

Nicaragua's Sandinistas Battle 'Diabolical' US Empire and Poverty on 42nd Anniversary of Revolution

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The Grayzone reports from Nicaragua on the 42nd anniversary of the Sandinista revolution. Nicaraguans discuss their improved quality of life, President Ortega condemns the dictatorial US "empire that wants to dominate all countries," and Vice President Murillo declares poverty an imperialist "crime against humanity."

42 years after the victory of the Sandinista revolution, Nicaraguans are still celebrating the gains of the leftist movement, and hoping to take the transformative process to another stage.

This July 19, tens of thousands of Nicaraguans flooded downtown Managua, the capital, to show their support for the revolution and the national government that since 2007 has been led by the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN).

An ocean of Nicaraguans filled the streets bearing red and black bandanas, waving FSLN flags, and chanting revolutionary slogans.

The celebration lasted for an entire week, culminating with speeches by President Daniel Ortega and Vice President Rosario Murillo, who emphasized gains of the revolution like free universal healthcare and education for all citizens, new high-quality infrastructure, the empowerment of women and the youth, as well as an assertive stance on the global stage.

Ortega used his speech on July 19 to announce a 5% increase in government spending on social programs, and a corresponding 5% increase in the salaries of public workers.

Murillo vowed to accelerate the government's war on poverty, linking it to the "diabolical imperialist threat" posed by US intervention. Stressing that underdevelopment of the Global South is an "imperialist imposition that has been used to dominate, divide, diminish," the Nicaraguan vice president called poverty a "crime against humanity."

Highlighting Washington's decades-long war on the Sandinistas, Ortega railed against US

imperialism, calling the “yanqui empire” a global dictatorship obsessed with destroying Nicaragua, Russia, China, and any country in its way, led by “rulers who want to impose their hegemony, who want to make themselves owners and lords of the planet, who even want to take over the universe.”



While tens of thousands of Nicaraguans filled Managua to commemorate the revolution, international media outlets blasted out fake news.

Spanish [corporate news wire EFE](#) falsely claimed, “Few celebrate Nicaragua’s revolution on its anniversary number 42.” In reality, although they did not receive any coverage in the mainstream foreign press, there were demonstrations this July in support of the Sandinista Front all across Nicaragua, in most the country’s departments and major cities, including [Masaya](#), [Estelí](#), [Boaco](#), [Rivas](#), [Chinandega](#), [Jinotega](#), [Matagalpa](#), [Granada](#), [Leon](#), [Chantales](#), [Carazo](#), and beyond.

The onslaught of disinformation, spread shamelessly by Western corporate outlets, is part of the unconventional warfare that has been waged against Nicaragua and its leftist government, since the Sandinistas returned to power through a series of democratic elections beginning in 2006.

In 2018, the United States backed a violent coup attempt aimed at overthrowing the FSLN and the party’s President Daniel Ortega. For months, right-wing bands waged a campaign of sabotage to destabilize the country, erecting barricades that battered the economy, while hunting down Sandinista activists in their homes and on the street.

The putsch fizzled out in July 2018. But just when it was on the path to recovery, Nicaragua encountered a new series of stumbling blocks.



In 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic ravaged the world, further damaging Nicaragua's economy. The [US-funded anti-Sandinista opposition exploited the health crisis](#) to launch another bid to sabotage the government.

As if this were not enough, that November, Central America was hit by not one but two hurricanes, Eta and Iota.

Despite the many obstacles, Nicaragua is still moving forward. The Sandinista government guarantees free, socialized, high-quality healthcare and education for all of its citizens.

And while Nicaragua is the second-poorest country in the western hemisphere (after Haiti), it has some of the strongest social programs in the region, as well as excellent [public infrastructure](#), on par with that of much richer Latin American countries.

The Sandinistas have also heavily emphasized the role of women in leadership positions. It passed laws requiring government offices to be split at least 50-50 between men and women, leading to the [fifth-highest level of gender equality](#) in the entire world, and the highest in Latin America.

The government's gains are especially impressive when considering that Nicaragua's neighbors in the so-called Northern Triangle – Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala – are wracked by catastrophic violent crime rates, making them some of the most violent nations on Earth that aren't officially at war.

Compared to its neighbors, Nicaragua is an oasis of stability and peace. And many Nicaraguans attribute their relative security to the Sandinista Front.

According to a survey taken this May by the mainstream polling firm, M&R Consultores, [76% of Nicaraguans feel their country has progressed](#) in the 14 years of rule of the Sandinista Front. 73% say the government gives them hope, 69% personally approve of President Daniel Ortega, and 63% believe their families will have better lives and jobs with the FSLN staying in power.

When I walked around downtown Managua on the week of July 19, the wellspring of popular

support was palpable.



“Thanks to the Sandinista Front and Comandante Ortega, my children can go to college for free, and the public schools are excellent,” said a middle-aged woman. “When I was a child, in the neoliberal period, we had to bring our own desks to school, and there were holes in the walls.”

“We have various new hospitals, and they’re free,” a man effused. “Before you would go and pay a lot, and they would just give you a pill.”

As I strolled down Avenida Bolívar a Chávez (the main street in the capital, where monuments to Venezuelan anti-imperialist leaders Simón Bolívar and Hugo Chávez had been erected), I spoke with dozens of people who had gathered to celebrate the revolution.

“The roads were horrible before Comandante Ortega returned,” recalled an elderly man. “It was just earth and mud outside my house. Now I have good roads all around my neighborhood.”

“I remember the neoliberal era. We had nothing. They privatized everything. They pillaged the country,” a woman lamented. “Before the Sandinista Front came back, we didn’t even have electricity or water. It went out every day.”

Many women emphasized the role the Sandinista Front has played in empowering them and their family members.

Several Nicaraguans also recognized me and stopped to show gratitude to The Grayzone for reporting on their struggle. “Thank you for telling the truth about what is going on,” a young Sandinista activist said. “The other media outlets say so many lies. They are all lies.”



Before Covid-19 broke out, Managua was the site of massive rallies each July 19, in which hundreds of thousands of Sandinista supporters filled downtown Managua to celebrate. [At The Grayzone, we have reported on these enormous popular celebrations](#), which essentially amount to multi-day parties in the streets.

Both last year and this year, however, the government cancelled the official July 19 celebration, over health concerns due to Covid-19. (I also [reported on the 41st anniversary of the revolution in 2020](#), from inside Managua.)

Yet these cancellations did not stop the hardcore base of the Sandinista Front from filling the streets of Managua in celebration.

The night before the anniversary, on July 18, tens of thousands of Nicaraguans filled Managua's Plaza La Fe.



A long line of cars stretched all the way down Avenida Bolívar. Sandinistas were willing to sit in hours of traffic to attend.



During a midnight fireworks launch, Nicaraguans blasted revolutionary music from their cars, and partied into the early morning.



The enthusiasm that many Nicaraguans felt toward the Sandinista Front was tangible. One woman displayed a leg tattoo of President Daniel Ortega.



While tens of thousands of Nicaraguans filled Managua's Plaza La Fe and Avenida Bolívar on the night of July 18, many more held large community parties, called *vigilias*, in working-

class barrios.

I attended a large gathering in the blue collar neighborhood of San Antonio, where young people mingled with elders and danced to a blend of reggaeton, rap, and *música testimonial* – revolutionary songs sang in unison and celebrating the Sandinista Front's victories.

Revelers constantly stopped me to thank me for “reporting what is actually happening” in their country, complaining that the pro-Sandinista majority is ignored by foreign corporate media outlets, which instead act as mouthpieces for the elite right-wing opposition.



An older man related to me the story of how he had left Nicaragua to study in Germany, and later worked in the United States, but later decided to return home because he wanted to support the revolutionary process.

“I have seen the poverty and homeless in the United States, and it is horrible, it is barbaric in a country with so much wealth,” he said.

Another Sandinista supporter exclaimed to me, “We want to thank the people of the United States who support the Sandinista Popular Revolution. The people of the US are not the same as the government; we know that!”

The older man had been involved in the armed struggle in the 1970s, and said that during the '80s, he met many US activists who arrived in Nicaragua to help build the revolution.



The *vigilia* in San Antonio was organized by local Sandinista activists, who put a series of poster boards outside of the event, highlighting what they consider to be the most important gains of the revolution.

“The revolution is health for everyone,” read one, showing photos of the socialized healthcare system and new hospitals built under the FSLN government.



“The revolution is: free, high-quality education,” read another poster. It included images of new school infrastructure, a state-of-the-art technological training center, and the free school supply program.



"The revolution is: building road infrastructure and dignified homes," the boards continued, displaying the Sandinistas' highly subsidized public housing initiative.



And last but not least was a sign emphasizing, "Without the participation of women, there is no revolution!"



After days of community celebrations of the anniversary across Nicaragua, President Daniel Ortega and Vice President Rosario Murillo delivered speeches in Plaza de la Revolución, in the heart of Managua.

Ortega proceeded to his speech down Avenida Bolívar, standing through the open roof of his presidential vehicle and waving at the thousands of Nicaraguans who had rallied to commemorate the revolution.



The president's security team reportedly did not support the decision, but Ortega insisted on greeting his supporters.



Nicaraguan President Ortega: US empire wants to dominate the world and suppress all other powers

Although Nicaragua is a small country of 6 million people, its Sandinista government punches above its weight on the international stage.

In the 2021 celebration, Ortega made it clear that anti-imperialism is at the forefront of the

FSLN's revolutionary program.

The "world is more and more shaken by the desires of the North American rulers, who want to impose their hegemony, who want to make themselves owners and lords of the planet, who even want to take over the universe," the Nicaraguan president declared. "That is how far their plans go. Because they have atomic bombs, because they have lots of money."

"And they can't understand that that era, where imperialism had a period that was temporary, but a period of hegemony, when the balance between the Soviet Union and the United States was broken, that that moment of hegemony that it had, it was a few seconds, and that disappeared," Ortega said.

"Now the peoples of the world are fighting; the North American people are fighting, bravely, the North American people are fighting, and the peoples of Europe are also fighting," he continued.

"Those countries that still dream of imposing their colonialist, neocolonialist policies in the world, they are simply outside of reality. That is no longer possible.

"When the universe was created, and in the universe, Earth came up, there was never any god that said, 'The yanquis are going to be the owners of the world.' Not in Africa, not in Asia, not in our American lands where are ancestors were, our roots. There were a multitude of gods worshiped by different cultures, and not one god said 'We must submit ourselves to the yanqui empire.'"

Free public health "clinics and hospitals are for all Nicaraguan families," not just Sandinistas

In a particularly memorable moment, Ortega argued that Nicaraguan opposition supporters were themselves victims.

"There are even those Nicaraguan families that, for diverse reasons, aren't able to understand what is the struggle for dignity, for justice, which has to do with their own material realities, and those families are also victims," he said. "I mean, the people who oppose us, because there are people who oppose us, as a result of the ferocious propaganda that there is, and they are in misery."

"But when they see that they are passing a new highway, they are happy. And they are not upset because it was the Government of the People-as-President that is building that road," Ortega continued. "And when a clinic is being built, and when a hospital is being built, as dozens of hospitals have been built in these years [of the Sandinista government], clinics for women, the doors are open for all Nicaraguan families."

"They are not clinics or hospitals only for Sandinista families. They are clinics and hospitals for all Nicaraguan families!" Ortega emphasized.

He then announced a 5% increase in government spending on social programs, including a 5% raise for public sector workers.

Ortega also stressed the importance of housing the population. "We will continue giving property titles until all Nicaraguans in our homeland have a house, a lot, a place to live, a farm," he said.

Since 2007, the Sandinista government has given poor and working-class Nicaraguans more than 501,000 property deeds, in both urban and rural areas, Ortega emphasized. This is important because it ensures that Nicaraguans are secure in their homes, and have legal protections so they cannot be displaced by wealthy landlords, corporations, or developers that want to steal and exploit the land they live on.

“When the property is recorded in the [government] registry, there are no latifundia-style thieves who can steal that property from the peasants,” the Nicaraguan president reassured.

Ortega: Coup-plotters provoked Nicaraguan police with violence and wanted them to shoot back

In his discussion of the violent 2018 coup attempt, Daniel Ortega praised the national police for “resisting the provocations, the bullet wounds, the deaths.” He specifically highlighted the officers in the city of Masaya, who were under siege for weeks by heavily armed extremist coup-mongers.

“How difficult it was in that moment to have to tell those comrades there not to shoot back, not to resist, to endure it, not to shoot, while the terrorists were firing bullets, with funding from the yanquis and the oligarchy, attacking every day,” Ortega said.

“It was a provocation. They wanted the police to react, so they could say it was a massacre,” the president continued, explaining the strategy of the US-backed putsch. “The police were simply following orders to resist without firing any bullets, which are the most difficult orders to follow, when an institution is being attacked, when a command is being attacked.”

Ortega’s comments recalled an op-ed published in the New York Times by a US government-backed anti-China activist, titled “[A Hong Kong Protester’s Tactic: Get the Police to Hit You.](#)” The unusually candid 2019 article explained how Western-sponsored insurgents employed “aggressive nonviolence to provoke the authorities,” based on a strategy called “Marginal Violence Theory,” which uses “the most aggressive nonviolent actions possible to push the police and the government to their limits.”

But as The Grayzone has reported, the tactics Nicaragua’s opposition employed in 2018 were anything but non-violent.

Ortega: US empire is “crazy” and “wants to dominate all countries”

“This is a complex struggle, because it is a struggle that involves the global interests of the empire that wants to dominate all countries,” Daniel Ortega continued in his speech.

The US empire “wants to suppress other powers, instead of getting along with the powers it wants to suppress them. It wants to suppress the Russian Federation; it wants to subordinate it. It wants to suppress, it wants to subordinate the People’s Republic of China. They’re crazy! They’re crazy!” he said.

The US empire “wants to suppress powers, and they want to suppress nations as well, like Nicaragua,” Ortega went on. “We are a strategic point, and that is where the yanqui persecution of Nicaragua comes from, because here there is a giant resource, which is a canal through Nicaragua.”

And US government officials “don’t want, they have never wanted, as long as Nicaragua has existed, they have imposed treaties so that Nicaragua would not sign any agreement with any country of the world, even European countries, if they don’t authorize it. They gave themselves the right over our land. Because there were traitorous sell-out governments, and they gave themselves the right to say to the Europeans, here you cannot enter, here we will decide the canal, we the United States, the yanqui empire.”

“We are in the middle of that battle, in that struggle, and it is a struggle, yes, one in which we are advancing,” Ortega said.

“Simply, what I can say is that, despite the empire’s attempts to destroy our country, here is Nicaragua, on its feet, firm and moving forward,” the president declared. “Despite the fact that they have tried to destroy the economy, they have killed, spreading terror, they have put into practice terrorism in Nicaragua, they have laundered billions of dollars in Nicaragua to spread terrorism.”

“And there they are doing the calculations where they are carrying out investigations into the infamous foundations, and millions of dollars are showing up here, millions there, and we are talking about millions of dollars to be used to try to destroy the Nicaraguan people. And they have failed.”



Sandinista women who lost their hands and arm in the revolutionary struggle, honored by President Daniel Ortega on the 42nd anniversary celebration (Photo credit: Canal 6)

While on stage for the anniversary celebration, Ortega honored two female guerrilla fighters who had lost their arms or hands in the Sandinista armed struggle. He also praised the revolutionaries who in the 1980s fought the CIA-trained Contras, which he referred to as “the yanqui government’s mercenaries, criminals, terrorists.”

Before his speech, Ortega grabbed a giant Nicaraguan flag and declared, “This flag does not have and will not have any stars!” It was a symbolic denunciation of the US government’s desperate attempt to try to reimpose control over Nicaragua.

En su discurso hoy conmemorando el 42 aniversario de la Revolución Popular Sandinista, el Comandante Daniel Ortega condenó al imperialismo estadounidense, y agarró una bandera nicaragüense gigante y declaró "Esta bandera no tiene, ni tendrá ninguna estrella!" pic.twitter.com/6c8VNov7nO

— Ben Norton (@BenjaminNorton) [July 20, 2021](#)

Ortega was also referencing a popular Sandinista song called [Soberanía](#) (Sovereignty), which went viral in Nicaragua this July, and was [performed on stage](#) at the celebration. The tune has become a unifying anthem for the Sandinista Front's 2021 electoral campaign. Its lyrics read as follows:

Sovereignty in my land is written in large letters

And not in ink but rather in blood, throughout history

...

Here we do not want foreign interference

It will never be the same when a Nicaraguan speaks compared to someone outside

Outside, outside they can say what they want

But if you are here in Nicaraguan land, respect my flag

The blue and white flag, which does not have a star

...

Here all countries have their ambassadors

But some of those those men do not respect diplomacy

And there is one, with his arrogance, who makes his way in the White House

And if he wants to speak, he should abandon his position

And he will see how short his time on this Earth lasts

I am not speaking about war, it is only a demand

That he can speak his BS, but outside the country

Outside, outside they can say what they want

But if you are here in Nicaraguan land, respect my flag

The blue and white flag, which does not have a star

For which Sandino raised up the Red and Black [flag]

Nicaraguan VP: Poverty is a 'crime against humanity' imposed by imperialism

In her speech at the 42nd anniversary event, Vice President Rosario Murillo also strongly condemned “the most brutal aggressions of North American imperialism” and the “diabolical imperialist threat.”

Murillo also put an emphasis on the need to “continue fighting against poverty, that imperialist imposition that has been used to dominate, divide, diminish.”

The Vice President declared, “We fight against poverty, which is hatred, which is a crime against humanity, and we fight so that its promoters stop those hatreds that they impose with methods that are considered novel or unconventional, but we refuse to refer to them as ‘soft’ or ‘color [revolutions],’ because nothing is light or easygoing or colorful in the shameless and dark minds in the dens where the colonialists and imperialists of the planet plot their crimes.”

This July, the Sandinista Front launched a new five-year [National Plan to Fight Against Poverty](#), especially dedicated to further developing the country and raising living standards for working-class people.

William Grigsby, a prominent Nicaraguan radio host whose daily [program Sin Fronteras](#) (Without Borders) is influential within the Sandinista movement, reflected on Murillo’s speech, emphasizing that the vice president referred to poverty as a “crime against humanity.”

“To me, this is one of the most powerful things that Rosario said,” Grigsby commented. “Poverty is an imperialist imposition. It is the maximum expression of capitalism. Poverty is an imposition; it is not something that we are because we want to be, or because we are stupid, as some people say. No brother, they have imposed it on us, creating the rules to impoverish us, to make us poor, and to live with that terrible scourge that is poverty

Grigsby emphasized the country’s contrast with Haiti: “It is a nation that has so much wealth. But they are pillaging it. The copper, the other minerals, it is being stolen, by the Canadians, the yanquis, the French, and they keep plundering it, in the north of Haiti. They are the owners. They even own the police.”

Grigsby added, “It is the same that has been done against us, that has been against the Salvadoreans, the Hondurans, the Mexicans, any country. They have pillaged these countries and imposed the crime against humanity they call poverty.”

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