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FEATURED Q&A

Should There Be More International Focus on Nicaragua?

A report last month by U.N. experts says crackdown on dissent under the government of Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega constitutes crimes against humanity. // File Photo: Ecuadorean Government CC BY-SA 2.0.

Q A September report by U.N.-appointed experts says Nicaragua's crackdown on dissent amounts to crimes against humanity, citing enforced disappearances, torture and arbitrary detention as part of a systematic campaign against political opponents. The findings come as former OAS Secretary General Luis Almagro has called for stronger international action over Nicaragua's deteriorating human rights situation. What do the latest U.N. findings say about how the situation in Nicaragua has changed since massive protests in 2018? How much scope is there for foreign governments or regional organizations to intervene, and what forms could such an intervention realistically take? Is the international community doing enough to protect those facing repression in Nicaragua, or are there additional diplomatic, economic or legal measures that could have an impact?

A Manuel Orozco, director of the Migration, Remittances and Development Program at the Inter-American Dialogue: "The U.N. report's findings confirm what has already been highlighted and reported by many groups, organizations and experts: The radicalization of Nicaragua's dictatorship is causing severe damage to Nicaraguan society—present and future. It is a situation that goes beyond political imprisonment, because its radical authoritarianism encompasses all aspects of social control and subjugation of Nicaragua, under a context of state capture. Nicaragua's social and economic indicators are at 2017 levels, be it on education, income, civil and political rights or even environmental conditions. The right to exist is constrained by the criminalization of democracy. Moreover, the dictators are a regional

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TODAY'S NEWS

POLITICAL

Bolivian Police Arrest Attorney General After U.S. Revokes Visa

Bolivia's attorney general, Roger Mariaca, was arrested Wednesday, just days after the United States revoked his visa over alleged links to drug trafficking. Mariaca denies wrongdoing.

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ECONOMIC

Energy Executives Voice Concerns Over Venezuela Power Problems

Energy executives expressed concerns about the lack of progress on fixing Venezuela's power problems.

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POLITICAL

Five Killed in Coordinated Attacks in Guatemala

Coordinated armed attacks left five people dead and three wounded in Guatemala, said President Bernardo Arévalo.

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Arévalo // File Photo: Guatemalan Government.

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POLITICAL NEWS

Bolivian Police Arrest Att'y General After U.S. Revokes Visa

Bolivian police on Wednesday arrested the country's attorney general, Roger Mariaca, a move that came two days after the U.S. State Department revoked his U.S. visa over alleged links to drug trafficking, Agence France-Presse reported. "The arrest of prosecutor Mariaca has been confirmed," an unnamed source at Bolivia's Ministry of Government told the wire service. Police also arrested Santa Cruz head prosecutor Alberto Zeballos, who was also on the State Department's list of more than two dozen current and former Latin American officials from Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru who were barred from entering the United States over alleged links to drug trafficking, corruption or other malfeasance. Mariaca, who was elected to a six year term in 2024 during the government of then-President Luis Arce, "abused his public positions by soliciting and accepting bribes to facilitate narcotrafficking and helped violent criminals evade justice," State Department spokesman Tommy Pigott alleged Monday. Mariaca has denied wrongdoing and said revocation of his U.S. visa was an act of "interference" because of his investigations.

ECONOMIC NEWS

Executives Eye Power Sector Problems in Venezuela

Energy executives meeting in Caracas this week for the first major industry conference since the U.S. government began its $100 billion push to rebuild Venezuela's oil sector voiced concern over how little progress has been made on the country's chronic power problems, Reuters reported Wednesday. With an electricity shortfall exceeding 1,500 megawatts, blackouts have worsened as demand rebounds, leaving households and businesses without power for hours daily. A January rule requiring new energy ventures to supply their own electricity hasn't solved the underlying problem, several executives said, arguing that expansion plans will stall unless authorities move faster to rebuild grid capacity. Just 40 percent of Venezuela's roughly 32,800 megawatts of installed generating capacity is currently available, said Sandra Conde of the Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean, who estimated repairing and automating the system would cost $5 billion, according to Reuters. Hunt Energy Holdings chief Hunter Hunt admitted he had no easy answer but pointed out that Venezuela's peak demand, around 16,000 megawatts, isn't beyond reach with better coordination. Electricity Minister Rolando Alcalá said the government aims to add 1,300 megawatts by year's end, including 600 from the Centro plant and 500 for the hard-hit Zulia region, according to EFE.

BUSINESS NEWS

Panel Recommends Restarting Panama Mine to Fund Closure

Panama should pursue formal negotiations with First Quantum Minerals to establish terms for potentially restarting the Cobre Panamá mine, one of the world's largest open-pit copper deposits, a government commission said Wednesday, according to Reuters. Under the proposed framework, a new agreement would settle pending international arbitration claims and permit operations structured so the mine itself funds its eventual "orderly closure," rather than leaving that cost to the state. Decommissioning a site of Cobre Panamá's magnitude isn't something that happens quickly, the panel's report said, estimating the process would span decades and demand continuous environmental monitoring, with the state facing significant fiscal exposure if the mine lacks the means to pay for its own shutdown. Panama's

NEWS BRIEFS

France's TotalEnergies to Invest $10 Bn in Argentina

French energy giant TotalEnergies will invest $10 billion in Argentina, CEO Patrick Pouyanne announced Thursday at a conference in Paris, Reuters reported. The funds will be oriented to support a new offshore project in Tierra del Fuego and expand gas output in Neuquén, with Pouyanne targeting production of 16 million cubic meters daily. Pouyanne said $4 billion to $5 billion of the total is expected within the next decade.

Five Killed in Coordinated Attacks Amid Gang Rivalry in Guatemala

Guatemalan President Bernardo Arévalo said Wednesday that coordinated armed attacks, that killed five people and wounded three the previous day, reflected "atypical violence" by criminal groups meant to spread fear, EFE reported. Interior Minister Marco Antonio Villeda said six shootings struck Guatemala City and nearby Villa Nueva and Amatitlán, some aimed at scattering security forces, others tied to turf battles between Barrio 18 and MS-13. Authorities vowed a stronger security response.

Nubank Denies it's Pursuing a Transaction With Britain's Monzo

Brazil-based Nubank said Wednesday that it is not pursuing a transaction with British digital bank Monzo, Reuters reported. Earlier media reports had said Nubank was in the early stages of talks to acquire Monzo. In a securities filing, Nubank said it regularly reviews investments and acquisitions along with other opportunities that could foster growth, Reuters reported. The Brazilian digital lender said it is focused on its strategic priorities of "deepening its position in Brazil, scaling up its businesses in Mexico and Colombia and building its presence in the United States."

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finance ministry said separately that the mine remains under state-ordered preservation with no active extraction, and that an independent, state-commissioned audit found compliance on 370 environmental commitments ranging from 87.73 to 98.92 percent across three measurements, with four non-conformities flagged. First Quantum said it would engage "constructively and in good faith" to establish a framework aligned with Panama's constitution, Reuters reported. Its shares fell as much as 31 percent in Toronto before paring losses to close down 15 percent.

PXP, OKTO Partner on Payments Access in Latin America

Payments platform PXP announced a partnership on Wednesday with OKTO Payments that will give its merchant network access to domestic transfer systems and treasury services throughout Latin America, the companies said in a statement. OKTO's infrastructure links directly into national payment networks in Brazil, Mexico, Colombia, Chile, Peru, Argentina and other markets across the region. PXP, which handles more than 35 billion euros ($39 billion) in annual transaction volume through a single-integration model built around in-house acquiring and alternative payment options, said the tie-up spares merchants from having to navigate each country's separate regulatory and banking requirements on their own. OKTO already routes instant payments for more than 40 clients spanning e-commerce, online gaming, foreign exchange trading and digital content, with throughput exceeding 17 billion euros a year across all those verticals combined. "Latin America is a region with multiple challenges. Every market has its own regulator, its own banking system, its own settlement logic, and its own consumer behavior," said André Boesing, OKTO's general manager for South Latin America. PXP chief executive Kamran Hedjri said the arrangement would give merchants a single gateway to local payment methods, instant transfers and liquidity tools built directly into each market's infrastructure.

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threat: Their modus operandi is unpredictable but harmful. They have formed military alliances with Russia, facilitated migration from third countries, harbored criminals, invaded neighboring countries in attempts to assassinate dissidents, and may act on other forms of aggression at any time in the immediate future. The scope for foreign governments to act is wide and starts with what OAS Secretary-General Albert Ramdin calls 'collective unilateralism': introducing a wide range of financial, political and economic pressures on a regime that threatens the region. The fundamental issue is how to provide the right incentives to governments, so they act with the motivation to pressure for a reversal of this radicalization. These incentives include input from the civic movements that show they are prepared as a democratic counterpart. That coordinated international pressure should be symmetrical and proportional to what is required to reverse the radicalization and have a timeline that is tied to a roadmap for a political transition. Nicaragua's radicalization can be epidemic because impunity has become attractive to political officials in other countries that don't want to be held accountable or because the mass exodus of migration can motivate other citizens to migrate when the rule of law is broken or breaking down. Thus political pressure may prevent a widespread situation."

Katherine Hoyt, retired co-director of the Alliance for Global Justice/Nicaragua Network: "Why has the Ortega-Murillo government felt obliged to react so strongly against the opposition? The examples of U.S.-supported right-wing coups and attempted coups, military actions, destabilization efforts and election interference in Nicaragua and in the region are too numerous to list here, but we all know them. We have seen election interference just in the last two years in Honduras, Argentina, Colombia and Brazil. What a tragedy that what we don't allow in our own country's elections—foreign interference—we demand the right to exercise in other countries. And the even greater tragedy is that governments that prioritize the economic and social human rights listed in Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and provide their citizens with free health care, free education, food self-sufficiency, macroeconomic stability and renewable energy as Nicaragua's has done, see resorting to restrictions in civil and political rights as their only route to avoid overthrow. With the massive support that USAID and the National Endowment for Democracy gave to opposition groups, NGOs and media outlets in Nicaragua, the violent coup attempt of 2018 could have succeeded. Salvador Allende rejected arming his supporters in Chile in 1973; Daniel Ortega did not reject that option in 2018. But stability returned and, among many other advances, five new hospitals were built in Nicaragua after 2018 that would not have been built by a coup government. What a world it would be if the Earth's citizens could enjoy all of their human rights and not have to sacrifice some for others."

Juan Sebastián Chamorro, former Nicaraguan presidential candidate and political prisoner: "The most important lesson from the U.N. findings is that Nicaragua's repression has not diminished since the massive protests of 2018 but in fact has changed and evolved. In 2018, the regime responded to mass mobilization with lethal force in the streets. Today, repression is more systematic, institutionalized and specially designed to prevent any protest. The state has dismantled independent institutions, criminalized dissent, imprisoned political opponents, forced tens of thousands into exile, stripped opponents of nationality and property and increasingly extended surveillance and intimidation beyond Nicaragua's borders. The U.N. findings on enforced disappearances, torture and deaths in custody demonstrate that these are not isolated

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abuses but rather components of a broader system of repression, and the reports are going to be crucial in future investigations of crimes against humanity. From the opposition's perspective, we have stressed the importance of international coordination, especially in light of the upcoming meeting at the OAS. The OAS and IACHR can continue documenting abuses, protecting victims and pursuing precautionary and provisional measures. Meanwhile, governments can impose targeted sanctions on officials and economic actors directly involved in repression, while conditioning access to international financing and other benefits on measurable human-rights improvements. International jurisdictions should also preserve evidence and examine opportunities for accountability. The international community has established important mechanisms, but the continuing abuses show a gap between documentation and consequences. It is crucial that the regime is accountable for abuses and that their actions have consequences. We need greater protection for Nicaraguans in exile, stronger coordination among democratic governments, continued diplomatic isolation of those responsible and preservation of evidence for future accountability could increase the costs of repression while protecting those still at risk."

Leonardo Alvarado, assistant professor in the Department of Political Science at Fort Lewis College: "The report documents the government's use of enforced disappearances as a systematic tool of repression since 2018, noting that these disappearances have become increasingly prolonged and strategic since 2023. The reported practices of arbitrary detention, enforced disappearances, torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment constitute crimes against humanity that the international community must condemn and address through coordinated action in accordance with international law. This includes pressing Nicaragua to implement the report's recommendations, which include disclosing the fate and whereabouts of people currently missing, the immediate and unconditional release of all people deprived of liberty on political grounds, and impartial, independent and thorough investigations into allegations of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, including deaths in custody. Important recommendations to other states include exercising universal jurisdiction over these crimes, emergency visas and other protection measures for at-risk relatives and close associates of victims of enforced disappearance or death in custody, adopting and rigorously enforcing sanctions against officials and institutions responsible for these crimes, and coordinating regional and international joint measures that uphold respect for human rights and the rule of law. While the United States, the European Union and others have imposed sanctions, the international community can strengthen its impact through coordinated multilateral action that reinforces—rather than undermines—international law, human rights institutions and international criminal justice mechanisms."

[Editor's note: The Advisor requested a commentary for this issue from Nicaragua's embassy in Washington but received no response.]

The Advisor welcomes comments on its Q&A section. Readers can write editor Gene Kuleta.

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