

OAS Steps Up Pressure on Ortega's Government in Nicaragua

By Wilfredo Miranda Aburto / [Special Correspondent for Confidencial](#)

Havana Times, July 1, 2019

75-day period to find a political solution, or face possible sanctions in the OAS



Valdrack Jaentschke and Luis Almagro greet each other in the family photo in Medellin, Colombia on June 27th. Photo: EFE

Twenty Foreign Ministers demand the return to Nicaragua of the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights (IACHR)

HAVANA TIMES – With the approval of the resolution entitled “The Situation in Nicaragua” on June 28th, the General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS), meeting in Medellin, Colombia, steps up the pressure on the Ortega-Murillo government.

If in 75 days the regime has not resolved the sociopolitical crisis through negotiations, releasing all political prisoners, and facilitating the return of international human rights organizations, as well as restoring the freedom of the press and mobilization, and an electoral reform that leads to early elections, the OAS Democratic Charter could be applied to the government. That would mean the invocation of Article 21 and the possible application of sanctions, the most

extreme being the expulsion from the Inter-American organization, which requires 24 votes.

The resolution was promoted by Canada, which heads the Working Group for Nicaragua, and endorsed by six other countries. After discussion in the OAS General Assembly, it managed to obtain more than the 18 votes necessary for its approval (20 in favor, 5 against and 8 abstentions).

Votes in favor: Argentina, Brazil, Bahamas, Colombia, Panama, Costa Rica, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Paraguay, Ecuador, Peru, Canada, Jamaica, Mexico, El Salvador, Saint Lucia, United States, Chile and Venezuela.

Voting against were Bolivia, Nicaragua, Surinam, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Saint Kitts and Nevis. The eight abstentions were Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Guatemala, Dominican Republic and Trinidad and Tobago.

“The approval was a success,” said Carlos Trujillo, United States Ambassador to the OAS. “The resolution was approved with 20 votes, applying Article 20. Now we are going to form a Commission, and we are going to start working to try to return democracy to Nicaragua. The government has 75 days or less to inform the Permanent Council, and at that time a high-level meeting of foreign ministers will be held to analyze whether Nicaragua merits application of article 21 for expulsion,” added the United States diplomat, one of the main promoters of this resolution rejected by the Ortega-Murillo government.

The resolution approved instructs the Permanent Council of the OAS in its point number 5 to appoint a commission so that, within the framework of Article 20 of the Democratic Charter, “it may carry out diplomatic efforts at the highest level to seek a peaceful and effective solution to the political and social crisis in Nicaragua, and to submit a report within a maximum period of 75 days.”

Initially, the resolution provided Ortega with a term of 90 days. That time frame was rejected by the Civic Alliance, the Blue and White National Unity, political prisoners and the general public, considering that it provided more time and political oxygen to the dictatorship. The critics agreed that the regime had already failed to meet the June 18th deadline to comply with the agreements already signed in Managua at the negotiating table.

However, Ambassador Trujillo argued that the June 18th deadline was agreed upon in Managua, at the dialogue table, not by the foreign ministers, who are the highest authority of the OAS.

“It’s not a new term, because we never gave it one. If the government does not comply, a meeting will be convened invoking Article 21 of the Democratic Charter,” says Trujillo. The ambassador also went out of his way to deal with the criticism of

the 75-days deadline, also considered too long by the opponents of the Ortega government.

“The time was reduced because a strong report is needed. As summer arrives it becomes very difficult that the foreign ministers, plus all the people who have to participate, to come out with a report in 20 or 30 days. This should be a report that can go from article 20 to 21. It was analyzed that this was the minimum time they needed to be able to advance on the subject,” expressed Trujillo.

Human rights defender Bianca Jagger, lobbied diplomats in Medellin asking for the reduction of the deadline to the minimum possible. Jagger argued that “every day that passes, is another day in which Ortega represses.” In the end it was reduced by 15 days.

“Exhaust all avenues”

Although the resolution adopted recognizes “serious violations of human rights, freedom of expression and press in Nicaragua as of April 2018, and the lack of progress in electoral reforms to guarantee free, fair, transparent and legitimate elections, lead to an alteration of the constitutional order which seriously affects the democratic order in terms of Article 20 of the Inter-American Democratic Charter,” the OAS is giving a last chance to Ortega and Murillo.

Diplomatic sources told Confidential that before suspending the regime from the OAS they must “exhaust all avenues” contemplated in Article 20 of the Democratic Charter. “There are still steps to exhaust,” they said, explaining that this stage is a prelude to the definitive suspension, and an opportunity for the Sandinista government to negotiate a way out of the crisis.

This past week, the Secretary General of the OAS, Luis Almagro, made some statements that caused controversy. He said that with the release of political prisoners, the Ortega-Murillo regime shows signs of “progress.” These statements are also interpreted by some as a strategy to be tested before invoking Article 21.

The Permanent Representative of Brazil to the Organization of American States (OAS), Fernando Simas Magalhaes, harshly criticized the OAS in its role in the Nicaraguan crisis. The diplomat considered the vote of the resolution as historic, although he considers it a little late.

“It is above all a total lack of respect for the dozens of innocent victims, disrespect for the suffering of the people of Nicaragua. Our organization has discussed the serious crisis in Nicaragua since the last General Assembly, when the death toll was already counted by the hundreds,” regretted Simas Magalhaes. “Since then, we have held more than ten sessions of the Permanent Council to discuss a crisis which demonstrates without a doubt, not only the serious violations of human rights, but also the alteration of Nicaragua’s constitutional and democratic order.”

More pressure from the US and the reaction of the representative of Nicaragua

“This is the first time that 20 foreign ministers are making a demand to Nicaragua, and with only five against, that they have to let the human rights commission return. They have to start cooperating in their commitments to democracy and human rights,” said the US Ambassador.

After the resolution was approved, the envoy of the Ortega government to Medellin, Valdrack Jaentschke, got up and left the plenary annoyed. However, before leaving he protested following the script written at the El Carmen presidential bunker in Managua: “This is again another exercise of interference by a group of countries that forced this vote throughout this day. Interference in the internal affairs of Nicaragua, which is nothing more than the modern reissue of what the people of Nicaragua have had to face throughout our history.”

The points of the resolution

-To reiterate the concern of the inter-American community for the deterioration of democratic institutions and human rights in Nicaragua and its support for a peaceful solution to the political crisis that has been affecting the country for more than a year.

-To urge the resumption of effective negotiation and good faith between the Government of Nicaragua and the Civic Alliance for Justice and Democracy and full compliance with the agreements reached.

-To insist on the need for the Government of Nicaragua to allow the entry of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and its mechanisms, as well as other international human rights mechanisms.

-To reiterate that the serious violations of human rights, freedom of expression and press in Nicaragua as of April 2018, and the lack of progress in electoral reforms to guarantee free, fair, transparent and legitimate elections, constitute evidence of an alteration of the constitutional regime that seriously impairs the democratic order, in the terms of Article 20 of the Inter-American Charter.

-To instruct the Permanent Council to appoint a commission so that, within the framework of Article 20 of the Inter-American Democratic Charter, it may carry out diplomatic efforts at the highest level to seek a peaceful and effective solution to the political and social crisis in Nicaragua and to submit a report within a maximum of 75 days.

-To instruct the Permanent Council to, upon receipt of the report of the commission, adopt the necessary measures, including, if necessary, the convocation for an extraordinary session of the General Assembly.

