being made. (*Sabato, 2018*). Likewise, not only Nicaraguan government officials and opposition civil society groups are reaching peace talks and certain agreements, there has also been the involvement of "UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) and representatives of the European Union." (*BBC, 2018*).

The current work being held in order to give order and to contain this crisis is being made after the involvement of the IACHR, which denounced serious human rights violations, such as the use of force, torture, illegal detentions among others. It is important to take into consideration the involvement of this commission, which is an autonome organ of the OAS, the Organization of American States and the committee of this debate. The OAS is the "world's oldest regional organization", which dates back to the First International Conference of American States, in 1889. (*OAS, 2018*). Achieving among every member state an order of peace and justice, to promote solidarity, to strengthen the collaboration between everyone, and to defend their sovereignty, integrity, and independence is the idea that brought OAS together. This organization uses a four-pillar approach to efficiently work based on democracy, human rights, development and security; it works with all 35 member states all throughout America, Nicaragua included. This committee works hand to hand with different member states and provides help in moments of crisis, just like what is occurring in Nicaragua and the seeking of solutions for it.

HISTORY OF THE PROBLEM

The Nicaraguan Crisis is the worst political crisis in this country's history, mainly caused by the different ideals and implementations made by President Daniel Ortega, and the disagreement of these by citizens of said country. Beginning on April of 2018, deadly and violent strikes have occurred, taking a toll on different sectors, such as the economical one. Different agreements are being reached, however, the difference in opinions and how Nicaraguan people have been affected are highly affecting how these decisions are proceeding. (*Wallace, 2018*).

The Nicaraguan Crisis began after protests against the President Daniel Ortega had begun, who is currently on his third consecutive term on office, and who has instructed changes in certain politics that disserved the citizens. The small demonstrations were held by people that were not in favor of Ortega's implementations, but the violence began when pro-government groups, often referred as "grupos de choque", repressed and crushed a small demonstrations that was being held against changes in reforms of Nicaragua's pension system. (*Wallace, 2018*). This occurred in April of 2018, with the very first change in social security systems being announced on the 16th of said month. This repression occurred on April 18th; on April 19th at least three people were killed amid attempts by different security and governmental forces to suppress these demonstrations. (*The Charleston Gazette, 2018*).

This crisis unfolded after the changes made in the pension system approved and made by the government of Daniel Ortega were the reason of protesting on the demonstrations made. Nicaragua's President cancelled the social security overhaul, thus causing a huge discomfort among the citizens, since they were now not only facing a with the reducing of benefits and an increase in taxes, but it also costed around 130,000 jobs. (*The Charleston Gazette, 2018*). However, the continuous protests are now being held in order to demand justice for those that have been killed during previous protests and demonstrations.

The Nicaraguan government has denied all responsibility to the problem, continuingly stating that the situation is a result of extreme acts from criminal and rebel groups involved. In May, a statement released by Ortega's administrations said that the protesters were "killing their own in order to destabilize President Daniel Ortega's administration." (*Wallace, 2018*) Governmental officials have also denied the existence of paramilitary forces, who are said to create a grave amount of damage to the people and the government's image as well.

The previously denied paramilitary groups are now being attacked by the Nicaraguan government, who have been suppressing student-led demonstrations against the same government. The military groups used weapons against the students and killed approximately 80 people. What turned out to be the most surprising to the citizens was that the armed groups who were attacking the protesters were pro-government students and regular people, which came as a surprise given that some of them had once been in the oppositional groups. (Wallace, 2018)

CURRENT SITUATION

Nicaragua is currently in a constant state of danger, with almost daily reports of lethal clashes between governmental groups, the pro-government gangs and shock forces, and Nicaraguan citizens. Even if the frontline in these protests, which were made now not only in order to say something about Ortega's changes but also to demand justice for those that have been killed in the last two months, were mainly of university students, they now also have the support of "Nicaraguans from all walks of life and from all political affiliations". (Wallace, 2018). As of the month of June of 2018, around 170 people have been killed as a result of the violence resulted in these crashes that are taken on the streets and on the blockage of different roadways. (World CBS, 2018).

The IACHR, the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights, which works as an autonome organ of the OAS, denounced serious human rights violations, including the use of force, torture, arbitrary and illegal detentions, and attacks and other types of intimidation on the press. Also, the commission has asked the Nicaraguan government to stop repressing these protests. Amnesty International has also accused Nicaraguan authorities of "unleashing a lethal strategy of oppression against the protesters". (Wallace, 2018). However, the government has denied any type of responsibility, and instead blames the protesters referring to them as "criminal groups" for the current situation. There has also been a huge decrease in the Nicaraguan economy, this as a consequence of the political crisis occurring. (Board, 2018).

Given that this issue is so recent, there are new death reports and incidents every single day. On July 13th 2018, a group of 150 students, journalists and even priest protesters were keeping shelter inside a church after more paramilitary

violence erupted in Nicaragua. A student was reported dead after the military entered the church and attacked the students, where the rest were only injured, but all the same it was a brutal attack for the protesters. The protesters continue to demand the resignation of president Daniel Ortega, which is “not likely to happen anytime soon,” a source states. (*BBC News, 2018*)

Similarly to the recently mentioned issue, on July 8th 2018, there was a previous attack to the Nicaraguan protesters, leaving approximately 38 people dead. It was reported as “the deadliest and bloodiest day in Nicaragua since a wave of anti-government riots started in April.” (*BBC News, 2018*) The president of the Cenidh, Vilma Núñez, reported that 35 people had been killed in the small towns of Diriamba and Jinotepe, and later three more were found dead in Matagalpa. The attackers were pro-government gangs, that moved into the towns and broke into churches where protesters had taken refuge.

The Catholic Church has been actively acting as a mediator between both violent groups, all though it has not been completely successful. The students that were found inside the Church on July 13th were transported into a different location, the Cathedral of Managua. Brazil’s government has also been an active responder to the attacks, stating that the government disagrees with the manner with which problems are being dealt with and finds it all unacceptable, yet have not been sending as many troops as necessary. “The escalation of violence against civil society, with physical aggressions against priests, journalists and human rights activists, are unacceptable,” the Brazilian government said in a statement. (*BBC News, 2018*)

More than 300 people have been reported dead since protests began against the government since April 18. Protests began because of a change in the social security system for the citizens, but they quickly focused their protests on the demanding of President Ortega to step down from office. The government has recently started to accuse the protesters of conspiring a coup d’etat against the president, who has been famously re-elected three consecutive times since 2016. They have also accused the protesters of causing an alarming and violent reaction to the government’s decisions, as well as “keeping the country and its people as hostages by blocking roads and interrupting trade and normal businesses as well.” (*BBC News, 2018*)

New attacks happen every single day and they are still being denied by the government and by all of those who support President Ortega's decisions. Although it is believed that the majority of the population wished to overthrow the President and his cabinet from power, they are not sufficiently strong enough to fight the military forces, so the citizens of Nicaragua are wishing that other countries will come to their aid and allow them to continue fighting. (*BBC News, 2018*)

UN ACTIONS

Ever since the beginning of protests and the violent clashes between citizens and the government, there have been conventions to reach a solution upon the problem that has been taking a toll on the citizens of Nicaragua. In representation of the United Nations, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, alongside the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights and representatives of the European Union are now part of an agreement with Nicaraguan government officials and civil society groups made around the 15th and 16th of June. This agreement includes a ceasefire between Nicaragua's government and opposition groups, with a truth commission in the process of being established and the investigation of all deaths and the acts of violence committed, looking for those responsible. (*BBC, 2018*) This, however, has not yet been implemented upon the country, given that there are still issues amongst military and paramilitary forces, all up until recently.

In an article published by the United Nations itself, on May 11th 2018, it was stated that "the United Nations human rights arm has called for investigations into all acts of violence in Nicaragua, where scores of people – the majority of them students – have been killed in protests that began in mid-April." (*UN News, 2018*) They have also appealed to the Nicaraguan government to allow them to have a certain amount of access to information about the student killings taking place throughout the entirety of the events, but the government has not allowed them to have such information.

The UN has not yet involved itself in this issue, which is why citizens are appealing to those in charge to help them and allow fellow countries to aid them with the necessary resources to take down their president and to establish a new government that will please most, if not all, Nicaraguan citizens.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

As previously mentioned, the Nicaraguan crisis has now become a global issue and is affecting the lives of millions of citizens. People are fleeing their native country because they are afraid of the consequences that they might have to face in the future and are unhappy with how the government is dealing with their protests. It is time that the UN and the international community involved help these people to have better and safer lives, with a proper government.

With the purpose of bringing proper help and aid to those in need, the committee proposes the following solutions, which could be taken into consideration when coming to the discussion and the debate upon the topic:

1. A UN commission, with base in Nicaragua, will be established. It shall overlook any changes and intermediations made in the government.
2. A renegotiation shall be put into place, speaking of the social security overhaul and an with an overlook in how this could affect the Nicaraguan people and the internal economy, given that this was the issue that started all the protests.
3. The intervention of foreign countries in Nicaraguan government decisions will be prohibited in the foreseeable future, unless it is absolutely necessary.
4. While changes are being implemented into the government, well developed nations shall bring necessary resources to the poor rural areas and help with the reconstruction of towns that have been affected by riots and attacks.
5. An investigation would be created, focusing specifically on the deaths and the violence Nicaragua underwent since the beginning of 2018 and see who is truly responsible for the crimes, which they should be held accountable for.
6. A change in the government of Daniel Ortega and his regime should be properly established, which should only be just and proper for the citizens.
7. A proper change in the law and constitution will be put into action, that will prohibit the reelection of any government official.

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