

# Open Letter on the Occasion of the São Paulo Forum in Brasilia from June 29 to July 2, 2023

July 4, 2023



Rosario Murillo and Daniela Ortega, rulers of Nicaragua.

We, the signatories of this letter, who took part in the struggle against the Somoza dictatorship and in an admired revolution that gave rise to so much hope in the world ; we who identify with the ideals of democracy and social justice won by the democratic left, progressive institutions and forces, address the parties and organizations of the São Paulo Forum to denounce the regime of terror in Nicaragua, which daily violates all civil liberties, destroys democracy and justice, and subjects the people to an oppression worse than that imposed by the previous dictatorship.

Daniel Ortega and what remains of the Sandinista Front present themselves as left-wing and anti-imperialist, but, far from this proclaimed discourse, they have for many years already abandoned their principles, through corruption, alliances with the country's most extreme right, the reinforcement of a neoliberal model that has accentuated the already considerable inequalities and misery of the population, and the concentration of political and economic power in the hands of the (Ortega-Murillo) family and its close collaborators.

In April 2018, after shock forces assaulted elderly people demonstrating against social security reforms, groups of university students who had taken to the streets and occupied university campuses were put down with bullets by the police, who murdered 56 people in three days, crimes confirmed by human rights organizations that arrived in the country in May, the first since Daniel Ortega's return to power in 2007.

Demonstrators mobilized en masse, demanding democracy, justice, electoral reform and the removal from office of Daniel Ortega and his wife, Vice-President Rosario Murillo. They erected barricades and roadblocks, which were razed to the ground a few weeks later by police and paramilitary forces

as part of the so-called “clean-up” operation. The Inter-American Council on Human Rights (IACHR) reported that 355 people were killed, 2,000 wounded, 770 prisoners subjected to judicial proceedings without guarantees and over 200,000 refugees.

The government’s claim that all this was just a “failed coup d’état financed by US imperialism” is belied by irrefutable reports from international organizations, which have documented and denounced the countless human rights violations and crimes against humanity committed by the Nicaraguan authorities, reports recently ratified by the group of experts appointed by the UN Human Rights Council (see report) [1].

Since then, Nicaragua has been in a de facto state of siege, with no freedom of movement, assembly, organization, expression, information or association. All opposition political parties, the independent media and over 4,300 civil society organizations defending various rights (feminist, environmental, trade union, sexual diversity, children’s and community rights, as well as centers for the elderly and disabled) have been dissolved.

Many centers have been occupied, converted into government premises and their assets confiscated, including the building of La Prensa, a 96-year-old newspaper that resisted the former dictatorship. The Nicaraguan Academy of Languages, the Nicaraguan Academy of Sciences and even the Nicaraguan Red Cross were dissolved.

In 2019, following an amnesty law (which left many crimes committed by the state unpunished), a large number of political prisoners were released. This raised hopes that in 2021, the election year, the agreements reached during the 2019 dialogue would be respected, an independent electoral council would be formed and elections would be held under good conditions.

In June 2021, the regime ordered the arrest of all opposition candidates and dozens of political and social leaders, commentators and journalists. To stay in power, Ortega resorted to Somozist tactics, eliminating the opposition and ridiculing those who agreed to play along. Thus, in 2021, he declared himself elected for the third consecutive time, with 75% of the vote, and in 2022, he took 100% of the mayoralties. Specialized organizations have estimated the abstention rate at over 80%.

In 2022, the police state was further strengthened in the country, and the more than 300 political prisoners were subjected to conditions that violated their rights. - July 3, 2023

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### **Signers in Exile :**

Sergio Ramírez Mercado, former vice-president of Nicaragua, writer, stripped of his nationality.

Gioconda Belli, poet, stripped of her nationality.

Dora María Téllez, former FSLN commandeer, historian, former prisoner, stripped of her nationality.

Luis Carrión Cruz, former commander of the revolution, former combatant of the revolution, economist, stripped of his nationality. Mónica Baltodano, former FSLN commandeer, social scientist, stripped of her nationality.

Ernesto Medina, former president of the public National Autonomous University of Nicaragua, stripped of his nationality.

Carlos Fernando Chamorro, journalist, director of the video news service *Confidencial*, stripped of his nationality.

Sofía Montenegro, journalist stripped of her nationality.

Oscar René Vargas, writer, sociologist and economist, former prisoner, stripped of his nationality.

Julio C López Campos, former director of international relations for the FSLN, political scientist, stripped of his nationality.

Azahalea Solís, attorney specializing in constitutional law, feminist, stripped of her nationality.  
Irving Larios , former prisoner, economist, stripped of is nationality.  
Héctor Mairena, attorney, stripped of his nationality. a  
Patricia Orozco, journalist and feminist, stripped of her nationality.  
Haydée Castillo, social scientist, stripped of his nationality.

*This open letter was first published here.*

**Note:**

[1] Group of Human Rights Experts on Nicaragua:  
<https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/ghre-nicaragua/index>