

# Report

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*“The US Appears to be Destined by Providence to Plague the Americas with Misery in the Name of Freedom.”*

**-Simón Bolívar, 1829**

## VENEZUELA: Mistrial in Embassy Protectors Case a Victory



*Embassy Protectors; David Paul, Margaret Flowers, Adrienne Pine and Kevin Zeese*

**By Roger Harris, Task Force Board member**

Judicial proceedings are taking place in DC federal court where the judge has ruled inadmissible the question whether the democratically elected Nicolás Maduro or the Trump-chosen Juan Guaidó is the legitimate president of Venezuela.

Like an emperor of yore appointing regents of vassal states, US President Trump tapped then recently seated head of the suspended Venezuelan National Assembly Juan Guaidó as president of Venezuela on January 22, 2019. The US has viewed the dominions south of the Rio Grande as the empire’s “backyard” since the 1823 Monroe Doctrine.

The 35-year-old Guaidó thus became one of the world’s youngest chiefs-of-state in the eyes the US government and its allies. The United Nations and the vast majority of sovereign states contin-

ued to recognize the democratically elected Nicolás Maduro as president of Venezuela.

Guaidó had never run for the presidency of Venezuela and had never served as president. He was not a member of a major Venezuelan political party nor even in the top leadership of his own far-right party. At the time of his self-declaration as president and anointing by Trump, Guaidó was unknown to 81% of the Venezuelan population.

But Guaidó had one outstanding qualification for the position of puppet president: he had been groomed as a US security asset.

Last year Guaidó staged three unsuccessful coup attempts in Venezuela against the elected government. On January 5, instead of reelecting Guaidó president of the National Assembly, the opposition chose another opposition politician, Luis Parra, removing the last

fig leaf of Guaidó’s legitimacy. Guaidó then scurried to an opposition newspaper’s office and was unanimously reelected by a phony assembly that had already been staged in anticipation of his defeat in the real assembly.

While Guaidó’s domestic support in Venezuela fizzled, the puppet president went on an international tour posing for photo ops with US-allied heads of state. On February 4, Guaidó made an appearance at Trump’s state of the union address, where he was given an enthusiastic standing ovation by Republicans and Democrats alike.

Guaidó, who has called for even more punishing US sanctions on his own people, did not get nearly as friendly a reception when he returned to Venezuela on February 11. Guaidó was called a traitor by angry workers from the state airline, Conviasa, that had just been sanctioned by Trump.

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Venezuela, continued from front page



Photo: Bill Hackwell

Back in April, North American solidarity activists formed a collective to prevent the Venezuelan embassy in Washington from being taken over by Guaidó’s collaborators. The Embassy Protectors, as they called themselves, defended the embassy with the permission of the Venezuelan government and pursuant to international law.

At first, the Embassy Protectors were able to come and go into the embassy and hold educational meetings. But soon the embassy was surrounded by antagonistic crowds who violently prevented food from being delivered to those inside.

The DC police made no effort to curb the hostile opposition from assaulting supporters, while the police attacked supporters trying to deliver food. Gerry Condon, then national president of Veterans for Peace, was among the supporters tackled by police while delivering food. He was thrown to the ground, bloodied, and then charged with misconduct (later dropped).

The government further tightened the screws on the Embassy Protectors. Water and electricity were illegally cut off at the embassy, while the police allowed protectors to leave but not reenter.

Eventually the collective of some 70 human rights activists at the embassy was reduced to the “final four”: Margaret Flowers, Kevin Zeese, David Paul, Adrienne Pine.

They rationed what little food and water they had and held out for 37 days.

The Secret Service expelled the final four on May 16, charging them with “interfering with the protective functions” of the State Department. They went on trial on February 11, facing possible stiff penalties including fines and imprisonment.

While the Embassy Protectors were defending themselves in the DC court for upholding the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations – information the judge ruled the jury would not be allowed to hear – the Venezuelan government charged at the International Criminal Court in The Hague that US sanctions against Venezuela constitute crimes against humanity. Tens of thousands of Venezuelans have perished from lack of medicines and food due to the US-imposed unilateral coercive measures.

While the Embassy Protectors were

in the embassy with the permission of the elected government of Venezuela and acting on legal advice that their actions were lawful, the US and Venezuela were negotiating a mutual protecting power agreement, which would have resulted in Switzerland protecting the US embassy in Caracas and Turkey protecting the Venezuelan embassy in DC.

The Embassy Protectors told the police they would leave voluntarily once that agreement was reached. But the federal judge ruled that the jury could not be told any of this.

Despite the government’s attempt to railroad the Embassy Protectors, the jury did not convict. The 4-day trial ended in a hung jury and declaration of mistrial. Retrial hearings are currently being held with the next hearing set for March 6 where the prosecution will likely announce whether defendants will be retried.

The mistrial indicates that the government’s case is severely compromised. This is a victory for the Embassy Protectors and international law, and a setback for the Trump administration.

David Paul, Embassy Protector and a board member of the Task Force on the Americas, commented: “This charge on us is just another attack on dissent. Whichever way it turns out, we need to build from it to continue our voice against the policies of empire.”

And it is time for all solidarity activists to show the Venezuela Embassy Protectors are not alone. Visit the Defense Committee website (<https://defendembassyprotectors.org>) and contribute to the defense fund.

Source: *Task Force on the Americas on February 29, 2020*

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# Chile: Four Months After the Revolt: Resistance, Struggle and Repression Continue



Four months of struggle

By Carlos Aznárez, journalist and editor of *Resumen Latinoamericano*

The government has not been able to cope with the movement of these stubborn and brave people who for four months have not only gone out into the squares by the thousands, but have also changed their names to beautiful words like "Dignity" and "Revolution". They have torn down monuments of conquerors and traitors who were their disciples. They have suffered wounds to the eyes

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of many young people who had opened them up to look at their enemies. They have added thousands of rebels to the prisons and they have become furious with pain for their comrades murdered by those criminals in uniform, supporters of Pinochet, who are the Chilean *carabineros*. Along with the current constitution that comes from the period of the Pinochet dictatorship, so too does the fascist apparatus of repression.

Evidence shows that Chile's dictator Piñera and his group of ministers and buffoons are increasingly surrounded by the anger of those who despise them for becoming ruthless and corrupt figures in a system that is falling

apart. In order to avoid the fall, they are capable of resorting to killing people in a thousand ways, be it by hunger, by misery or by a clean shot.

The same goes for the bourgeoisie of both the right and the left. The former, like Piñera, are "murderers like Pinochet," and the latter were the main supporters of capitalist and repressive governments (against the Mapuche people, the students and the workers) during the government of Lagos or Bachelet. They

stop.

Four months are not a few months to be fighting the repressive madness of the police, even though some ominous people continue to announce, like crows, that "it will soon be over". They are wrong and they will be wrong again. Chile woke up and all fears were lost. What sense would it make to renounce the freedom that the streets give to thousands of young people who are singing, dancing, fighting and responding to whoever asks them x that they are doing it for "dignity"? But also for the others, for the old people with low pensions, for the 3,000 prisoners of today, who are very similar to those imprisoned by the Pinochet dictatorship in the Stadium. They are doing it for Commander Ramiro, buried alive in a prison of terror, and for Mauricio Fredes or the Neko Mora of the Colo Colo fans, who died because of the repression of the terrorist *carabineros*. And without a doubt, for Victor Jara, whose emblematic songs they sing in the middle of the barricade in the Alameda, just as they enjoy the feisty coherence of the rapper Anita Tijoux or the Bersuit, playing from the balconies of radio Plaza de la Dignidad.

All these stories and experiences are incarnated in a wonderful movement of youth. As always, the repression believes that it is dispersing them, intoxicating the air with its poison, but in its cowardice it does not understand that this Revolt is unstoppable. By occupying their trenches again, with smiles, improvised rhythms, pots and pans and drums, the movement is showing the world that four months are nothing. What's more, they serve to forebode that March is coming with great strength.



Protests in Chile continue. Photo: Reuters

are the same ones who now agreed with Piñera on a constituent plebiscite that is empty of content, and not the one wanted by those who fight day by day on the front lines against oppression. Even if they make this lie effective, everything indicates that they are condemned to failure, since the rebellion is difficult to

The myth of Chile as the shining and exceptional neoliberal model of the South has been shattered. The poverty and separation of wealth and the repression are there for all to see, thanks mostly to this vibrant movement that will not go away.

Source: *Resumen Latinoamericano*, February 20, 2020

## Julian Assange and Latin America



*Assange with Ecuadorian Foreign Minister Ricardo Patiño, at their embassy in London, 2014, Photo: Open Democracy*

**By Rick Sterling, President, Task Force on the Americas**

In mid-January I went to London England to research what is happening with Julian Assange. We could not visit him. He is in Belmarsh Maximum Security prison and even his lawyers could only see him for two hours over the entire previous month. This despite the fact he is facing extradition to the USA and possible life imprisonment.

On Saturday, January 19, we took the London metro to the end of the line, and then walked a couple miles to Belmarsh prison. We joined the dedicated supporters who demonstrate in support of Assange every Saturday. On special occasions there is a major event with hundreds or thousands of participants. But every Saturday, rain or shine, there is an action supporting Assange during the afternoon in front of Belmarsh Prison and in the evening in Trafalgar Square in downtown London.

The dedicated supporters of Assange are strikingly international and Latin American. The organizer of the Belmarsh action was Cristina, a Brazilian woman who has lived in England for 20 years. The person with the megaphone was Clara, who left Chile after the 1973 Pinochet coup. With a Chilean accent she explained to passersby, “Julian Assange is one of the greatest journalists of our day. He must be freed. Julian, we love you!” Elise, originally from Colombia, was yet another Assange supporter. We met other impressive individuals who are dedicating part of their lives to supporting Julian Assange. There was Larry from Australia. Six months ago Larry arrived in England to do anything he could to support Julian. There is Rei-

ko, a young woman of Japanese descent. After Julian was taken to Belmarsh Prison his supporters set up a tent camp on the avenue in front of the prison. Supporters stayed there round the clock until the tents and bicycles were confiscated by authorities.

Progressive leaders of Latin America are also supporting Julian Assange. The former president of Ecuador, Rafael Correa, took the brave and bold step of granting Julian Assange asylum in the Ecuador Embassy. That was his safe haven from arrest for seven long years. Correa even granted Julian Ecuador citizenship in an attempt to block the US from seizing him.

Unfortunately, the next Ecuador government succumbed to US bullying and bribery. Suddenly there were “problems” with Julian staying in the Embassy. While huge protests against the unpopular Lenín Moreno government took place in Ecuador, the Ecuador embassy in London made life increasingly difficult for Assange. They allowed a private contractor, paid by the US, to spy on him 7 days a week, 24 hours a day, including during meetings with his attorneys. In April 2019, the Ecuadoran government revoked Julian Assange’s Ecuadorian citizenship and asylum and allowed British police to seize him. He is now imprisoned at Belmarsh Maximum security prison pending an extradition hearing. In addition to Rafael Correa, numerous other Latin American leaders have spoken out for Julian Assange. Former Brazilian President Ignácio Lula da Silva criticized the arrest of Julian Assange as “an attacked on freedom of expression.”

Evo Morales, former president of Bolivia, has said, “We strongly condemn the detention of Julian Assange and the violation of freedom of speech. Our solidarity is with this brother who is persecuted by the US government for bringing to light its human rights violations, murders of civilians and diplomatic espionage.”

Mexican President Lopez Obrador has called for Assange to be released, noting that Wikileaks has “demonstrated how the world system functions in its authoritarian nature.”

The support for Assange is well placed. He and the Wikileaks team have

exposed US meddling, manipulations and worse in Latin America. As Julian Assange explained in his introduction to the book *The Wikileaks Files*, “Perhaps no region in the world demonstrates the full spectrum of the US imperial interference as vividly as Latin America.”

Chapters of the book synthesize important findings in the nearly 2.5 million US State Department records and cables. As Assange says, “The cables demonstrate a smooth continuity between the brutal US policy in Latin America during the Cold War and the more sophisticated plays at toppling governments that have taken place in recent years...the use of USAID and ‘civil society’...pursuing ‘regime change’ in El Salvador, Nicaragua, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Haiti.” The cables reveal the intensity of US intervention against Venezuela and that State Department over-ruled the conclusion of their embassy in the 2009 Honduras coup. The embassy was explicit that the overthrow and kidnapping of President Zelaya was a coup, but this was downplayed in Washington.

The cables confirm corporate influence in US foreign policy. For example, the US Embassy in Quito sought to prevent Ecuador from developing its own pharmaceutical industry to replace expensive US drugs.

Julian Assange is an Australian journalist whose “crime” is that he led a group which broadcast information that US authorities did not want revealed. Secretary of State and former CIA Director Mike Pompeo has called Wikileaks a “hostile non state intelligence agency bent on the destruction of the United States.” That is not true. US policies do not have to be based on intervention, aggression, violations of international law and hypocrisy. In fact, most US citizens as well as Latin Americans are hurt by these policies.

In Argentina, former president and current Vice President Cristina Kirchner has said, “In the upside-down world, false news circulates freely and those who reveal the truth are persecuted and imprisoned.”

It is crucial for press freedom that Julian Assange be freed and NOT extradited to the US.

For background and latest news, see [www.defend.wikileaks.org](http://www.defend.wikileaks.org).

Source: *Task Force on the Americas, February 26, 2020*

## Oscar Lopez Rivera: “Socialism is an Alternative that Can Move Us Forward”



Oscar Lopez Rivera at La Peña. Photos: Bill Hackwell

By Alicia Jrapko, Task Force Board member

At a time when what is coming from the US government is all about hatred and misery, hearing Oscar Lopez Rivera, a man who talks about love and solidarity despite spending more than 30 years in US prison for fighting for the right of self-determination and sovereignty for Puerto Rico and its people, was refreshing.

A full house at La Peña Cultural Center in Berkeley, California warmly welcomed Oscar. The event was part of a national US tour that has as its goal to benefit his work in Puerto Rico after Hurricanes Irma and Maria and more recently a series of devastating earthquakes have made the colonial living conditions even more difficult for most Puerto Ricans on the island.

Since his release in 2017, Oscar has founded the Oscar López Rivera Foundation, Libertá, as part of the effort to strengthen grassroots community organizing, demanding the auditing and cancellation of the island’s debt and advocating for Puerto Rico’s sovereignty.

In this Western part of his tour, Oscar has spoken at the University of Washington, Berkeley City College, University of California at Davis, San Francisco State University (San Francisco and San José campuses), Stanford University, Diablo Valley Community College, California State University (East Bay),

and UC Santa Barbara.

In his talk he stressed that it was his passion and love for Puerto Rico that gave him hope through all those years of his imprisonment. Out of that he took away the belief that nothing is impossible. “I don’t do things for me; I am a citizen of this planet. Love is what moves me in the direction to do whatever we need to help our people. The history of Puerto Rico is full of examples of this type of patriotism”.

In addition Oscar asked the audience to support the struggle to free political prisoners. He talked briefly about how the Violeta Parra song *Gracias a la Vida* became his everyday anthem, something significant for La Peña Cultural Center which is full of history of the Chilean refugees who started it in the seventies after fleeing the Pinochet dictatorship.

Then he talked about Cuba and what it means for him and for humanity. He highlighted the fact that for four years he shared the same cell with Fernando Gonzalez Llort, one of the Cuban 5 political prisoners in the US for defending their country against terrorism. He described that time as, “Those were the best years for me”.

Someone from the audience asked Oscar a question about what socialism means to him and he responded that, “Socialism is an alternative that can move us forward.” He used Cuba and its international solidarity as an example. He talked about the role of the medical brigades that Cuba sends all over

the world to help wherever there is a need.

Importantly, he also talked about the decisive role that Cuba played in the struggle against apartheid in Southern Africa. “Without Cuba’s assistance Apartheid could still exist there and without the help of Cuba, there would have been no President Mandela,” all that coming from a country in a constant struggle against a brutal US blockade, all the while showing the possibilities of a social system based on humane priorities.

Oscar made the connection between Haiti and Puerto Rico and all they have in common, and the importance of the Puerto Rican diaspora and how much they are helping their compatriots on the island. But he also brought up the terrible conditions that people in the US confront today, like the lack of health care and homelessness. “We came to talk to people about the thousands on the island who are living without homes and under tarps and in tents and then we found that right here in Berkeley and Oakland there are hundreds of people visibly in the same conditions. We have to shame the US government with all their money and power for what they do to their own citizens and others around the world.”

It is hard to imagine what 36 years of



unjust imprisonment can do to an individual, but after seeing and listening to Oscar Lopez Rivera tonight we can say that the spirit of those who continue to fight for justice can never be broken.

Source: *Resumen Latinoamericano*, on February 23, 2020

## CUBA: A Matter of Principle



*Nelson Mandela with Fidel Castro. Photo: Minrex*

**By Rosa Miriam Elizalde, Journalist and Vice President of the Union of Cuban Journalists (UPEC)**

Thinktanks in the United States and Cuban researchers agree on one thing: the policy of more sanctions and the extension of the US blockade will not change the socialist course of Cuba. In the case of the island, punishment produces the exact opposite of weakness. It has been that way for more than 60 years and nothing indicates that it will change just because Donald Trump wants to win Florida in 2020 and satisfy the Cuban-American right by raising his fist against the government of Miguel Díaz-Canel.

The resumption by the Trump administration of the hegemonic presumption that contemplates punishment and hostile policies will not change Cuban policy. On the contrary, it will again polarize foreign relations with other countries, both inside and outside the Western Hemisphere, while negatively affecting jobs in both the United States and Cuba, concludes a study just published by US lawyer Bruce Zagaris for the Center for Freedom and Prosperity, where he addresses the excessive use of sanctions by the US government and how they produce unintended consequences.

One of the most informed analysts on relations between the two countries, Cuban Jesús Arboleya, acknowledges that successive administrations in the White House have not succeeded in making the Cuban revolution yield or

betray its principles, and will not do so now in the face of Washington's decision to insist on conditions for Cuba's relationship with Venezuela.

In spite of the deployment of forces carried out," Arboleya states, "neither the intelligent power of Obama nor the 'counter-intelligence' of Trump have achieved the purpose of altering Cuba's alliance with Venezuela and, much less, defeat-

ing their respective revolutionary processes. This calls into question the real capacity of the United States to do so."

It would add an additional reason exposed by Arboleya. The US government has already gone through similar situations of blackmail and conditioning of the island, and it failed miserably. For example, the government of Gerald Ford put an end to clandestine talks with Fidel Castro's envoys to normalize relations when it became known that Cuban troops were confronting the racist South Africans, then allies of the United States. Nelson Mandela would remember learning of the Cuban victory in Angola while he was imprisoned on Robben Island, "I was in prison when I first heard of the massive aid that Cuban internationalist forces were giving to the people of Angola. ...We in Africa are used to being victims of other countries that want to tear apart our territory or subvert our sovereignty. In African history, there is no other case of a people that has risen up in defense of one of our own."

In 1980, the Democrat government of Jimmy Carter also proposed lifting the blockade if Cuba withdrew its fighters from Angola, as documented by Johns Hopkins University researcher Piero Gleijeses. Cuba did not give in and history rewarded the sacrifice of hundreds of thousands of Cuban soldiers who returned victorious and with no reward other than the remains of their comrades who had fallen in combat.

The presence of Cuban troops in Africa not only guaranteed the independence of Angola and Namibia, but, in Mandela's words, "destroyed the myth of the invincibility of the white oppres-

sor and inspired the fighting people of South Africa... The battle fought by the Cubans in Cuito Cuanavale (Angola) marked the turning point in the struggle to rid the continent and our country of the scourge of apartheid."

For decades, day-to-day life in the Caribbean has begun with one consistent premise; Cuba remains determined not to change its system, not because of stubbornness, but because this boldness has been and continues to be the driving force that makes the nation's existence viable in the face of the obsessive hostility of its powerful northern neighbor. Modifications are being introduced, such as those that were recently made to the Constitution, but they are those that Cubans want to give themselves freely, in the exercise of their culture, their interests, their dreams, their projects and their sovereignty.

For the ordinary citizen, the blockade means that you can spend an hour and a half in line to buy detergent or to get on public transport, but socialism guarantees the right to receive an education and an organ transplant free of charge that only a millionaire could afford anywhere else in the world. Everyday life on the island makes it clear that it is hard to break out of the capitalist mold—that it is hard to put a new system in place when you are 90 miles off the coast of the United States. We are not forgiven for being a country that has tried to build an ideal, which may be the one that the US government does not want, but it is our ideal. President Díaz-Canel said as much this week in dialogue with the accredited foreign press in Cuba during a tour of the island's eastern side.

When I was standing in line this Wednesday for detergent at a small shop in front of the port of Havana, I was struck by a woman who was standing very tall while carrying a bulky backpack, with things she had bought elsewhere. In the hour and a half she waited, she never laid her luggage down, as if it were a matter of principle. I ended up asking her why. The answer was brutally simple and it comes to the point. You don't let go of what you have if you have the strength to hold on to it.

Source: *La Jornada*, translation, *Resumen Latinoamericano*, February 1, 2020

## El Salvador: Dirty Water and Dirtier Profits



Photo: CISPES

By CISPES Blog Post

For nearly two months, the environmental movement, the left-wing Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) and El Salvador's leading public water utility workers' union have been criticizing President Nayib Bukele's administration for its seeming indifference to the foul-tasting, fetid brown water that began spurting from faucets throughout the capital city of San Salvador in early January, affecting the water of 2.5 million people in the greater San Salvador area.

Tap water in El Salvador hasn't been safe to drink for decades due to severe contamination; most Salvadorans either use a filter or buy bottled water. When water quality began to worsen in early January, Bukele's Minister of Health, Ana Orellana, stunned many in the country when, on January 18, she said the situation could be resolved by simply boiling the water before consuming it. The day before, Frederick Benítez, the president of National Aqueduct and Water Supply Administration (ANDA), whom Bukele appointed in June, asserted that "a proliferation of algae in [the] Lempa [river] caused this phenomenon" but that "[the water] is not harmful to health."

But not everyone was buying the government's explanation. The independent magazine Gatoencerrado found Benítez's declaration to be false, given the high concentration of heavy metals in the water. And the largest ANDA Workers' Union (SETA), challenged the administration's explanation in a statement: "The contamination did not have to do with the proliferation of microalgae, as the authorities have argued. Instead there was a political decision to violate the

treatment protocol at the Las Pavas Water Treatment Plant and thus supply the population with poor quality water."

After first requesting and ultimately having to subpoena both Benítez and the Minister of Health to come before the Assembly, Benítez gave testimony to the legislature, admitting that "drinking the water was not recommended."

In a radio interview, FMLN legislator Dina Argueta spoke out against the "attitude of the new government, not only of the minister of health and the president of ANDA, but of all the officials." Citing the similar refusal of the president of the Port Authority (CEPA) to appear before the Public Works Commission.

In addition, the National Alliance against Water Privatization, a coalition of environmental, faith, labor and community organization, denounced the government's decision to purchase and distribute bottled water as a solution to the crisis, given that bottled water companies already profit from the poor quality of water in El Salvador and bear responsibility for El Salvador's water scarcity in the first place.

Bukele has used the issue of water contamination to reiterate his support for the construction of a water treatment plant at Lake Ilopango, deeming it necessary given the severe water scarcity, despite numerous studies concluding that the water at the lake is unsuitable for human use, even after treatment. Numerous outlets have reported that Bukele is in talks with China to finance construction of the plant as part of a major infrastructure investment plan.

The current crisis in San Salvador comes in the midst of a national debate about who will manage El Salvador's fragile water resources.

The environmental movement and the FMLN have been promoting a General Water Law since 2012 which would enshrine public management of water and the human right to water into law. But in 2018, the right-wing parties introduced legislation to the Environment and Climate Change Commission that would have created a national water regulation agency where the majority of decision-making seats would be held by the private sector.

The Water Forum, a coalition of local, environmental and religious groups, is

concerned that the recent, dramatic deterioration in water quality could be "a strategy to represent public management as inefficient, since it happened the same week that the General Water Law came up for debate in the Legislative Assembly. So if people hear about public water management and are experiencing an ordeal with ANDA, they might be inclined to support the privatization of water."

Indeed, as all of this was unfolding, the right-wing parties began debate on a new regulatory framework in the Environmental Commission. As the National Alliance Against the Privatization of Water explained, "people are bound to get suspicious when, in the midst of a crisis, the Bukele administration, bottled water companies, the Salvadoran Chamber of Commerce (ANEP), the sugarcane industry, real estate developers and the right-wing president of the Environment Commission Martha Evelyn Batres decide to hurriedly pass a law regarding the regulation of water."

Verónica Marroquín, a member of the FMLN political committee, similarly expressed, "We are totally against privatization. We also have our questions regarding this crisis, because the Right uses cases like these to make their arguments, to put the issue of privatization into discussion again."

Towards the end of January, Bukele urged his cabinet to create a "National Water Plan" in which "we solve the water issue in all its facets." However, Bukele's national budget for 2020, which the right-wing majority legislature approved in December 2019 without the votes of the FMLN, cut ANDA's funding by \$7.5 million compared to 2019, the FMLN's last year in the presidency. Notably, ANDA's funding for Environmental Sanitation and Water Security was cut by 65%.

Although Bukele has apologized for the delay in addressing the crisis, his repeated emphasis on inviting private sector investment to El Salvador, cuts in funding to public institutions like ANDA, and promotion of environmentally-risky infrastructure projects suggest that crises like this will continue to worsen in the months and years to come.

Source: *The Committee in Solidarity in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador*, February 20, 2020

## Bolivia: Elections under a Dictatorship

By Angel Guerra Cabrera, journalist and member of the Secretariat of In Defense of Humanity

The United States imperialist offensive against the people in Latin America and the Caribbean is beginning a new phase—showing clear fascist tendencies in some countries. Though this is not the only symptom, a clear example of it is the U.S. obsessive effort to starve to death and cause death due to insalubrity to the Venezuelan and Cuban people just for the sake of hindering their sacred human right to self-determination. Another example is the cynical and crazy “anti-terrorist” crusade through Latin America convened last week in Bogota by State Secretary Mike Pompeo and Colombia’s sub president Ivan Duque, shaking hands with their puppet Juan Guaido.

Precisely due to such a hostile context, nominating Luis Arce and David Choquehuanca as candidates to President and Vice-President of Bolivia by the Movement for Socialism (MAS) in the elections next May 3rd gains greater political relevance.

Evo Morales fostered their nomination in a crowded meeting in Argentina with members of the MAS party and representatives of the Pact of Unity signed by Bolivian social movements. They initially proposed Choquehuanca as President and young cocalero leader Andronico Rodriguez as vice-president but they then agreed with Evo’s intelligent reasoning in the pursuit of more unity, representativeness, and electoral efficiency.

The goal is to win in the first round just as they did last October 20th, which was cut short by the never proven alleged fraud by the Organization of American States (OAS). Morales explained that the Arce-Choquehuanca electoral ticket achieves unity between peasants and the city, unity between scientific knowledge and the millenary indigenous world. He stressed that Arce ensures the economy because he was a minister in this field under Evo’s for three administrations, except for a short period. Doubtlessly, Arce is responsible

for the successful economic model that enabled Bolivia not only to grow economically above the rest of the Latin American and Caribbean countries but also to take millions of citizens out of poverty and extreme poverty. Since very young, Arce was a militant with the of distinguished leader Marcelo Quiroga

native people’s cosmogony.

The moral, political, intellectual and humane superiority of this pair is evident when compared to the variety of opposition candidates they will face like Santa Cruz province neo-fascist Luis Fernando Camacho; neoliberal Carlos Mesa; the U.S. super puppet Tuto Quiroga, and others of the kind. Apparently, the self-proclaimed President wants to be a candidate too. But those people are nothing.

What is going to be very difficult, not only for Arce and Choquehuanca but for any MAS candidate is to run for elections in a militarized country, recently overcoming two massacres; with a political persecution regime against those who think different, such as a large number of MAS militants, activists, or natives, all of them

persecuted, imprisoned, and more than a few cases given cruel, inhuman and degrading treatments, such as former Cabinet Minister Carlos Romero. Moreover, the media is completely serving the right-wing and the international media has been given their orders to vilify MAS. Meanwhile, important MAS government officials are sheltering themselves as refugees in Mexico’s embassy to La Paz, without having the possibility of leaving the country. MAS would win elections today according to all surveys. But the big question is if the alleged provisional government, whose only function was to pacify and control the country, is willing to give power back to the “savages,” as Mrs. Jeannine Añez called them, in case they win. This is not a meaningless question as Bolivia’s dictatorship has unleashed racism; took an abrupt turn on foreign policy—now completely subordinated to the United States; placed public companies in hands of friends and relatives, and it’s acting as if they are going to stay around for a thousand years.

Source: *La Pupila Insomne* on January 28, 2020



MAS candidate for President Luis Arce. Photo: Aizar Raldes

Santa Cruz’s Socialist Party-1. His first readings on the economy were not in college classrooms but in Marxist theory study circles. Besides that, he got a bachelor’s degree and a master’s degree in economics at the University of Warwick in the United Kingdom. As a university professor, he worked on Morales’ first electoral campaign in 2005; he joined Morales’ first Administration as soon as he was elected; and shortly after he assumed the position of Minister of the Economy continuously for almost 14 years.

In turn, David Choquehuanca is one of Evo’s closest friends since the latter led the *cocaleros* in the Cochabamba tropical lowlands; he also boosted student struggles and Marxist study groups since he was very young; meanwhile, he gained prestige as an advisor to peasant unions and took postgraduate studies in anthropology and history, as well as in the rights of native populations in the Bolivian universities of San Andres and The Cordilleras. He was Evo’s Foreign Minister for 11 years. Choquehuanca then served as secretary to the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA) and has been promoting the rights of Mother Earth and the



## HAITI: Ten Years after the Earthquake

### *Haiti Action Committee Statement*

January 12 marked ten years since the 2010 earthquake in Haiti that killed more than 300,000 people, and left an estimated 1.3 million more homeless. Much of the greater Port-au-Prince region lay in ruins, including the presidential palace, 17 of 19 ministries, and many schools and hospitals. Entire neighborhoods were leveled, there were power outages, roads blocked with rubble that still has not been removed.

Generous people worldwide, including half of all registered voters in the United States, donated \$3 billion to NGOs, as part of the total of \$16.3 billion spent or promised for earthquake relief, but most of this money never reached Haitians on the ground. Figures vary by source, and where much of the money went is still unknown. By the end of 2018, \$7.54 billion had been dispersed by donors, with little to no accountability. Many countries never gave what they promised. Of the money pledged, \$972 million was for debt relief – money Haiti never had in the first place. NGOs used much of their \$3 billion for overhead (spent in the countries where they are based) or left money unspent. The American Red Cross received \$486 million, took out 25% for its own internal expenses, built six houses, and used some of what was donated for Haiti in other countries. The Clinton Bush Fund spent \$2 million building a luxury hotel for business travelers. The biggest investment went into the Caracol Industrial Park, more than 130 miles from Port-au-Prince, which today provides only a fraction of the sweatshop jobs promised.

The United States government militarized the emergency aid. They sent in thousands of troops to provide “security,” when Haitians needed food, water, and medical care. There had been no security crisis at all. Even a US general noted things were “relatively calm.” The airport was so clogged unloading military personnel and supplies, that Doctors Without Borders said that five of its cargo flights carrying 85 tons of medical and relief supplies were turned

away and had to be shipped into Haiti by ground from the Dominican Republic. Flights from the World Food Program were delayed up to two days.

In the meantime, Haitians were taking matters into their own hands, organ-



*Photo: Carlos Barria*

izing themselves into popular committees to clean up, to pull bodies from the rubble, build refugee camps, and provide for security. Grassroots women’s organizations that permeate Haitian communities mobilized to contend with the collective loss of already vulnerable housing, water, food, and livelihoods. Many of these resourceful organizers belonged to the Lavalas movement of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, twice elected by huge majorities, but overthrown by military coups in 1991 and 2004, and this is what the United States government and the Haitian elites feared the most. Instead of distributing emergency supplies to those who could deliver them most effectively, the thrust of militarized “relief” was to *prevent* supplies from reaching those who could help the most because of a distrust of Haitians, the dismissal of their ability to rebuild and direct their own reconstruction, and the fear they might actually succeed. And in case any mass demonstrations developed in the streets US and UN occupation troops were there to put them down.

The US pledged \$940 million by the end of September 2010, but almost half of \$465 million, went through the Defense Department as reimbursement for

their expenses. Of \$2.43 billion in donations that came in by the end of 2010, at least 93% went back to the UN or NGOs to pay for supplies and personnel, or never left the donor states at all! \$151 million was completely unaccounted for and only 1% or \$24 million went to the Haitian government.

The US seized on the earthquake as a pretext to reinforce its neoliberal economic agenda in Haiti, the earthquake proved to be highly lucrative for foreign businesses. Of the nearly \$1 billion spent in US government contracts for post-quake Haiti by April 2011, only 23 of 1490 contracts went to Haitian firms for a total of \$4.8 million. Through 2018 the US Agency for International Development (USAID) awarded \$2.3 billion, but only 2.3% of it went directly to Haitian organizations or companies. A Haitian official commented, “We are the ones accused of corruption for the money we don’t receive.”

In spite of all efforts to marginalize them, the Haitian grassroots movement has only grown stronger in the ten years since the quake. Their advocacy led to the return of President Aristide from exile in South Africa in 2011, but all they could do to stop the imposition of Michel Martelly as president was to not vote. Aristide’s Fanmi Lavalas Party was still banned from participating in elections, because it was understood they would win. Despite the record low turnout, the world powers recognized Martelly, who began his administration of repression, theft, corruption, and the selling off of Haitian land and resources.

Upon his return, Aristide and his wife and colleague, Mildred Trouillot Aristide, reopened the University of the Aristide Foundation (UNIFA), which has now graduated its second class. UNIFA has Schools of Medicine, Nursing, Physical Therapy, Engineering, Dentistry, Law and Continuing Education, and is raising funds to build a teaching hospital. Radio and Tele Timoun operate from the Aristide Foundation and provide news to counter the monopoly news corporations.

*Continue on page 10*

Haiti, continued from page

The US, the UN and the Haitian elites still fear the popular movement, and have turned to increasingly brutal tactics to suppress it. In a completely corrupt election cycle in 2015/2016, Fanmi Lavalas was allowed to run candidates, but they were prevented from winning through massive voter suppression and fraud. The electoral council named a completely unqualified Jovenel Moise president, stopping a recount in mid-process. Ever since, Haitians have been protesting in the streets.

Now it's been discovered that \$4.2 billion has disappeared from Petrocaribe funds. Venezuela has been selling Haiti oil at discounted prices through its Petrocaribe program, initiated by the government of Hugo Chavez, with the understanding that Haiti would sell the oil at market rate and use the profits to finance

infrastructure and economic development. Instead the Martelly and Moise regimes have stolen the money, and the protests have only grown stronger calling on the imposed President Moise to resign.

Instead Moise has dug in and is refusing to leave. Police, under the control of the UN, and death squads reminiscent of the *tonton macoutes* of the Duvalier dictatorships operate with impunity. In November 2018 in the historically militant neighborhood of La Saline, 77 people were massacred, and possibly many more bodies were never found. On June 24, 2019 police or death squads fired into a crowd of protesters, killing as many as 30 people. Moise is now hiring foreign mercenaries as well to control and terrorize the population.

Haiti needs massive solidarity to support the grassroots movement calling for the overthrow of the Moise regime, and the

creation of a society based on democracy and economic equality. There is almost no informed media coverage of Haiti now. Haiti Action Committee is working to Make Haiti Visible and to support the Haiti Emergency Relief Fund. You can donate: [www.haitiemergencyrelief.org](http://www.haitiemergencyrelief.org),



which will get donations to the people on the ground working to fulfill the dream of the 1804 revolution that has been suppressed

ever since.

Source: [www.haitisolidarity.net](http://www.haitisolidarity.net)  
February 10, 2020

## Nicaragua: Access to Higher Education Reveals the Lies of the Coup Mongers

By Jorge Capelán, journalist

A further piece of information contradicts the big lie of the promoters of the defeated “soft coup” of 2018 presented inside and outside Nicaragua as a “student insurrection” against the Sandinista government. On Monday, Vice President Rosario Murillo announced that the National Autonomous University of Nicaragua (UNAN) registered the largest pre-registration in history, with more than 18,000 applicants for 76 courses offered, the most in-demand being medicine, public accounting, finances, and English.

Of the more than 18,000 applicants to this public university, 76.23 percent come from public schools and 60 percent are young women.

If “students” have been “massacred” and “persecuted” by the “regime,” how can the university lecture halls be full of

them? If, as the coup propaganda says, “students” migrated “en masse” abroad, how can the lecture halls not only be full but actually overflowing with them? The

and bottomless crisis, how can young people bet massively on education for their future instead of looking merely for a way to survive?



Students taking the entrance exam to UNAN Managua. Photo: Carlos Cortez

The truth is that today Nicaragua is undergoing an educational explosion, with almost 1.8 million people studying, among them hundreds of thousands of young people studying for no cost at one of the 60 technical careers available in 45 government technology training centers nationwide.

The versions of events expounded by the coup leaders is nothing more than a monumental lie. It is astonishing that there are still people outside the country who believe in it. Inside Nicaragua everyone saw through the lie long ago.

public universities were one of the terrorists’ favorite targets during the defeated coup attempt against the people of Nicaragua between April and July 2018. Today they are full of students.

If, as the coup plotters say, the country is living in the throes of a hopeless

Source: *Tortilla con Sal*, on January 30, 2020

## Nicaragua: Poll Has Sent the Coup to the Dustbin of History



Photo: El Digital

By **Chuck Kaufman**, co-coordinator of *Alliance for Global Justice*

The latest poll by independent M&R Consultants covering the last quarter of 2019, shows that less than two years after the failed coup attempt of April-July, 2018, the Sandinista government, led by President Daniel Ortega is more popular than ever and all but a tiny minority of Nicaraguans reject the violent tactics and street blockades used by the US-supported opposition.

In the face of these poll numbers it is hard to maintain any credibility for the opposition and corporate media narrative that says Ortega is a dictator, the police are repressing the people, and that Nicaragua is collapsing into a failed state. The Empire's solution is to ignore the numbers and continue to press the discredited narrative as if it were true.

The poll found that 52% say they strongly support the Sandinista Front (FSLN) and 60% say they are likely to vote for the party in the 2021 national election. 65% of those polled support the current government. 55% think that President Ortega is leading the country in the right direction and 59.7% hold a favorable opinion of his administration. Likewise, 59% think that the Sandinista government is a factor of unity for Nicaraguans and 58.3% say that it is a government that generates hope. A strong majority believe that the country has made progress compared to six years ago. 61.1% think that the current government is the best the country has ever had, while 69.3% responded that the Ortega government works for the general population. To each question roughly one-third of respondents disagreed.

Perhaps even more significant is that 53.8% of respondents say there is more security at present and 77.8% see the National Police as a very professional

institution. One of the clearest signs that the coup attempt in 2018 was based on lies was its demonization of the police and attempt to portray them as if they were the same corrupt and violent institution as exists in neighboring Honduras. Those who have followed Nicaragua for decades know that, even during the neo-liberal years of 1990-2006, every poll showed the police and the army as being the two institutions most respected by the population. That is simply not true in countries where the coercive powers of the state are venal and repressive.

I remember five or six years ago a naturalized Nicaraguan, former gringa, went with me to Honduras and she wrote to me after the delegation that she was so frustrated because her neighbors would simply not believe that in Honduras people feared the police. In Nicaragua, the National Police was born out of the Revolution to overthrow the Somoza dictatorship. The police have always walked with the people. Police departments from around the globe travel to Nicaragua to study its system of community policing, its job training programs for at-risk youth, its sports programs for the same, and its women's police stations where abused women can find a safe space to seek protection and justice.

The third significant finding of the M&R poll was the nearly universal rejection of the violent tactics of the US-funded opposition. 92.2% of respondents said they disagreed with the statement: "It doesn't matter that the roadblocks prevent people from going to work, it doesn't matter that the roadblocks prevent the movement of merchandise, it doesn't matter that the economy is damaged because that is the price the population must pay to overthrow the Sandinista government."

Even a higher 93.6% rejected the statement, "We must return to the streets, it does not matter that people are unemployed, what is important is to overthrow the government." 87.4% also disagreed with the statement, "The roadblocks are an extraordinary idea." Finally, 82.5% of those polled agreed that "it is the people through their vote who should decide who should govern and when." Only 16.5% is in favor of the government being replaced, while over two-thirds (68.5%) reject pressure on the country by the international community to have early elections. 69.6% rejects attempts to remove the president of the Republic, 21.6% approve, and 8.8% are uncertain or did not respond...

If I were an opposition leader, I would be

pretty damned depressed by the M&R poll and if I were one of their handlers in the US State Department or National Endowment for Democracy, I would be wondering if my democracy manipulation budget wouldn't better be spent in some other country.

The Sandinista Front continues to be the biggest political party in the country, with 52% support, the opposition in this survey polled only 23.9%, with 3.5% of that hard vote and 20.4% of soft vote. The remainder declared themselves independent. Of these independents, 28.4% tend to identify themselves with the FSLN and 24.1% with the opposition. 93.6% of those surveyed, who were all of voting age 16 and above, said they had a voter identification card.

Of the poll respondents, 55.8% believe that Nicaragua's problems are economic and 29.4% believe they are political. A bit over one-third (36.2%) think about emigrating, which is high, but lower than historical levels and far below those of their neighbors in the Northern Triangle countries. Although only 17.5% stated that their family economic situation improved since last year, 27.1% said it remained the same, and 55.4% said it deteriorated; this was a 5-6% improvement over the previous quarter. 70.1% of those consulted were optimistic that in the next 12 months their family income will be better with greater purchasing power and employment.

These are not the conditions that create fertile ground for insurrection. Most people are poor, but remain optimistic about the future. They feel physically secure and opposed to violence. And they are relatively satisfied with their government and distrustful of outside intervention. This is the difference that a revolution makes. Nicaraguans shed much blood and endured much hardship to achieve their current state of peace, security, and hope for the future. The generations of revolutionary struggle have done a good job of passing their experience and the stories of their martyrs on to the generations that have grown up in the last 40 years. And the attempted coup built a bond between the historic combatants and the young Sandinistas who worked together to overcome the violence. Nicaragua is a small and impoverished country, but it is a country filled with the wisdom gained by blood and sweat and it is not a soft target for the bourgeois elites and the US hegemony. Nicaragua remains the "threat of a good example."

Source: Alliance for Global Justice, January 15, 2020

# JOIN THESE UPCOMING DELEGATIONS



## MAY DAY BRIGADE TO CUBA 2020

The National Network on Cuba is pleased to announce the XV International May Day Brigade to Cuba, from April 27 to May 10, 2020. *Please arrive by or on April 26.* The trip will cost **\$725 USD** which includes: accommodation, full board, and transportation to all programmed activities. You are responsible for getting to Cuba and returning to the US. For applications or more information visit: <http://nnoc.info/mayday-brigade-application/>



## HONDURAS EMERGENCY HUMAN RIGHTS DELEGATION

Alliance for Global Justice and the Honduras Solidarity Network Invites you to join this delegation Human rights, repression and violence after 10 years of US and Canada backed narco-government May 7 – 17, 2020, Cost: \$950. For more details, application and information, contact Eduardo Garcia, [Eduardo@afgj.org](mailto:Eduardo@afgj.org) or call 202-540-8336 ext.7. This delegation is co-sponsored by La Voz de las de Abajo, Code Pink, and the Task Force on the Americas

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