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FEATURED Q&A

What Will Sunday's Election Mean for Nicaraguans?



Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega is seeking a fourth consecutive term in Sunday's election. His government has imprisoned or forced into exile virtually every candidate who could pose a serious challenge to him. // File Photo: Nicaraguan Government.

Q Nicaragua will hold its presidential elections on Sunday. The vote has been widely denounced as rigged as the government of President Daniel Ortega, who is seeking a fourth consecutive term, in recent months has imprisoned or pushed into exile virtually anyone who could mount a serious challenge against him. What will Ortega's expected victory mean for Nicaraguans in the coming years, and how will the country be affected? How likely is the international community to respond with increased political and financial pressure on the Ortega administration following the elections? What are the prospects for social unrest of the magnitude of the 2018 protests in Nicaragua?

A Lucía Pineda Ubau, journalist at 100% Noticias in Nicaragua and winner of the International Women's Media Foundation 2019 Courage in Journalism Award: "Every day that Daniel Ortega and Rosario Murillo are in power, they hurt the people of Nicaragua. Without freedom there is no democracy. They intend to continue with the Cuban model, imprisoning all of Nicaragua. Without freedom, there can be no generation of jobs; with dictatorship, businesses close and people are forced into exile, not only because of repression but also due to economic reasons. With Ortega and Murillo, there is no future for Nicaragua; rather they regressed by rejecting the path of democracy. They bet on repression to sustain power. They won't consider leaving power because it would mean jail for them. Ortega announced a dialogue, but it will be yet another farce. He continues to breach the agreement that came out of the second national dialogue in Nicaragua and has even

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TODAY'S NEWS

ECONOMIC

Brazil Holds Long-Awaited 5G Spectrum Auction

Following several delays, Brazil held its auction for the rollout of the country's 5G network, bringing pledges for more than \$5 billion in investment.

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BUSINESS

Argentina's Ualá Buying Mexican Bank ABC Capital

Argentine financial technology company Ualá announced that it agreed to buy ABC Capital, a move that Ualá said will help it speed up its plans for expansion and growth in Mexico.

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POLITICAL

Peru's Congress OKs Moderate-Left Cabinet

Peru's Congress approved President Pedro Castillo's moderate-left cabinet, which is led by Prime Minister Mirtha Vásquez. A month ago, Castillo sacked his original, far-left prime minister, Guido Bellido.

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Vásquez // File Photo: Peruvian Government.

POLITICAL NEWS

Lawmakers Approve Peru's Moderate-Led Cabinet

Peru's Congress on Thursday confirmed President Pedro Castillo's cabinet, a month after Castillo dismissed controversial Prime Minister Guido Bellido and replaced him with moderate leftist Mirtha Vásquez, Bloomberg News reported. Lawmakers approved the Vásquez-led cabinet in a vote of 68-56, with one abstention. In a speech after the vote, Vásquez said the "leftist" cabinet is committed to transforming the country. Many of Castillo's supporters opposed the president's nomination of Vásquez, who is not a member of Castillo's Marxist-Leninist Perú Libre party. Several Perú Libre members, including Bellido, a member of Congress, voted to reject the cabinet, Reuters reported. "The new cabinet is more broadly based, including not only Prime Minister Vásquez, an environmentalist from a small leftist party and a diplomatic and disciplined former Congress speaker, but also moderates at energy and mining and at production," Cynthia McClintock, professor of political science and international affairs at The George Washington University, told the Advisor in a [Q&A](#) published Oct. 13. Before the vote in Congress on Thursday, Castillo swore in a new public safety minister, Avelino Guillén, a former prosecutor in the case of ex-President Alberto Fujimori, who is currently imprisoned after being convicted of human rights violations, Reuters reported.

Deforestation Has Grown in Colombia Since 2016: Report

Deforestation has increased in Colombia since the demobilization of the country's largest guerrilla group following its 2016 peace deal with the government, according to a report published Thursday by the International Crisis Group, the Associated Press reported. Ac-

ording to the study, cattle ranchers, loggers, miners, subsistence farmers and criminal groups have moved into areas that the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, guerrillas previously controlled. "The FARC imposed restrictions on logging in areas under their control because they needed the forest cover to move their troops and build camps without being noticed from the air," said Bram Ebus, the report's author. But after the FARC's withdrawal, "the state did not show up with law enforcement or development projects," Ebus said. "So other armed groups and criminal organizations filled the void left by the FARC and started to incentivize deforestation to expand their illicit economies," he added. In an interview with the Financial Times in Glasgow, where the U.N. COP26 climate conference is ongoing, Colombian President Iván Duque on Thursday slammed cocaine users who preach environmentalism while consuming a drug whose production he said is one of the biggest causes of deforestation in the Amazon. "In order to produce one hectare of coca, almost two hectares of tropical jungle are destroyed in Colombia," Duque said.

ECONOMIC NEWS

Brazil Holds Long-Awaited 5G Spectrum Auction

Brazil held its long-awaited auction for the rollout of the country's 5G network on Thursday, bringing pledges for more than 30 billion reais (more than \$5 billion) in investment, the Associated Press reported. The government expects the tender, which is still ongoing today, to yield as much as 50 billion reais. Among the seven companies that made bids on the first day were mobile operators such as Claro, Tim and Telefônica. Claro, owned by Mexican billionaire Carlos Slim's América Móvil, spent the most, 1.63 billion reais for several batches, including the B1 batch of 3.5 GHz spectrum, for which it paid 338 million reais, and the 2.3 GHz E3 batch, which it won with a pledge of 750

NEWS BRIEFS

Honduran Presidential Candidate Arrested on Laundering Charges

Honduran authorities on Thursday arrested independent presidential candidate Santos Rodríguez Orellana on money laundering charges, an accusation his lawyer said he would deny in court, the Associated Press reported. Rodríguez Orellana, of the Dignity and Hope Movement, was not considered a leading contender ahead of the Nov. 28 election. A former army captain, Rodríguez Orellana was the first public figure to accuse current President Juan Orlando Hernández's brother of ties to drug trafficking, after which Rodríguez Orellana was discharged from the military in 2016. Hernández's brother, Tony, was later sentenced to life in prison in the United States on drug trafficking charges.

Brazil Showing New Commitment to End Deforestation: Borrell

The government of Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro is showing a new commitment to put an end to deforestation in the Amazon, the European Union's foreign policy chief, Josep Borrell, said Thursday after briefly meeting with Bolsonaro during a visit to the South American country, Reuters reported. Borrell also met with Brazil's environment and foreign ministers.

Brazil Performance Helps Drive Rise in Profit at Portugal's EDP

EDP-Energias de Portugal, the country's largest utility, on Thursday posted a 21 percent rise in nine-month net profit, which it said was driven in part by strong performance in Brazil, Reuters reported. The Energias do Brasil unit recently posted a 67 percent rise in net profit, riding on the economic recovery from the pandemic and an increase in its customer base, according to the report.

million reais, Reuters reported. The tender had been delayed several times over differences as to whether Chinese telecom giant Huawei Technologies should be allowed to participate in the auction. The United States was reportedly pressing Brazil's government to ban its involvement over security concerns, Reuters reported. Huawei has rejected U.S. allegations that the Chinese government can use its network equipment for spying purposes. The company did not participate in the 5G auction on Thursday, but experts and legislators said it might enter the market later, the AP reported. "The innovative services provided through the 5G networks will contribute to increasing the efficiency of various activities, enabling the digital transformation of the Brazilian economy and benefiting the entire society," Artur Coimbra de Oliveira, secretary of telecommunications in Brazil's Ministry of Communications, told the Advisor in a [Q&A](#) published June 21.

BUSINESS NEWS

Argentina's Ualá Buying Mexican Bank ABC Capital

Argentina-based financial technology company Ualá announced Wednesday that it has agreed to buy Mexican bank ABC Capital, Reuters reported. The move will allow Ualá to speed up its plans for expansion and growth in Mexico, the wire service reported. Ualá said the deal's closing is subject to government approval. Ualá is planning to bring in some \$150 million in investments over the next year and a half. "Our commitment to financial inclusion in Mexico is absolute. We come to revolutionize the market with more technology, access and transparency," said Ualá's founder and chief executive officer, Pierpaolo Barbieri. "Once we obtain the corresponding authorizations, the incorporation of ABC Capital to our group will allow us to offer better financial services to all Mexicans. This great step will accelerate our investment and growth in this beautiful country."

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imprisoned those he spoke with on that occasion. Ortega means death, destruction, unemployment and jail for Nicaraguans. He will continue to harm the country by forcibly staying in power. The least the international community can do is ignore the upcoming elections, which Ortega and Murillo will win. It has been a failed, false, totally illegitimate process from its inception. It is unacceptable that the regime intends to sell a false, flawed electoral process that is staged like a circus as a democratic act. It imprisons opponents and presidential candidates who challenged Ortega's power. It persecutes the independent press and continues to confiscate the media. It imprisons journalists, human rights defenders, political analysts, businesspeople, students and peasants with the aim of continuing to silence society in Nicaragua and consolidate its monarchy, its dynasty—his tyranny. Right now, it seems impossible to carry out a large demonstration and civic uprising similar to that those of April 2018 because the regime maintains a police and terror state. The current discontent is higher than in 2018. It has reached its own Sandinista bases and public employees. I am a woman of faith, and I believe that at any moment this dictatorship will end. God will perform the miracle of Nicaragua's freedom."

A **John F. Maisto, member of the Advisor board and former U.S. ambassador to Nicaragua:** "2021 began with slight political hope for Nicaragua. The November presidential election would be the opportunity, with opposition participation, for Nicaraguans to peacefully select leadership and address what produced the 2018 violence, as the Ortega regime preached. Month by month, however, hope faded to farce and tragedy as it became clear that Ortega had no such outcome in mind. Political prisoners continued in jail, opposition candidates were arrested, and political mobilization was suppressed. Police shut down much of the

media. Fascist-crafted legislation calling all opposition treason and invoking 'sovereignty' provided the 'legal' justification. The non-separation of powers deepened. The regional and international response, with the usual few exceptions, was condemnation

“After Sunday, sanctions from abroad on regime figures will continue and expand, but they will fail to persuade.”

— John F. Maisto

of Ortega. After Sunday, sanctions from abroad on regime figures will continue and expand, but they will fail to persuade. The economic and financial sanctions that are likely to come will damage the economy of the second-poorest country in the Americas, generating more poverty, migration and problems for the region, and—with Russian meddling—for the United States. Any social unrest will encounter efficient suppression. Post-November may see a new Ortega strategy to respond to international pressure that offers negotiation with political leaders freed from jail and international participation à la Nicolás Maduro. If that happens, the international community should engage to deal with poverty, migration and human rights issues, along with democratic governance. Without such initiatives that Nicaraguans generate with U.S. and international assistance, prospects for Nicaragua will remain bleak."

A **Jennie Lincoln, senior advisor for Latin America and the Caribbean at The Carter Center:** "Democracy is dead in Nicaragua. Its slow death began earlier but took a giant leap at the brutal response of the Ortega-Murillo regime to the civic protests that erupted in April 2018. Cross-generational, peaceful protests, with demonstrators

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waving blue and white Nicaraguan flags, began as a response to surprise changes in the social security structure. However, they resulted in violent repression, deaths and the imprisonment of citizens expressing opposing views to the government's actions. An attempt at a national reconciliation dialogue in May 2018 resulted in Ortega's abrupt departure from the negotiating table and a turn toward the trenches with a repressive response. Draconian laws were passed in 2020 that were used to charge political opposition and business leaders—including opposition pre-presidential candidates—with sedition, terrorism, money laundering and/or cybercrimes, resulting in detention, house arrest and imprisonment. The political opposition, except for small parties that are aligned with the regime, was systematically eliminated from electoral competition in this Sunday's elections. Independent journalists have been imprisoned or driven into exile. No credible conditions exist for democratic elections in Nicaragua, with more than 150 political prisoners, no freedom of expression, no citizen security for mobilization, no respect for human rights and no compliance with international standards for electoral administration. The regime may claim victory on Sunday, but the victory will be

shallow for the almost 70 percent of people who expressed opposition to the regime in a recent CID Gallup poll. Nicaragua will face condemnation in the international community and increased calls for economic

“No credible conditions exist for democratic elections in Nicaragua...”

—Jennie Lincoln

sanctions to pressure the Ortega-Murillo regime to reverse its return to dictatorship that Nicaraguans had previously chosen to reject. Nicaraguans know they must be the ones to recover their democracy. The international community should step up to help.”

[Editor's note: The Advisor made repeated requests for a commentary for this issue from Nicaragua's ambassador to the United States, Francisco Campbell, but received no response.]

The Advisor welcomes comments on its Q&A section. Readers can write editor Gene Kuleta at gkuleta@thedialogue.org.

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Erik Brand

Publisher
ebrand@thedialogue.org

Gene Kuleta

Editor
gkuleta@thedialogue.org

Anastasia Chacón González

Reporter & Associate Editor
achacon@thedialogue.org

Leticia Chacón

Reporter
lchacon@thedialogue.org



Michael Shifter, President

Rebecca Bill Chavez, Nonresident Senior Fellow

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Subscription inquiries are welcomed at ebrand@thedialogue.org

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Advisor Video

Technology's Role in Latin America's Economic Recovery

A Latin America Advisor interview with Karim Lesina, Chief External Affairs Officer at Millicom



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