

# LIMUN

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## General Assembly

### *Topic A: "Political Instability and Human Rights in Nicaragua"*

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## I. COMMITTEE BACKGROUND

The General Assembly is the first committee of the United Nations (UN). Here, delegates meet to discuss contentious issues, mainly those related to international peace and security. As well as this, the General Assembly is also responsible for overseeing the UN budget, the general functioning of the organization and the admission of new members.

Today, the General Assembly is made up of 193 UN members, each of whom has a voice and a vote. And all have a collaborative responsibility to find solutions on important issues such as political, humanitarian, social, economic, and legal matters. Its objective is to reach a general agreement to achieve the 4 purposes of the UN. Such as: to maintain international peace and security, to foster relations between nations and to favor international cooperation to solve problems, and always respect human rights.

## II. HISTORY OF THE TOPIC

### A. Introduction

Nicaragua, being the second poorest country of the Western Hemisphere and the largest of the Central American Republics, is now facing different challenges that have been brought to our attention. In the last couple of months, the government's grip on its citizens' way of life has tightened, provoking fear and uncertainty. Since the 2018 protests, Daniel Ortega, as president, has been more active than ever in his declarations against religions, peaceful protesters, and opposing party movements, claiming that they are conspiring against his government.

Commencing his fourth consecutive term as president, Ortega has found his way through Congress to maintain power indefinitely. With his wealth, he has distributed seats of power among his family, showing similar characteristics to the Somoza regime. Daniel Ortega, who led the terceristas against Somoza's dictatorship at the height of the Cold War, is now condemning himself to repeat history again.

### **B. Evolution of the topic**

For more than 40 years, since 1936, Nicaragua had been under the Somoza family's rule, defeated until 1979 when the FSLN took Managua. Daniel Ortega joined this movement in 1960 during his teenage years but rode to the highest of positions through the different conflicts. At first, when the FSLN started its revolution, it orchestrated multiple raids and kidnappings. With the 1972 earthquake that left the city in chaos, leaving 70% of the city in ruins, the FSLN took advantage of this chaos. It was after this disaster that Nicaragua's status as the healthiest economy in Central America fell, as well as the economic policies established by Somoza.

When the government destined millions of dollars to the affected population by the earthquake, progress was not seen. This continued until in the late 1970s, the Terceristas led by Daniel Ortega became the predominant rebel group in the country. They looked for social democracy and allied with the non-communist groups that were against Somoza's

leadership. In August 1978, FSLN held the entire Congress hostage, and took Managua, Nicaragua's capital, the following year. Leaving behind an indebted government, the Somoza dictatorship came to an end, as well as the Sandinista Revolution.

Daniel Ortega was elected as successor and new president of Nicaragua. He entered office in 1984 with the intention to ease poverty, dividing lands and distributing them throughout the population. This agrarian reform was supported by the USSR, which brought attention to the U.S. government, the Reagan administration at the time. Ronald Reagan, with his policies for rolling back the great influences of communism, decided to show support to the Contras, who were the new anti-communist rebel group. In 1982, without the permission of Congress, Ronald Reagan gave permission to the CIA to aid the Contras with a 19 million dollar budget. Following the 1984 elections, the FSLN won again, claiming they were free and fair, while the U.S. government claimed otherwise. During these years until the next elections, U.S aid was cut off from the Contras, making them agree to a peace deal, where they further established themselves beyond the borders of the country. In the 1990 elections, the population had become unsatisfied with the FSLN's policies, making Ortega lose the elections. In his place came the National Opposition Union, led by Violeta Barrios de Chamorro, whose husband was murdered during the Sandinista revolution.

During the next fifteen years, Nicaragua's politics remained extremely polarized, until Ortega regained power through the 2006 elections. By supposedly having learned from experience, he was able to convince with good intentions, establishing good relationships with the Catholic Church, neighboring countries, and allowing American investment. These declarations slowly turned contradictory. After further reelecting himself in 2011, 2016, and 2021, through Congress policies, Ortega's government has turned into an autocratic dictatorship.

## C. Relevant Events

### 2018 protests

In 2014, Daniel Ortega changed the constitution in order to abolish terms, securing his power for the next years to come. In 2018, he further altered the pension system, triggering protests that in time became massive. The general discontent of the Nicaraguan population was manifested in 2018, where streets and peaceful protests took place. To shut them out, the paramilitary and government military forces became involved in using brute force, resulting in many killings. According to the Nicaraguan Red Cross, 435 people were injured, 242 were hospitalized, and 26 people died between the 18th and 25th of April. In the span of these events, TV stations were taken off-air, while many reporters and journalists were targeted. Between the protesters, some of Ortega's once sandinista allies were now searching again for a true democracy. These protests gained international attention, but it was not only until the last elections that other countries spoke out.

### Jailed Opponents

After these protests, Ortega quickly changed his stance concerning the Church and other opponents, intensifying arrests and attacks against them and contradicting his own constitution. The U.S Department of State confirms that inside Nicaragua's legal framework, "no one 'shall be obligated by coercive measures to declare his or her ideology or beliefs'".

During the 2021 elections, the 7 other candidates for presidency were arrested, as well as another 29 critics who spoke out for human rights. According to the Human Rights Watch in Nicaragua, critics have been held incommunicado for months under abusive conditions and interrogations, including lack of food and water, prolonged solitary confinement, as well as daily interrogations without authority present. Since May 2021, 36 critics

have been arbitrarily detained due with the charge: “conspiracy to undermine national integrity.” By claiming that “traitors” were not allowed to run for future presidents, Ortega secured his place in the elections, starting his fourth term.

Not only has Ortega arrested his once sandinista allies, but has also openly attacked the Church and its representatives in his country, even though the majority of his population identifies as Christian (90. 5%, according to Migrants Refugees). In 2018, Bishop Silvio Bález was exiled from the country after receiving death threats, as well as several nuns and members of religious communities. Furthermore, Bishop Alvarez was put under house arrest in August 2022, with the charge of organizing “destabilizing and provocative” activities in the population, as well as openly claiming that the Church was a “perfect dictatorship”. The Pope in response to these claims, indirectly invited Nicaragua to dialogue. Ortega, in his part, has further continued his claims against the church and other opponents, claiming their arrests necessary, but still has not recognized the illegitimacy in them.

By twisting and bending, Ortega has managed to create new laws that allow this kind of behavior. By following the amendment to the Code of Criminal Procedure, police are allowed to hold detainees for up to 90 days without charge. These cases have mostly been between critics and protesters, and Human Rights Watch states that most of the cases are standardized human rights on freedom of expression, which should not be criminalized.

After gaining attention from the Pope and other countries, the U.S. White House publicly condemned Ortega and the 2021 elections with the following statement: “What Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega and his wife, Vice President Rosario Murillo, orchestrated today was a pantomime election that was neither free nor fair, and most certainly not democratic”.

## Emigration

Between protests and arrests, terror has risen up in Nicaraguan society, forcing citizens to flee or displace, having as main destinations in the U.S and Costa Rica. Due to the political instability, environmental crisis (such as earthquakes and hurricanes), and social inequality, around 10% of Nicaragua's population has already immigrated to the previously mentioned countries.

### III. CURRENT ISSUES

#### A. Panorama

Being the largest country in Central America, Nicaragua holds some geographical importance, as well as gaining attention from other governments. Clearly there has been tension between Ortega's autocratic way of ruling and other leaders. By having parallel factors with the Somoza family dictatorship, Ortega's dictatorship is seen negatively by liberal and democratic countries.

#### B. Points of view

##### Nicaragua

By being part of the international community, Nicaragua has been subject to several pressures from different countries, as well as counted support from others. By being part of the OAS (the Organization of American States), condemnation from Honduras and El Salvador was directed toward Ortega, blaming him for civil and political rights issues. On the other hand, Nicaragua's trade stays strong with various countries but is still a threat considering the large dependence its economy has on these trades.

##### United States

By openly stating their position, the United States has spoken in favor of democracy and invites the Nicaraguan government to release

those unjustly imprisoned. In the past, the Reagan administration had supported the Contras that were against the Sandinistas during the Civil War . This aid was given without Congress's permission, but was still continued indirectly until the 1980's. Today, the U.S. stands with its international connections and is against any other movement supporting the autocrat's way of governing

### Costa Rica

Of Costa Rica's population, 10% are immigrants, and inside this percentage, 97% are Nicaraguan. Tension rose with the COVID-19 pandemic when borders were closed for almost 10 days. While 20% of Central America's goods are transported by land, economic losses were evident. Costa Rica's way of coping with immigration enabled humanitarian aid to many refugees, providing education and asylum. Yet despite their greatest tries, Costa Rica's capacity is overstretched.

### China

China and Nicaragua seem to be in good relations, ever since the latter adopted the One-China policy in December 2021. In order to secure China's support, Nicaragua had to cut relations with Taiwan. With this, Nicaragua secures financial support from the second largest economy in the world. China, on the other hand, finds this relationship beneficial by isolating Taiwan, and further establishing itself into what may be called the *U.S's backyard*. By doing so, Ortega still doesn't bend to the international pressure he is exposed to.

## IV. UN & EXTERNAL ACTIONS

### HRC

The United Nations Human Rights Council passed a plan addressing the Nicaraguan inequality that was previously mentioned. In May 2022, the council decided that it would send human rights experts to carry out independent investigations in order to confirm the unfair arrests of the 7

presidential candidates and more than 40 critics. The roots of these problems were found in the 2018 April crisis, marking the date were investigations will part.

### Human Rights Watch

The Human Rights Watch has been documenting and searching for the protection of Human Rights in Nicaragua through several crises. During its research, it was confirmed that more than 770 non-governmental organizations were forced out of the country due to imposed laws and resolutions. Between these laws stands the “foreign agents” law that allows the government to cancel any organization registration since 2018. Furthermore, the Human Rights Watch speaks out by showing that the Nicaraguan government fails to deliver the most basic services to its population. By removing most of Nicaragua’s NGO’s, its civilians’ poverty is even more affected because of the lack of aid that once came from these organizations.

### V. CONCLUSION

In the end, what remains certain is the constant fight for human rights preservation. Even though most wars seem to have no end, it is the committee’s duty to engage their attention in these types of problems, and furthermore, find a solution where most can benefit from. Taking into consideration humanity’s past mistakes, it is important to remain observant for the best solutions, and for freedom of expression to be preserved.

### V. QUESTIONS

- How can the committee secure the liberation of the unfairly arrested?
- What factors remain unsolved in order to reach a more stable government?

- What can be done in order to avoid armed conflict in Nicaragua streets? Is emigration an option?
- Through what means can Nicaragua regain its independence from its unwanted regime?
- Is international intervention needed? What can other countries do to aid Nicaraguan citizens in their fight for human rights?

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