Dear friends,

With so much going on in our own country, it’s hard to keep up with events beyond our borders. But it’s important to note that one of the most dangerous political trends in the U.S. is also on the rise globally -- a strain of nationalist authoritarianism is on the move. Sadly, this is also happening in Nicaragua.

At PeaceWorks, we don’t take political sides in the conflict that began when the Nicaraguan Government began cracking down on peaceful protesters in April of 2018. But as stewards of your generosity, we believe it is critical to keep you informed of what is happening in the communities where our Nicaraguan partners are living and serving those in need.

Global & National Trends
We see the dangers of nationalism here in the U.S., with 85% of Republican voters standing solidly behind the American President in spite of ongoing scandals and investigations. And in Europe, millions of voters moved towards far-right political parties this May. In Austria, a video exposed top government leaders from a pro-Nazi, anti-immigrant party seeking financial help from the Kremlin.

To shore up and excite their base, politicians around the world are sowing mistrust in democratic institutions and instilling fear in “the other.” They make ideology the driving force behind policy at the expense of truth and facts. This strategy is clearly seen in Nicaragua’s state sponsored news programming, “El 19.”
State Sponsored News
Regularly, Rosario Murillo, Nicaragua’s Vice-President and wife of President Daniel Ortega will read or release a midday news statement through “El 19.” She often starts with a prayer that may last 5-10 minutes. After invoking a connection to God, to a deeply religious audience, the Vice President wades into more secular matters.

In her May 31st statement Murillo described the protesters as “terrorists” who wanted to “keep us apart, and permanently install hatred and perversity over Nicaragua.” She said that the government is holding hundreds of town hall meetings as part of a peace process and working to help the victims of the “terrorist coup” attempt.

In reference to the estimated 60,000 Nicaraguans that have fled the country since the April 2018 protests, Murillo reported that the government had just issued a “Plan of Safe Return, and Reinsertion.”

In the lengthy statement, Murillo goes on to talk about anything from rain forecasts to sporting events, cultural activities, vaccination programs and medical brigades in rural communities. From her broadcasts she seems to be on top of everything happening in Nicaragua.

The Other Side of the Story
Other Nicaragua news organizations, like the Prensa Libre, El Nuevo Diario, and La Confidencial, had very different takes on recent news.

While Murillo touted the town hall meetings and plans for re-integration, opposition press regularly reported that the peace process had largely broken down. In March, there was an anti-government protest during which about 100 protesters were arrested. In response, the opposition left the negotiating table and demanded that all prisoners be released before talks could resume.

The local press also reported a national strike organized by the opposition on May 16th. Intended to put pressure on the Ortega administration, there was widespread participation, according to social media reporting, but it is hard to measure the overall impact on negotiations. It did spark enough government ire to revoke the licenses of several businesses that participated in the shutdown.

Also widely reported was the recent killing of one of the early protesters, Eddy Montes, who was arrested and accused of terrorism in 2018. Shot while in custody in the Modelo prison, the disturbing photos of his cracked head and lifeless body were widely circulated in social media. Montes was born in Nicaragua, but was a U.S. citizen and former U.S. Marine who returned to live in Nicaragua about a decade ago. His daughter said he was assassinated in prison because he was a witness to the murder of anti-government activist Lenin Mendiola in Matagalpa.

**Solidarity vs. Polarization**
As Americans, the discrepancy we see in the Nicaraguan media is far too familiar. It takes hard work and credible relationships with people on the ground to determine the truth. It is for exactly these reasons that PeaceWorks was founded -- to look into the murkiness of difficult political and social situations, provide information and reveal any opportunity to build peace and solidarity. With PeaceWorks, those opportunities are not hard to find.

We are proud of our partners who, in spite of it all, continue to provide vital services in marginalized communities. And we’re proud of our community of activists who continue to stand with the Nicaraguan people through good times and bad.

One last note before we go:

**Miguel is back! September 14th Dinner Forum**
We’re happy to announce that Miguel Marin is coming back. He’s the Director of FEDICAMP which provides training and resources for rural farmers in Nicaragua to fight the negative effects of climate change and build thriving, sustainable farms. He’s super engaging and we always learn a lot from him, so come on out for dinner and good conversation. 6:30pm at the Friends Meeting in Chatham, Saturday Sept. 14th.
Potential Academics Needed in Nicaragua!

We just sent down funds for scholarships for 12 university students coming out of Inhijambia’s program -- young men and women, who only a few years ago, were living and working on the streets of Managua. A huge thank you to Jerry McKenna and his friends and family who raised $12,000 to make the scholarships possible.

Can you join us in helping raise the grades? There’s no shortage of young people, like these handsome guys from Inhijambia’s boys program, that need your support.

En solidaridad (y un gran churrasco el 13 de julio...a big roast on July 13th),

Denis, Diane, John, Micha, Maggie, Susan, Marilyn and Guy
The PeaceWorks Board

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I’d like to contribute to help offset the costs of our 76th humanitarian aid shipment to Nicaragua:

☐ $50  ☐ $75  ☐ $100  ☐ $150  ☐ $250  ☐ $500  ☐ $1000  ☐ $____________

Sure, I’d like to help a university student:

☐ $50  ☐ $75  ☐ $100.  ☐ $150  ☐ $250  ☐ $500  ☐ $1000 (one-year scholarship)  ☐ $____________