

US AND UK IMPOSE SANCTIONS ON NICARAGUA

Introduction

Although the Nicaraguan people voted overwhelmingly to elect the FSLN and Daniel Ortega in elections held on 7 November, the US has refused to recognise the legitimacy of the elections, declaring them 'neither free nor fair' and not 'democratic' and has decided to punish the Nicaraguan people for not voting as the US wanted them to. In what is almost a carbon copy of the statement issued by the US, the UK government has stated that the election was neither free nor fair and 'is not a plausible expression of democracy'.

The Renacer Act – US imposes more sanctions

On 10 November, President Biden signed into law the RENACER (Reinforcing Nicaragua's Adherence to Conditions for Electoral Reform) Act. The Act had already received approval from the US Senate just days before the election in an attempt to coerce Nicaraguans to vote against the Sandinista government.

The effect of the Act will be to extend illegal coercive measures (sanctions) against Nicaragua in a move which will cause suffering to the poorest and most vulnerable in the country. The Act will hinder the functioning of government agencies and includes restrictions on international lending, which will make development financing more difficult to get, putting at risk a whole range of social programmes in health and education. The Act will cause harm and suffering to the Nicaraguan people, especially the most vulnerable, by suffocating the economy. The Act applies targeted sanctions to card-carrying members of the FSLN, some 2.1 million people, and their families. The US is also threatening additional measures including a trade embargo, which would – if implemented – cause thousands of job losses in the country.

On 16 November, Biden also imposed a series of visa restrictions on Nicaragua, banning members of the Nicaraguan government from entering the United States. The travel ban applies to all of Nicaragua's "elected officials," apparently including President Ortega and Vice President Rosario Murillo, in addition to security force members, judges, mayors and others seen by the US as "undermining democracy".

There are indications that these latest announcements are the first in a series of steps which will be ramped up over time.

UK government follows suit

On Monday 15 November, the UK government followed the US by imposing sanctions on Nicaraguan officials, Vice President Rosario Murillo. The UK sanctions carry asset freezes and UK travel bans. In imposing these measures, the UK government has stated that it 'confirms its strong support for the messages of concern issued by so many countries of the region, including collectively in the Organisation of American States, at the deterioration of political and human rights in Nicaragua and the subversion of democratic processes'. It is perhaps worth recalling that days after the November 2019 coup in Bolivia, the UK Foreign Office released a statement congratulating Jeanine Añez and welcoming her appointment.

Organisation of American States

The Organisation of American States (OAS) is little more than an instrument of US foreign policy. It played a key role in the 2019 coup in Bolivia, legitimised the post-coup regime in Honduras, supported a soft coup against the Brazilian Workers Party which led to Bolsonaro taking power and recognises Guaidó as President of Venezuela.

On 12 November, the organisation adopted a resolution criticising the Nicaraguan elections as unfair and urging future action. The resolution states that the elections were 'not free, fair or transparent and lack democratic legitimacy'. It also instructs the Permanent Council to undertake an assessment of the situation and to "take appropriate action", without specifying what that would be.

Nicaraguan Government Response

Responding to the OAS resolution, Michael Campbell, Nicaragua's representative in the OAS, stated that "We have witnessed another attack against the free, dignified and sovereign people of Nicaragua, which will go down in history as one of the worst aggressions against democracy."

On Tuesday 16 November, the Nicaraguan National Assembly accused the OAS of violating the principle of non-intervention in the internal matters of other states and called upon President Ortega to reject the OAS Charter, which would begin a formal process of leaving the organisation. On 19 November, Nicaraguan Foreign Minister Denis Moncada submitted the formal notice of withdrawal from the OAS to OAS Secretary General Luis Almagro see link [here](#)

Conclusion

US interventions in Latin America have never led to democracy. Their latest actions against Nicaragua are part and parcel of ongoing attempts to overthrow the legitimate governments of Nicaragua, Cuba and Venezuela. Bolivia too is once again in their sights. Meanwhile, the US continues to support its client states in Honduras, Colombia and Chile and has recently sold \$650 million worth of US-made missiles to Saudi Arabia, whose regimes are anything but democratic and where human rights are openly, grossly and daily violated.

And the UK, where child malnutrition has doubled and where child poverty is set to increase to 5.2million by 2022 is surely in no position to lecture anyone about human rights and democracy.

The people of Nicaragua have spoken. Together with Cuba and Venezuela, Nicaragua will continue to resist US attempts to dominate their country and the region. No pasaran.

"The peoples of the Americas are rising again, saying no to imperialism, saying no to fascism, saying no to intervention and saying no to death." - Hugo Chávez