



July 1, 2018

Dear friends,

This is an emergency appeal on behalf of our Nicaraguan partners. Eight weeks of political unrest has endangered vital projects and organizational functions, forcing many to make drastic cutbacks. So, we are asking your help in raising \$15,000 to go directly to our partners. Additionally, our July 14th Solidarity Roast will be a special fundraiser - all proceeds will go to this emergency fund. Without our help, the future of these organizations is at risk.

We're getting emails like this one almost daily:

We've had to warn staff not to come to work if the part of town where they live is dangerous or if they see the situation getting risky...and as a security measure, we stopped using our staff uniforms.

We will try to continue bringing food and toiletries to the most vulnerable of the children because they are suffering: hunger, anguish and fear. We can only promise that we will be with them up until the last moment.

– Mirna Sánchez of Inhijambia, June 21, 2018

For the moment, our partners are consistently telling us they have very few options to keep their programs going.

Small businesses are suffering the most from the economic fallout and of course tourism has completely fallen off. We have been severely affected, with cancellations as far ahead as August. At present we are closed, at least for the month of June. It is heartbreaking as we were set to do well this year, having recovered from Hurricane Nate (only 6 months ago) we had about 15 groups booked in and the hotel fully booked for several weeks. All that has gone.

--Paulette of the Mariposa Spanish School and Chispa de Vida Program for Kids with Disabilities

SOLIDARITY ROAST

& FUNDRAISER FOR OUR PARTNERS

SATURDAY JULY 14, 3PM
FRIENDS MEETING IN CHATHAM
BRING A SALAD TO SHARE!
RSVP TO SUSAN STEINER
smsteiner100@gmail.com

PeaceWorks, 1125 Woolley Ave., Union, NJ 07083
917-301-6967, peaceworks.org

Reports of violence and fear are widespread, from Managua to the rural areas.

The north of Nicaragua continues with barricades that are not letting vehicles circulate between the capital and the rest of the country. In the middle of this situation we are trying to continue to do our work in the communities, but it's very risky on the highway There is a lot of violence and there have been groups of criminals robbing people on the road.

--Federation for the Development of Rural Farmers of Nicaragua (FEDICAMP), June 22, 2018

It is uncertain when the situation in Nicaragua will be resolved. One of our partners in Masaya, Nicaragua reported on June 21st:

Outbursts of gunfire were heard throughout Masaya this morning. They want to enter Monimbo (a neighborhood of Masaya known for being rebellious) and have taken down many of the barricades on the road and within some neighborhoods.

ANGUISH, PAIN, ANGER has followed. There are heavily armed riot police working alongside the "Sandinista Youth." They want to go in to massacre the people of Monimbo.

We're including an article to give you greater context about the current situation and why our partners need your immediate support

Our community has been working in solidarity with the people of Nicaragua for more than 25 years -- we are in it for the long haul! Please, help us immediately raise \$15,000 to help our partners keep operations going through these uncertain times.

En paz y solidaridad,
Denis, Diane, John, Micha, Maggie, Susan, Marilyn and Guy
The PeaceWorks Board

I'd like to contribute to the EMERGENCY FUND for PeaceWorks partners

\$50 \$75 \$100 \$150 \$250 \$500 \$1000 \$_____

Please add me to the PeaceWorks email list for meeting reminders and events announcements.

Name: _____ Email: _____

**PeaceWorks, 1125 Woolley Ave., Union, NJ 07083
917-301-6967, peaceworks.org**

¡Basta ya!



When is enough...enough?

Putting Nicaragua's Violence in Context

The following is based on conversations with a wide range of people in our community-- experts in the field, eyewitness accounts, and correspondence from many of our partners. We realize that it does not represent the experience of everyone involved. We plan to continue the dialogue as we move forward in solidarity with our Nicaraguan friends and partners.

“Watching TV on the evening of Thursday 19th April...news started to come through that a peaceful protest, mainly of students, against the proposed Social Security reforms had resulted in an unknown number of protestors being shot dead by police. Two workers at our organization were concerned for their friends at the Polytechnic University who had barricaded themselves in fearing further police attacks. Several of us went with them to the UPoli on the Monday to take in medical supplies as there were also many students inside with gunshot wounds. The sight was absolutely shocking.”

Urgent messages from our partners started coming in shortly after the day the Nicaraguan government announced plans to change its national social security system. The changes would require workers to contribute more, while cutting back services for healthcare and stipends for people already retired. We knew this news would be unwelcome in a poor country where so many struggle for survival. We assumed people would speak out. But the and the subsequent and ongoing violence and repression against protesters and the widespread outcry for a change in government has shocked us all.

Looking Back: Recent Progress & Stability

President Daniel Ortega, alongside his wife, Vice President Rosario Murillo, had built a “Christian Socialist” movement with a broad range of alliances that defied the traditional left-right paradigms of the past. Since retaking the presidency in 2007 the Sandinista government had reached out, and with some success, was working with the Catholic Church and private business sectors, relationships that were severely

strained during revolutionary government in the 1980's. From an economic standpoint, the relationships ushered in a period of relative growth and stability.

Nicaragua's economy has been growing at about 4% a year. While still one of the poorest countries in the Western Hemisphere, the government has made a



Daniel Ortega and Rosario Murillo

concerted effort to lift people out of extreme poverty, with programs that provide farm animals and basic food supplies. The social security system provided free healthcare and a stipend for the elderly. On past PeaceWorks' delegations, we could see for ourselves government sponsored electrical and water systems in remote

villages. Local municipalities provided critical support to our partners, like technical support to FEDICAMP to install the new water system at El Apante we have written about previously.

In recent years, the Sandinista government has provided free Internet hotspots in parks around the country -- important for a nation where almost everyone relies on a mobile phone, even in the smallest, most remote communities. Ortega's wife Rosario Murillo, a poet and British-educated scholar, was responsible for the "Trees of Life," the larger-than-life, swirling metal trees that lined Managua's boulevard's and lit up the urban landscape with colored lights.

While the relationship between the Ortega government and the Obama administration could be characterized as cautious, Nicaragua had some success working with the US DEA (Drug Enforcement Agency) in reducing narco-trafficking. Indeed, Nicaragua has not suffered the level of drug-fueled

violence that plagues many Central American countries.

One last point. Unlike other countries in the region, under Ortega, the Nicaraguan police and army had enjoyed support from the population, representing institutions built out of the revolutionary period when the army was by and for the people.

So, what happened? What drove so many Nicaraguans to that *¡Basta ya!* moment? The roots of the unrest today may go back to what happened during a power outage in Managua nearly a decade ago.

Power Grabs & Unresolved Conflicts

Losing electricity is almost a daily event in Nicaragua, but in October, 2011, the power went out in Managua while the Constitutional Commission of the Nicaraguan Supreme Court was in session. Without electricity, some of the judges from the commission decided to go home early -- one can only assume it is hard to work in the dark and heat. But that left a quorum of Sandinista judges who took it upon themselves to change Presidential term limits. Now, President Ortega was no longer limited to back-to-back consecutive terms. A few years later, in 2014, the Sandinista party-heavy Nicaraguan National Assembly sealed a third consecutive term for the President when it voted to change the constitution. Similar to actions we've seen in our own government, the Sandinistas were creative in finding ways to consolidate power. They also found ways to discourage other viable opposition candidates from running.



Trees of Life: a permanent art installation commissioned by Rosario Murillo - protesters have taken many of them down

As the power of the Ortega government grew, so did murmurings of distrust among young Nicaraguans.

Well into his consecutive 2nd term as president, in 2013, Ortega made a first attempt to change the national social security system. And just like this past April, the students (probably taking advantage of the free internet hot spots to organize on social media) protested. They inspired others to get involved, including senior citizens. Soon, the BBC was running headlines like, “Government-Sponsored Groups Attack Old People Protesting in Nicaragua.” Mobs of young people with pro-government t-shirts and covered faces attacked old protesters whose pensions were threatened. As we say in New Jersey: this is some real greaseball...you get the point.

The police also went after the student organizers.

“In the middle of the night the police went in and started bashing heads and all those middle class kids ran away,” remembers one friend of PeaceWorks. “Cars were confiscated. Cell phones were confiscated. But [the protests] completely dissipated because people were really shocked at that level of repression. So that's a very unresolved conflict that's been there kind of lurking since that time.”

The 2013 repression was the first of several high-profile, unresolved conflicts between protesters and the Nicaraguan government.

By 2014, the Sandinista government was pushing for a new transcontinental canal that would rival the Panama Canal. The proposed construction caused massive protests because its path would cut through traditional indigenous territories, delicate ecosystems, and Lake Nicaragua. Protests went on for years until the Chinese money behind the project fizzled out.

Then, a week or two before the protests this past April, students and environmentalists had taken to the streets to protest what they considered a lackluster government response to a major forest fire in *Indio Maiz*, a pristine tropical forest along Nicaragua's border with Costa Rica. Because of their historic rivalry, the Nicaraguan

government refused technical support from trained Costa Rican firefighters. Nicaragua sent its army to fight the fire and kept journalists out. By the time rains had come to extinguish the fire, 12,000 acres had burned and many Nicaraguans felt the government had severely mishandled the situation.



"No to the Canal," one of several unresolved conflict, 2014-16

Back to the Present: Forces for Change

Through all of these conflicts and protests, there was one group that remained independent and especially steadfast in speaking up for the most marginalized communities: the Nicaraguan feminist movement. Whether students, indigenous people or environmentalists, Nicaraguan women leaders have been organizing, collaborating across many sectors, and resisting government policies, like some of the most restrictive abortion laws in the hemisphere. In general, feminists lost faith in Daniel Ortega years ago when it became publicly known that he had sexually abused his step daughter when she was a child.

So, this spring, the students weren't *just* demonstrating against changes to the social security system, they were reacting to tensions built through years of distrust and unresolved conflicts. Enough was enough.

Protesters knew that the state security forces were dangerous. They knew they were taking risks when they stood up to the Ortega administration. However, nobody predicted the level of violent repression, and the absolute meltdown that followed. Students didn't expect the government to limit their Internet access. They

