

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

US Sanctions on Russia Target Venezuela, Nicaragua, Cuba



(Photo: Peoples Dispatch)

By Benjamin Norton, Journalist

President Joe Biden’s top Latin America advisor has admitted that US sanctions against Russia over Ukraine intentionally seek to hurt Venezuela, Nicaragua, and Cuba as well. The United States imposed a series of harsh sanctions on Russia following Moscow’s recognition of the independence of the Donetsk and Lugansk People’s Republics in Ukraine’s eastern Donbas region on February 21, and its subsequent military intervention in Ukraine on February 24.

Juan S. González, Biden’s special assistant for Latin America and the US National Security Council’s senior director for the Western Hemisphere, made it clear that these coercive measures against Russia are also aimed at damaging the economies of Venezuela, Nicaragua, and Cuba.

Venezuela, Nicaragua, and Cuba have socialist governments that Washington has long tried to overthrow. All three currently suffer under unilateral US sanctions, which are illegal according to international law. Former US National Security

Advisor John Bolton, an architect of the Iraq War, referred to these three Latin American nations as the so-called “Troika of Tyranny.”

Biden’s advisor González did an exclusive interview with Voz de América, the Spanish-language arm of the US government’s propaganda outlet Voice of America, on February 25. They published his comments in a report titled “US sanctions on Russia will impact Venezuela, Nicaragua, and Cuba, White House estimates.” “The sanctions against Russia are so robust that they will have an impact on those governments that have economic affiliations with Russia, and that is by design,” González explained. “So, Venezuela is going to start feeling that pressure. Nicaragua is going to feel that pressure, along with Cuba,” he added.

Biden’s Latin America advisor noted that Washington has imposed sanctions on 13 top financial institutions in Russia, including some of the largest in the country. He proudly said that these coercive measures will, “by design,” harm other

countries that do a lot of trade with the Eurasian power.

González also used his interview with the US-funded Voz de América to reiterate Washington’s call for regime change against these three socialist governments in Latin America. His comments were reported by the independent Bolivia-based news website Kawsachun News.

Venezuela, Nicaragua, and Cuba have stood with Russia against NATO expansion and Western military encirclement. President Nicolás Maduro said that Venezuela “laments the mockery and breaking of the Minsk agreements by NATO, promoted by the United States of America.” Maduro stressed that Washington and NATO bear responsibility for the conflict, and “have generated strong threats against the Russian Federation.”

Cuba blamed Washington for the crisis as well. Its Foreign Ministry stated, “The US determination to continue NATO’s progressive expansion towards the Russian Federation borders has brought about

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a scenario with implications of unpredictable scope, which could have been avoided.” Denouncing Western governments for sending weapons to Ukraine, Cuba declared, “History will hold the United States accountable for the consequenc-

es of an increasingly offensive military doctrine outside NATO’s borders, which threatens international peace, security and stability.”

Nicaragua’s President Daniel Ortega condemned Washington for sponsoring a 2014 coup in Ukraine, and joined Russia

in recognizing the Donetsk and Lugansk People’s Republics. The chairman of Russia’s State Duma, Vyacheslav Volodin, traveled to Nicaragua to meet with top officials from the Sandinista government, and thanked them for their support against NATO expansion and US threats.

Source: Multipolarista, 2/28/22

COLOMBIA: Historic Pact Emerges While Uribismo Declines

By Orlando Oramas Leon

The Historic Pact, which gathers a good part of the Colombian left wing, emerged Sunday as the most voted political force in the legislative elections in the South American country, where Uribismo was relegated to fifth place as a result of the social dissatisfaction with its government policies.

The challenge at the polls meant a historic moment for the coalition that will carry congressman and former guerrilla Gustavo Petro as its presidential candidate.

The Historical Pact obtained 2,246,024 votes for its closed list for the Senate, where it will occupy 17 seats. In the vote for the House of Representatives, it filed two million 475 thousand 953 ballots for its different lists, thus securing 25 seats with 95.98 percent of the tables counted.

Suffice it to compare these figures with those achieved by the left in previous elections, when the Polo Democrático and the List of Decency movements received 1.2 million votes for the Senate, and 815 thousand 381 for the House of Representatives.

The numbers also speak to the defeat of the party that represents the positions of former President Álvaro Uribe, and of the government of Iván Duque. Centro Democrático went from being the political grouping with the largest representation in the Senate (19) to sinking to fifth place with only 14 positions.

In the House it was worse. Uribismo lost 17 positions, going from 32 representatives to 15. The plummeting fall was from 1.8 million ballots four years ago to almost 700 thousand less this time, which confirms the bill passed after the popular protests of a year ago that put in check the

neoliberal policies of the Duque administration.

Although the right wing resented the loss of voters, it will retain, although fragmented, a majority in the Senate where the traditional Conservative and Liberal parties won 15 seats each, the Democratic Center 14, Radical Change 11, the U Party 10 and the Mira-Colombia Justa Libre’s Coalition 4.

The Historical Pact will have to juggle



Presidential and Vice-Presidential candidates Gustavo Petro and Francia Marquez (Photo: publimento.co)

in Congress with the Green Alliance Coalition and the Hope Center in order to put a stop to the right-wing attempts.

With a view to the May 29 presidential elections, Gustavo Petro was the great winner in Sunday’s elections, since he won the nomination of the Historical Pact and pushed the advance of this grouping and the punishment of the right-wing formations.

“The Historic Pact has achieved the best result of progressivism in the history of the Republic of Colombia”, he said sur-

rounded by his supporters when celebrating the triumph.

The leftist forces conquered at least 41 seats in both chambers, more than three times more than in the last legislative elections and above the 17 they obtained in 2006, date that marked their best record.

The Pact could add in Congress the support of Comunes, the political expression of the former FARC, which although it did not have good results in the elections, has 10 seats reserved in Congress as part of the peace agreements.

In the dispute for the presidency of the Republic Petro will face the former mayor of Medellín, Federico Gutiérrez, of the extreme right-wing coalition Equipo por Colombia. He will also face former governor Sergio Fajardo, who proclaimed himself as presidential candidate for Centro Esperanza.

There will also be Óscar Iván Zuluaga, for the ruling Democratic Center, the independents Rodolfo Hernández, and Ingrid Betancourt, who did not go to the primaries and are competing on their own.

From now on, Gustavo Petro will be in the spotlight of the Colombian right wing, particularly his attachment to the integral implementation of the Peace Accords, and his commitment to face the abysmal social and economic inequalities prevailing in his country.

Before that, the hundreds of complaints regarding irregularities in Sunday’s elections, the same ones that contributed in the past to deny spaces to excluded sectors, must be clarified.

Source: Cuba en Resumen, 3/14/22

VENEZUELA: US Officials Meet with Maduro

By José Luis Granados Ceja, journalist

A high-level United States government delegation that visited Venezuela (on March 5) failed to produce an agreement with the government of Nicolás Maduro.

News of the delegation was first broken by the New York Times, which described the trip as the highest-level visit by US officials in years. Outlets subsequently reported that no agreement was reached. Caracas had not publicly commented on the meeting at the time of writing.

According to Reuters, the US team was led by White House Latin America adviser Juan González and made “maximalist” demands concerning electoral guarantees. Citing three people familiar with the matter, Reuters reported that the US was seeking new presidential elections, a larger participation of foreign private capital in Venezuela’s oil industry and a public condemnation of Russia’s incursion into Ukraine. The Biden administration representatives reportedly offered Venezuela a temporary return to the SWIFT financial transaction system.

Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro and Vice President Delcy Rodríguez, who directly participated in the meeting, instead demanded broader sanctions relief and the return of foreign assets such as oil subsidiary CITCO. US officials reportedly brought up the cases of US citizens jailed in Venezuela, including six oil executives imprisoned for corruption and two former Green Berets who took part in a failed coup effort.

The meeting in Caracas was the latest US effort to isolate Russian President Vladimir Putin from his allies in the region. US officials told the Times that Washington views Russia’s Latin American allies as a potential “security threat” should the tensions continue to escalate in light of the ongoing conflict in Ukraine.

Venezuela broke off diplomatic relations with the US in 2019 after the latter recognized opposition figure Juan Guaidó as “interim president.” The US and its allies refused to recognize the results of the 2018 election that saw Mad-

uro reelected to a six-year term. Washington then proceeded to engage in and support a series of unsuccessful coup plots, ultimately failing to oust Maduro from power.

US strategy toward Venezuela has more recently been focused on isolating Maduro, imposing crippling sanctions on the country’s energy sector and seizing, together with its allies, the country’s assets abroad. In public statements, the Biden administration has expressed its unwillingness to seriously negotiate with Caracas absent new elections. Nonetheless, due to the failure of the US to successfully install Guaidó as an authority with any real power inside Venezuela, Caracas and Washington have maintained back-channel communications despite the lack of formal diplomatic relations. Guaidó, despite being recognized by the US as the country’s president, was only informed of the high-level delegation the morning of the meeting.

Venezuelan geopolitical analyst Sergio Rodríguez Gelfenstein told Venezuelanalysis that the leak of the news of the visit of senior US officials was motivated by an effort to drive a wedge between Caracas and Moscow and leave the impression that there was a “chill” in relations between the two countries.

Rodríguez maintained that Washington and Caracas would nonetheless leave the door open to dialogue. “I believe that there will be continued attempts at rapprochement, especially because the Mexican [dialogue between the Venezuelan government and the opposition] was exhausted,” he said. “The Mexico talks were totally absurd since the opposition was being directed from within the United States. Any step they took had to be consulted with Washington. In that sense it is much more feasible for the US to negotiate directly with Venezuela.”

President Maduro has repeatedly expressed a willingness to negotiate an end to US-led sanctions on the country. The lack of a deal stemming from the visit by the senior-level delegation suggests Venezuela did not find it to be a workable

proposal. Reuters reported that US officials agreed to a follow-up meeting.

It would take a considerable reversal of US policy toward the Caribbean nation to get the country to walk away from its Russian ally. Relations between the two countries have only grown in light of US efforts to isolate Caracas. Russian assistance has played an important role in Venezuela’s efforts to attend to the economic crisis in the country, providing support and expertise to the country’s key industries as well as steady investment in Venezuela’s energy sector. Venezuela recently strengthened its ties with Russia following a visit by Russian Deputy Prime Minister Yuri Borisov in February.

Caracas has called for a “peaceful resolution” to the ongoing crisis in Ukraine but has stopped short of condemning the Russian military operation. Venezuela did not vote in the United Nations General Assembly’s resolution concerning the Russian offensive in Ukraine. The country’s voting rights have been suspended as a result of unpaid UN membership dues due to the impact of sanctions.

In light of coercive measures applied on Russia by the US and the European Union, Maduro has insisted that Venezuela will maintain its commercial relations with the Eurasian nation. The Venezuelan leader spoke directly by phone with Putin recently, with the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs reporting that the Venezuelan president expressed his “firm support” for Russia and condemned destabilization efforts by the US and NATO. Maduro has publicly called NATO’s handling of the Minsk Agreements a “mockery” and argued that their “derailment” constituted a violation of international law.

The Russian ambassador in Caracas Sergey Melik was invited to greet the opening 5th Congress of the ruling United Socialist Party of Venezuela on Saturday and was met with strong applause from the delegates.

Source: *Venezuelanalysis* 3/7/22

HONDURAS: “Social Organizations Must Remain Combative”

By *La Tinta*

On January 27th of this year, Xiomara Castro assumed the presidency of Honduras. Working with a coalition of parties, organizations and social movements, the president faces a seemingly unmanageable number of challenges. Among them, the plundering of national resources, and the fulfillment of demands that the indigenous peoples and peasants of Honduras have voiced for decades.

President Castro also faces a far-right opposition that, together with the Armed Forces and the United States, were the architects of the overthrow of her husband, Manuel Zelaya, who served as president between 2006 and 2009.

Bertha Zúñiga Cáceres, general coordinator of the Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH) and daughter of Berta Cáceres, the assassinated Lenca leader and environmental defender, was recently interviewed, six years after her mother's death in 2016.

-From COPINH, what are the expectations of the government of Xiomara Castro? We understand the difficulties faced by a government that must, among its challenges, overcome – or lay the foundations to overcome – 12 years of coup and post-coup. The government has some good will and popular slogans; however, there are going to be many challenges to bring those proposals to reality. There is still a complex configuration of power. The Judicial Power is still controlled by the most reactionary sector, which laid the groundwork for impunity in Honduras. In the National Congress there is a power struggle, as we have seen, and this has partially eroded the formal will needed to get things done. In addition, the de facto power continues to be disputed and controlled by, above all, economic groups which, in turn, control the power of the State.

We remember very well the counsel of our comrade Berta Cáceres, who always said that just being president does not give you power. Remember the case of Mel Zelaya! We see how the real power brokers are manifesting themselves to continue controlling the institutional framework. Our expectations are to lay some foundations to solve structural problems, especially on

issues of territory and rights of indigenous peoples. It is going to be a complex and difficult path, but we social organizations must maintain our fierceness and our willingness to struggle.

-What are COPINH's main proposals and demands to the new government? Within the transition commission, created by the government as a way to talk with the social movements, we raised some very important



Bertha Zúñiga Cáceres, General coordinator of COPINH

(Photo: Wikimedia Commons)

issues. For one, the issue of territory: that the State should recognize the historical possession of the indigenous peoples and that it should do so formally. It should issue the necessary community titles through the National Agrarian Institute, for the communities that are litigating for land, not only the Lenca people, but also other indigenous peoples who have similar situations.

We have also proposed declaring fraudulent the concessions for hydroelectric dams, mining and other energy exploitations, given behind closed doors soon after the 2009 coup d'état and in violation of the right to a free, prior, and informed consultation.

Also, we proposed the creation of a law for the protection of life, in which the well-being of communities that are being

threatened would always be prioritized over economic, political or other interests. This would apply not only for indigenous communities, but also for peasant communities.

Xiomara made justice for Berta Cáceres a part of her campaign. We proposed the creation of high-level round table talks between State institutions and international organizations that can help in the investigation and which the victims and COPINH can be part of, in order to prosecute the intellectual authors related to the murder of Berta Cáceres and investigate crimes of corruption, money laundering and other crimes which paved the way towards violence and the violation of the rights of indigenous communities.

-In the first weeks of the new government, what position did the opposition sector take? The opposition sector, the National Party, which is the most conservative sector in Honduras, is quietly crouched, silent and humiliated, because its defeat is due to the accumulation of social unrest in the Honduran people. Above all it was due to the many corruption scandals. We are in the midst of the extradition process of (former president) Juan Orlando Hernandez, which is a very important development for the people of Honduras.

These political sectors operate in criminal structures; that is more than proven. They continue working to guarantee their own impunity and the economic benefit they get from state concessions. Furthermore, they have representation within this government. This is a government born from a pact in which several parties participate, which created an opposition alliance. ...They continue to operate actively to guarantee their own impunity and to make excessive profits.

-How do you think the Armed Forces will behave before the new administration? The government has been clear that the Armed Forces, which participated in the coup d'état against Manuel Zelaya Rosales, is an institution which has been serving interests that do not coincide with those of the majority. Even simply considering investigating drug trafficking would be a blow to the leadership of the Armed Forces. Appointments have been made, such as the Secretaries of Defense and Security, attempting to have some kind of control over the Armed Forces. The Armed Forces do not represent reli-

ability. We are now in a transition in which they are settling in, so we will see how they operate.

How is the legal case for the murder of Berta Cáceres proceeding? We are just a few days away from commemorating six years since the vile crime of our colleague Berta Cáceres. Despite the efforts and some very minimal but important victories, we continue to demand that the State pay its debt to justice and prosecute the mastermind. We demand the dismantling of the criminal structure that led to the murder of Berta Cáceres. This involves the private business sectors, international banking, the Armed Forces, and members of the judiciary which all led to the prosecution and criminalization of Berta Cáceres. In addition, we call for the dismantling of private security companies that participated in actions and attacks against social activists, especially those who defend their territories. And we continue to warn of the dangers that the communities of Rio Blanco face today: the danger that their lands will be privatized.

All this highlights the importance of remaining fierce in the fight for justice. Perhaps...with independence, professionalism and political will, we can reach those most responsible and indeed all those who were involved in this crime.

Source: *RESUMEN* 3/4/22

Extradition: Juan Orlando Hernandez

A Honduran judge has approved ex-President Juan Orlando Hernandez's extradition to the US to stand trial for drug trafficking and weapons charges. Hernandez, who left office in January after eight years in power, is one step closer to being at the mercy of the US federal courts, where he is charged as part of a vast drug trafficking conspiracy. As expected, Hernandez's defense team had appealed the extradition. The Plenary of the Supreme Court has now rejected that appeal. The last legal resource for JOH has vanished and his extradition is imminent.

Source: *Presente-Honduras*, 03/19/22, 03/28/22

Ex-Honduran Police Chief Arrested

After two years in hiding, the feared former Honduran police chief General Juan Carlos "El Tigre" Bonilla Valladares has been captured, official sources confirmed. General Bonilla, arrested by Honduran police at a toll booth near the country's international airport, could be a key witness in the case against former president Juan Orlando Hernández, who is facing extradition to the US on drug trafficking charges. He is expected to be extradited to the US, where he is named as a co-conspirator in the drug trafficking indictment that also includes former president Hernández.

Bonilla, 62, was charged in April 2020 by US prosecutors in New York with allegedly abusing his official position to protect multi-ton cocaine shipments on behalf of Hernández and his brother Tony Hernández, a former congressman who was sentenced last year by a federal judge in New York to life in prison.

US Sen. Patrick Leahy, a long-time critic of the US government's dealings with Bonilla, said in a statement that he had urged successive US administrations to cut ties with Bonilla. "Instead, they treated him like a legitimate partner, even though he was deeply involved in the corruption and brutality of drug trafficking."

Source: *Univision*, 3/9/22

Open-pit Mining Banned in Honduras

The new government of Honduras has announced that it will ban open-pit mining. The government of President Xiomara Castro, sworn in last month, said that it would cancel environmental permits for open pit mining operations across the country. It is not clear if the cancellation will apply only to new projects or also to those already operating. Areas of high ecological value would also be preserved.

In making the announcement, the Honduran Ministry of Mining described "extractive exploitation" as "harmful to the state of Honduras" and argued that mining threatened natural resources and

public health as well as limiting access to water. Environmental and indigenous activists in Honduras have been warning for years of the damage caused to nature and communities in their ancestral lands by large-scale mining, both legal and illegal.

Honduras is not the first country in Central America to place limits on mining. In 2002, Costa Rica banned all new open-pit mining projects. El Salvador banned mining for metals in 2017.

Source: *BBC*, 3/1/22

Guapinol Water Defenders Freed

In February, the Constitutional Supreme Court of Honduras overturned a lower court and threw out the conviction of six environmental defenders from the community of Guapinol. Two days later they were free, after nearly two-and-a-half years in pre-trial detention for their part in protesting a mine they say polluted the river that provides water for their community.

"While this is a significant victory for the water defenders and their families," the Honduras Solidarity Network said in a statement, "the entire process that led to this outcome highlights the injustices imposed on civil liberties under Honduras's authoritarian post-2009 coup governments and deepened during Juan Orlando Hernández narco-dictatorship. Moreover, the blatant criminalization of the Guapinol environmental defenders demonstrates that the people of Honduras pay a high price for unfettered private investment by US corporations....They disrespect the people. They disregard the environment. They cozy up to corrupt oligarchs who run the country....They collude with police and judicial authorities to criminalize human and environmental defenders. And they leave a trail of physical, environmental, and emotional destruction with the 'development' of their megaprojects."

Source: *Maryknoll NewsNotes*, March 2022

21ST CENTURY US COUPS IN LATIN AMERICA



Anti-imperialist Graffiti in Cuba

(Photo: Yoav Litvin)

By Stansfield Smith

During the 21st century, the US, working with corporate elites, traditional oligarchies, military, and corporate media, has continually attempted coups against Latin American governments which place the needs of their people over US corporate interests. Soft coups, a new strategy, are a significant change from the brutal 1970s military hard coups in Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, etc. A central US concern in these new coups has been to maintain a legal and democratic facade as much as possible.

Successful soft coups depend on mobilizing popular forces in anti-government marches and protests. Some revolutions are heavily funded by US and European NGOs, such as USAID, NED, National Democratic Institute, International Republican Institute, Open Society Foundations, and the Ford Foundation. They make use of organizations professing “human rights” (Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International), local dissident organizations, and even liberal-left media (Democracy Now) to prepare the groundwork.

Three mechanisms have proven to be successful. First, economic warfare on a country, through sanctions and outright blockades, creating discontent against the targeted government. Second, increasing use of corporate media, social media, and CIA social media to spread disinformation (around “human rights,” “democracy,” “freedom,” or “corruption”). Third, lawfare, using the appearance of democratic legality to bring down those defending their country’s national sovereignty. Related are the electoral coups (Haiti, Honduras, and Brazil) where the US helped engineer a stolen election.

Some attempted coups failed because the people mobilized to defend their governments, and because of timely defensive solidarity declarations by the Latin American bodies of the OAS, UNASUR, and the Rio Group. Today, the Rio Group no longer exists, UNASUR is much weakened, and the OAS is now fully under US control.

US Backed Coups and Attempted Coups

2001 Haiti. Haitian paramilitaries based in the Dominican Republic launched an attack on the National Palace, seat of President Aristide’s government. The attack failed, but until 2004 these paramilitaries launched numerous raids into Haiti, playing a key role leading to the 2004 coup perpetrated directly by US troops.

2002 Venezuela. The US government partially funded and backed the short-lived April coup against Hugo Chavez.

2002-3 Venezuela. Management of the state oil company PDVSA organized an “oil strike,” actually a lockout of the oil workers, to drive Hugo Chavez out of power. This again failed in early 2003.

2003 Cuba. Before the March 2003 US invasion of Iraq, John Bolton claimed Cuba was a state sponsor of terrorism, producing biological weapons for terrorist purposes, just as Iraq was falsely claimed to have WMDs. The US increased its anti-Cuba propaganda and increased funding to “pro-democracy” groups, while anti-Cuban rightwing groups escalated activities. The US paid “dissident” groups to organize protests, then leave for the US, where they were never prosecuted. The goal was to create the appearance of disorder. Combined with alleged biological WMDs, an international intervention could thus be requested to restore order. Cuba squashed this movement.

2004 Haiti. In an older style coup, US troops invaded Haiti, kidnapped President Jean Ber-

trande Aristide, and exiled him to the Central African Republic.

2008 Bolivia. An attempted coup involved rightwing leaders and some indigenous groups from Bolivia’s lowlands financed by the US. Seeking to separate the richer Media Luna region from the rest of the country, in the process they killed 20 supporters of President Evo Morales. Between 2007-2015, the NED gave \$10 million in funding to some 40 economic and social institutions and to NGOs. US embassy cables showed it sought to turn social and indigenous movements against the Morales government.

2009 Honduras. Honduran military forces under orders from the US seized President Manuel Zelaya, brought him to the US military base at Palmerola, then exiled him to Costa Rica. This began an era of brutal neoliberal narco-trafficking regimes that ended in 2021 with the landslide election of Xiomara Castro, Zelaya’s wife.

2010 Ecuador. In September a failed coup against President Rafael Correa by military and police units backed by the indigenous organizations CONAIE and Pachakutik. The US had infiltrated the police and armed forces, while the NED and USAID funded these indigenous organizations.

2011 Haiti. Following the 2010 Haiti earthquake that killed 200,000, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton imposed Michel Martelly as president after threatening to cut off US aid. Clinton demanded that Martelly be named one of the two runoff candidates, although not recognized as such by the Electoral Council. Despite a voter boycott, Martelly was announced as the winner of the “runoff.” One reason why most Haitians boycotted was that the most popular political party, Fanmi Lavalas, was excluded from the ballot. The Haiti elections were funded by USAID, Canada, the OAS, and the European Union.

2012 Paraguay. President Fernando Lugo was scapegoated for a land occupation confrontation between campesinos and the police, which led to 17 deaths. He was removed from office without a chance to defend himself in a lawfare coup.

2013 Venezuela. After the April election that Nicolas Maduro narrowly won, Henrique Capriles, the US-supported loser, claimed the election was stolen and called his supporters to violent street protests. Due to the strength of the

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UNASUR countries at the time, the US could not convince other countries to reject Maduro's victory.

2014 Venezuela. Led by Leopoldo Lopez and Maria Corina Machado, the coup resulted in 43 deaths and aimed to drive President Maduro from power. Again, the US could not get other Latin American governments to denounce Maduro, either in UNASUR or in the OAS.

2015 Ecuador. Between 2012-2015, \$30 million from NED went to political parties, trade unions, dissident movements, and media. In 2013 alone, USAID and NED spent \$24 million in Ecuador. This paid off in 2015 when CONAIE, thanking USAID for its funding, called for an indigenous-led uprising. Marches began and concluded in Quito with an uprising and general strike. The attempted coup failed.

2015 Haiti. A new electoral coup for the presidency was funded by the US for \$30 million. Both the US and the OAS refused Haitians' demands to invalidate the election. Supporters of opposition parties were shot with live and rubber bullets by police, killing many. President Michel Martelly's chosen successor Jovenel Moise became president.

2015 Guatemala. The US engineered a coup against rightwing President Otto Perez Molina because he was not sufficiently subservient.

2015 Argentina. Argentine prosecutor Alber Nisman was evidently murdered days after he made bogus criminal charges against President Cristina Fernandez, claiming she was involved in the 1994 bombing of a Jewish community center. This was used to create a scandal, unseat her, and bring neoliberals back to power. The case was used to disrupt the Kirchner coalition from winning another presidential election.

2015-2019 El Salvador. El Salvador's rightwing opposition backed by the US sought to destabilize the government of President Salvador Sánchez Cerén of the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front. A conservative media smear campaign was launched against his administration, together with a surge in gang-driven homicides that the police chief said was part of a callous campaign to drive up body counts and remove the FMLN government. Sanchez Cerén and other former FMLN officials later became targets of a "lawfare" destabilization strategy.

2016 Brazil. US-backed rightwing movements launched a campaign against President Dilma Rousseff of the Workers Party for "corruption." Aided by the corporate media, they organized a series of protests in Brazil's larg-

est cities throughout 2015. In 2016 a massive political demonstration brought together more than 500,000 people in support of impeaching President Rousseff. She was finally impeached and removed from office in a successful lawfare coup.

2017 Venezuela. Violent protests, led by Leopoldo Lopez, sought to oust President Maduro, leading to 126 fatalities. The protests ended after the elections for the National Constituent Assembly.

2017 Honduras. The US supported an electoral coup by President Juan Orlando Hernández involving widespread electoral fraud and government killing of protesters. The US quickly recognized him as president and pressured other countries to do the same, even though the OAS itself had called for a new election.

2018 Nicaragua. US-backed violent protests, supported by anti-FSLN media and social media disinformation campaigns, sought to remove President Daniel Ortega and the Sandinistas party. After two months, public sentiment turned strongly against the violent protests and they disintegrated.

2018 Brazil. Former President Lula de Silva was the leading candidate to win the presidential election but was imprisoned due to a lawfare operation of the US and Brazil's right wing, using bogus corruption charges. Bolsonaro won the election, aided by a fake news operation which sent out millions of WhatsApp messages to Brazilian voters.

2019 Venezuela. In January, Juan Guaidó declared himself president of Venezuela after being assured of US recognition. On April 30, the Guaidó-Leopoldo Lopez' planned uprising outside an air force base flopped. Later, a mercenary attack from Colombia failed to seize President Maduro in the presidential palace.

2019 Bolivia. The US engineered a coup against Evo Morales, using a social media campaign to falsely claim he stole the election. The OAS played a key role in legitimizing the coup. The disastrous coup government of Jeanine Anez lasted for just over one year.

2021 Cuba. The US orchestrated and funded protests against the Cuban government in July and November. The US sought to build a new generation of counter-revolutionary leadership by creating new "independent" press and social media platforms. Again, these failed miserably.

2021 Bolivia. In October, the rightwing tried to organize a coup and general strike, demanding the release of imprisoned former President Anez. The attempt was successful only in San-

ta Cruz province. Later, supported conservative organizations led a rally of 1.5 million to the capital, to defend the MAS government.

2021 Peru. The rightwing oligarchy used lawfare unsuccessfully to unseat new President Castillo, a leader from the popular indigenous movement, seeking to remove him for being "permanently morally incapable." A newer lawfare has been brought against him for "corruption."

2021 Nicaragua. The US planned to repeat the 2018 Nicaragua protests, combined with a concocted campaign that the Ortega government had imprisoned US-financed opposition "pre-candidates" before the presidential election. This coup attempt failed but the US and OAS refused to recognize the election results.

In 2022 we can expect the US to continue "regime change" operations against Cuba, Nicaragua, Venezuela, Bolivia, Peru, and now Chile with the election of progressive President Boric.

This list of 27 US-backed coups and attempted coups in the first 21 years of this century may be incomplete.

The US regularly interferes in what it considers its colonies to both impose neocolonial regimes and maintain regimes which open their markets to the US without conditions. Under the facade of "democracy promotion", Washington works to advance the exact opposite goal. Governments and leaders that stand up for their people and their national rights are the very targets of "democracy promotion" coups.

Besides US funding of NGOs and rightwing groups, many liberal and liberal-left alternative media and NGOs in the US now receive corporate funding, which pushes their political outlook. These NGOs and alternative media give a false humanitarian face to imperialist intervention.

Regime change operations are now openly being used at home against the US people, as seen in the confusion and political divisions in the US population, manufactured by the 2016 Hillary Clinton Russiagate disinformation campaign against Trump, and in the Trump 2020 stolen election disinformation campaign against the Democrats. For those opposed to US interventionism, there must be exposure of these new sophisticated methods of soft coup interference, with a demand that the sovereignty of other nations be respected, together with demands by the US people against internal manipulation by corporate rulers.

Source: *Popular Resistance*, 1/7/22

CENTRAL AMERICA

EL SALVADOR: Ex-President Charged for Massacre of Jesuits

By Jeff Abbott, journalist

Alfredo Cristiani, the former president of El Salvador, has been charged by prosecutors for his role in the 1989 massacre of six Jesuit priests at the height of the country's internal armed conflict. He is accused along with twelve others, primarily high-ranking members of the military.

"[The case] has been a symbol of impunity in El Salvador and in the public prosecutor's office for more than twenty years, which has always been on the side of the perpetrators, never on the side of justice," Leonor Artega, the executive director of the Washington, D.C.-based Due Process of Law Foundation, tells *The Progressive*. But there are questions about the accusations against the former president.

"It is a right of the victims to have a judicial process, where the truth comes out, against the intellectual author," Artega says. "Behind these orders for arrest there is no solid investigation, there is no evidence from an investigation by the prosecutor's office." She adds, "There is not enough evidence to consider him as a defendant in the case. The Truth Commission mentioned Cristiani in its report, but to prosecute him criminally, other types of evidence are needed that apparently do not exist."

Artega suggests that this could be yet another action by El Salvador's current President Nayib Bukele to attack his political rivals, specifically among the political and economic elite. The lack of evidence, she feels, will likely lead to the case failing in the courts.

Cristiani, a member of the far-right ARENA party and part of the political elite, oversaw the signing of peace accords with leftist guerrillas of the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) in 1991. The peace accords brought the country's twelve-year brutal civil war to an end. Cristiani, who served between 1989 and 1994, has denied any knowledge or involvement in the plans to carry out the massacre of the Jesuit priests.

This is the first time that a former president is being accused of crimes against humanity during the country's internal



Former President Alfredo Cristiani is alleged to have known beforehand and not stopped the military plan to execute the priests. (Photo: National Security)

armed conflict. While there are questions about the case, its advancement in El Salvador is welcomed by the victims' lawyers. "It is a victory..." Arnau Baulenas, a lawyer who represents the families of the victims of the massacre, tells *The Progressive*. "It is a right of the victims to have a judicial process, where the truth comes out, against the intellectual authors."

On November 16, 1989, soldiers from the infamous Atlacatl battalion invaded the campus of the Jesuit-run University of Central America in San Salvador. The soldiers had been given orders to leave no witnesses. The Atlacatl battalion was an elite unit trained at the US Army School of the Americas and at Ft. Bragg, for rapid response and counterinsurgency in the early 1980s. The UN-sponsored truth commission found that the unit was responsible for a number of high profile massacres, including the killing of the Jesuit priests, during the country's twelve-year civil war, which left more than 75,000 people dead, and 8,000 disappeared. Father Ignacio Ellacuría, the university's rector, along with five other Jesuit priests, a housekeeper, and her teenage daughter were brutally murdered by the soldiers. Father Ellacuría had been an instrumental part of the negotiations for peace between the Guerrillas and the Salvadoran government. At the time, there were attempts by the ultraright and segments of the Salvadoran military to smear Father Ellacuría as a communist sympathizer and "a tool" of the guerrillas.

The crime had remained unprosecuted for decades, in part due to a post-war amnesty law that protected those accused of

carrying out crimes during the civil war. This amnesty law was ruled unconstitutional in 2016 by the country's Supreme Court. A Spanish court in 2020 sentenced former Salvadoran Colonel Inocente Orlando Montano, who had been vice minister of defense and public safety for the Salvadoran government at the time of the murders, to 133 years for his part in the massacre of the priests. He was one of eight people accused in Spain, the home country of five of the murdered Jesuits.

El Salvador marked the thirtieth anniversary of the signing of the peace accords this January. But the country failed to hold a public ceremony to commemorate this anniversary, in part due to the position of President Bukele, who referred to the peace accords as a "farce." "President Bukele has no real interest in justice...his actions have shown that he is a president who believes more in the power of imposition and control, who does not comply with the laws," Artega explains. Bukele, elected in 2019, has largely sought to erase these accords and diminish what occurred during the internal armed conflict in the 1980s and early 1990s, while at the same time growing closer to the country's military forces.

Bukele has taken significant steps back from the accords, including increasing the presence of the Salvadoran military in the country's public security structure, and deploying soldiers against the country's congress in 2020.

The military has also blocked investigators from access to the archives of the El Mozote massacre, which is also currently in the courts. There are seventeen former high-ranking military officers who are facing charges for massacring 800 civilians in the village of El Mozote in 1981. This massacre was also carried out by the US-trained Atlacatl battalion.

"We want these cases to advance in El Salvador," Artega says. "The impunity of the past continues to send a negative message."

Source: *The Progressive*, 3/14/22

SOUTH AMERICA

ARGENTINA: Protests as Chamber of Deputies Approves IMF Plan

By Saheli Chowdbury, journalist

Thousands of Argentines protested outside the Argentine Parliament on Thursday and Friday as the Chamber of Deputies discussed the new refinancing agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) that was proposed by the economic cabinet of President Alberto Fernández. After more than 13 hours of discussion, the draft agreement to refinance the \$45 billion debt acquired by former president Mauricio Macri from the IMF was approved by the Chamber of Deputies on Friday, March 11, with 200 votes in favor and 37 against the bill, while 15 deputies abstained. The bill has been sent to the Senate for further procedures. It must be passed by the Senate and the IMF board of directors for it to enter vigor.

The most notable among those who voted against the agreement was Deputy Máximo Kirchner, who was the president of the bloc of deputies of the ruling coalition Frente de Todos and had resigned from his post as president a few weeks ago in protest of what he called “the return of IMF” to Argentina.

While the meeting was going on, thousands of protesters belonging to various social movements took to the streets, questioning the agreement and demanding cancelation of the debt, shouting slogans such as “Not in our name” and “IMF out of Argentina.”

Although the protests were generally peaceful, a group of protesters approached the parliament building and threw stones at the windows and doors of the premises.

The Vice President of Argentina, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, released a video on Twitter, showing the results of the attack, which caused destructions and a fire in her office.

In the video, the vice president stated, “Paradoxically, it was my office that was attacked. The office of the one who stood up to the vulture funds, who kept the International Monetary Fund out of the country, continuing the legacy of my companion Néstor Kirchner, and who also decided to build the Frente de Todos, with which Mauricio Macri was defeated. Paradoxically or intentionally...”



Argentina Demands Justice from the IMF

(Photo: theintercept.com).

She also mentioned that at the time of the attack she was inside her office, together with Senators Oscar Parrilli and Anabel Fernández Sagasti, and with her son, Deputy Máximo Kirchner.

It was the late Néstor Kirchner, former president of Argentina and Cristina Fernández’s husband, who restructured and repaid all IMF loans that were accumulated during the earlier decades and did not contract any new loans from IMF during his term. Similarly, during the two terms of Cristina Fernández as president, the government of Argentina had no pending debt with the IMF. Right-wing President Macri, who came to power after Fernández, brought the IMF back to the country, recklessly contracting nearly \$57 billion in loans, through processes plagued with irregularities on both sides—his government and the IMF.

In January this year, the current government of President Alberto Fernández reached an agreement with the IMF regarding the repayment of the loan, through a refinancing by the IMF itself. This led to questioning of the government’s policies by various social and po-

litical organizations of Argentina, many of which had supported Fernández’s presidential campaign, as he had promised to solve the debt crisis.

Protesters raised banner that said, “We don’t owe, we don’t pay,” while another banner in the background proclaimed, “The debt is with the people, not with the IMF.”

Cristina Fernández’s wing within the Frente de Todos coalition has opposed President Fernández’s approach towards the IMF debt due to the massive impact that the repayment of the debt will have on the most vulnerable sectors. This has created an unofficial split in the coalition and made Cristina Fernández a leading figure in the polls for the next presidential elections in 2023.

Source: *Orinoco Tribune*, 3/13/22

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LATIN AMERICA

PUERTO RICO: Massive Strikes of Government Employees

By Ramón Frontera Nieves

Despite the rains that hit Puerto Rico on Friday, February 18th, thousands of public employees declared a work stoppage and demonstrated in the streets demanding a salary increase and a decent pension at the time of their retirement. This escalation of protests follows recent strikes by the public-school teachers' unions, also joined by several other unions. Among them are unions that represent workers in the health department, the department of corrections, the department of natural resources, the courts, the university, emergency medical services and others.

Gathering in different parts of the country, thousands and thousands of employees have raised their voices to raise similar demands regarding basic rights and respect. In the last weeks the protests have gained momentum. The protesters are making it clear to the government that they are tired of hearing promises that are not fulfilled.

The protesters are also demanding that Governor Pedro Pierluisi Urrutia halt the "Debt Adjustment Plan." They claim that the country's debt has not been audited and that the plan is very onerous and endangers essential services for the people. Puerto Rico was declared bankrupt several years ago, as it was unable to pay its debt. As its colony, the US government imposed a Board that oversees and determines the government's finances. This is



Puerto Ricans rise up against US-imposed austerity and poverty wages.

(Photo: multipolarista.com)

where the real decisions of all the affairs of Puerto Rico are made and carried out by their flunkies like Urrutia.

Since early in the morning, the unions held several rallies. They ended their marches in different parts of the country. Some marched to the Capitol, others to the Fortaleza (home and offices of the Governor), the central offices of the Department of Health and the offices of the Fiscal Control Board and the University of Puerto Rico.

These massive marches brought vehicular traffic to a standstill on several of Puerto Rico's main roads and highways.

As part of their protests, many demon-

strators waved the design of the Puerto Rican flag in black and white. This is a representation of the crisis that the country is going through; an economic, financial, social crisis and more. It represents a country that is not just in a state of mourning for all the neglect but is becoming active and militant in response to all the effects of the crisis.

The leaders of the different unions indicated that if their just demands are not met, the demonstrations and work stoppages will not only continue but multiply.

Source: *Resumen Latinoamericano-English* 2/19/22

WTF: Want to Know What's Going on in Latin America?

Tune in live Wednesdays at 4:30 PT or 7:30 EST for Code Pink's weekly webinar on important news from Latin America and the Caribbean hosted by Teri Mattson who interviews Latin American critical experts. You can watch on YouTube@codepink or on Facebook@GoodNeighborPolicy.

Task Force on the Americas is a co-sponsor of the program.



BRIEFS

Mexico: Eight Journalists Assassinated

Armando Linares López, the director of a news website called Michoacán Monitor, was reportedly shot at least eight times outside his home on March 15 in the city of Zitácuaro. He is the eighth Mexican journalist to be killed in 2022, compared with nine in the whole of last year. Linares had reported the killing of his colleague, Roberto Toledo, saying that Toledo had been targeted for exposing corruption. "We don't carry weapons. We only have a pen and a notebook to defend ourselves," he said.

Source: *The Guardian*, 3/22/22

Chevron to Increase Venezuelan Oil

Chevron is getting ready to increase its oil supply by enhancing operations with Venezuela based on the possible easing of US sanctions on this South American country. The transnational corporation plans to expand its role in four joint ventures it shares with state-run company PDVSA and organize a trading team to market the Venezuelan oil under the authorization of the US government.

These measures will revitalize Venezuela's oil sector, whose production reached a value of 2.3 million BPD in 2016 but has been declining permanently due to the US blockade. US officials have made it clear that any authorization will depend on whether Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro agrees to political concessions such as setting a date for resuming negotiations with the opposition.

Source: *Telesur English*, 3/15/22

Ecuador: Indigenous Land Rights

The recent decision by Ecuador's highest court in favor of Indigenous people's rights was a huge victory for Indigenous land rights and for nature too. The ruling by the country's Constitutional Court, in favor of Indigenous people's rights and their authority to decide on extractive projects that affect their land, upheld a landmark lower court ruling in 2018. The rulings are a massive victory for Ecuador's Indigenous people, who make up 70% of the population of the Ecuadorian Amazon. The verdicts are also an undoubted blow to Ecuador's president, Guillermo Lasso. Last July he issued a new hydrocarbons policy that promised to double oil production. Lasso did so in open defiance of Indigenous peoples' concern for millions of acres of the pristine rainforest as well as the physical and cultural survival of Indigenous nations.

Source: *The Real News Network*, 3/14/22

El Salvador: Under State of Exception

El Salvador is currently under a 30-day state of exception imposed by the government of President Nayib Bukele, in response to a presumed rise in homicides. Under this state of exception, meetings and gatherings are prohibited, no warrants are needed to intercept communications, people can be detained without explanation, and the period for which someone can be held without charges is extended from 72 hours to 15 days. Over 9,000 people have already been arrested in

massive sweeps in poor neighborhoods.

The Legislative Assembly also approved changes to the penal code, the anti-terrorism law, and other laws, including increased sentences for crimes when the accused is an alleged gang member. Concerns have been voiced from grassroots organizations that this will be used to justify human rights abuses and attacks against civil society.

Source: *CISPES* 04/01/22

Guatemala: Abortion and LGBTQ Outlawed

On March 8, while hundreds were commemorating International Women's Day, Guatemala's Conservative-controlled Congress approved the "Protection of Life and Family" law in a 101-8 vote.

The legislation labels LGBTQ people "abnormal" and prohibits the prosecution of anyone who carries out a hate crime against the community. It declares a family as one involving a married man and woman, outlaws same-sex marriage, and restricts the ability of schools or other educational institutions to provide inclusive sex education outside of the nuclear family. Abortion is already illegal in Guatemala, but the law also increases the penalty for women who undergo the procedure, whether induced by a doctor or due to a miscarriage.

A day after the law was approved, Guatemala's conservative President Alejandro Giammattei held a ceremony to declare the Central American nation "the pro-life capital of Iberoamerica".

Source: *Aljazeera*, 3/14/22

Peru: Castillo/Fujimori

Peru's left-wing President Pedro Castillo has only been in power for eight months, and just survived a second impeachment attempt by the right-wing-dominated congress. After eight hours of debate, the vote was 55 for impeachment, 54, against, and 19 abstentions. The motion to remove Castillo, presented by the right, would have had to have had 87 of the 130 legislative votes. On another note, Peru's Constitutional Court has processed a pardon and early release of the dictator, Alberto Fujimori (1991-2000), who was sentenced to 25 years for crimes against humanity, but the Inter-American Court on Human Rights is opposing this decision.

Source: *Telesur*, 3/22/22

Guatemala: General on Trial for Genocide

After almost forty years of the perpetuation of crimes against humanity such as genocide, Chief of Operations General Luis Enrique Mendoza García, was sent to trial for genocide and crimes against humanity committed against the Maya Ixil people. He oversaw the implementation of military plans and operations in the Ixil region.

He served as Director of the Operations of the Army between April 1982 and August 1983; this included elaborating orders for the execution and assembly of all operations. The general was a member of the Defense Staff of the government of General Efraín Ríos Montt and participated in Plan Victoria 82. His functions were fundamental for the perpetuation of crimes against humanity and genocide at the time.

He was captured in June 2019 after having been a fugitive for more than seven years.

Source: *Nisgua.org*, 2/16/22

Bolivia: OAS Responsible for Fraud

The US Congress passed a spending bill that also calls for the State Department to investigate claims of fraudulent election in Bolivia in 2019. The request is to consult independent experts and produce a report on whether fraud changed the results of the Bolivian election as the OAS has claimed.

Congress seems determined to hold OAS Secretary General Luis Almagro and other officials accountable for repeatedly promoting false accusations of fraud in the Bolivian 2019 election, fueling a political crisis that culminated in a military coup and forced elected President Evo Morales to flee Bolivia. The coup government of Jeanine Anez violently repressed pro-democracy protests. Investigators with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights concluded that her government was responsible for the Sacaba and Senkata massacres which were racist in nature.

Source: *CEPR*, 3/11/22

Marilyn Naparst: Presente!



Marilyn visiting the Zapatista school in Oventic, Chiapas on a Pastors for Peace caravan in 1998 with Ernie Noyes, Dale Sorensen and George Friemoth.

For over 20 years Marilyn has been a dedicated community member and supporter of MITF.

We had met her working together in support of Pastors for Peace caravans to Cuba and Chiapas. She came to most of our events in Berkeley, San Francisco and Marin, and volunteered to help set up our annual dinner every year. She went on many of our delegations. Just to name a

few, we went together to Mexico (Chiapas 1998, the Zapatour 2001, Oaxaca 2007), Argentina and Uruguay, Bolivia 2008, Chile 2009, Honduras, Venezuela, and of course the country she was most passionate about, Cuba, several times. We are so appreciative of Marilyn's undying solidarity with Latin American struggles, her friendship, her enthusiasm and her laughter. She was not just a colleague but a dear friend.

The Task Force on the Americas Endorses and Invites your Participation in the People's Summit for Democracy

In the tradition of each Summit of the Americas since the 2005 Mar Del Plata Summit, we unionists, activists, grassroots organizations, and progressive people of the Americas are calling for a People's Summit on June 8th, 9th, and 10th to counter the 9th Summit of the Americas

to be held in Los Angeles, CA.

The People's Summit will host three days of art, music, speakers, debates, workshops, panel discussions, performances—all which uplift the voices of the people and imagine a new world; one that puts people's democracy first. Join our movement and join our call for a People's Summit to discuss the real crises facing our communities within the region.

Check out the website:

<https://peoplesummit2022.org/>



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