

On Renewed Citizen Pressure in Nicaragua: Better Late Than Never

Havana Times, May 24, 2019



One of Managua's usually busy streets during the general strike on May 23, 2019.
Photo: Carlos Herrera / Confidential

It is about giving the political battle on all fronts and intensifying the pressure. The national strike is a necessary and timely action.

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HAVANA TIMES – Recent events seem to indicate that we are entering into a new stage. The stalemate was broken, the political initiative is resumed and Ortega's strategy begins to show fissures. It is time to focus on interpreting the moment, make the right decisions and, above all, to hold the rudder firmly.

Let us recapitulate on the events:

1-The murder of Eddy Montes and the beating of political prisoners perpetrated by the minions of the regime rekindle the spirits of the population and lit up the bulbs of the international community.

2- The Blue and White Unity movement, which in its latest statements had insisted on intensifying the pressure and in the withdrawal of the Civic Alliance from the negotiating table, issued a very strong statement in which it called for civil disobedience, exhorted a fiscal moratorium and in a clear and resounding manner urged the international community to adopt sanctions against the regime for violating the international legal framework on human rights.

3- For its part, the Civic Alliance, which resisted the pressures of the regime to demand the cessation of international sanctions, announced its withdrawal from the negotiating table with Ortega, and its willingness to return “only when they have released from prison the political prisoners in the reconciled list, without detracting from the definite liberation of all political prisoners by June 18.” In addition, it for a national strike and other civic actions. The business chambers made public their support for a national strike [which successfully took place on Thursday May 23rd].

4- On Tuesday May 21, the OAS Permanent Council, after several sessions on Nicaragua in which only debates had taken place, adopted a resolution in which it makes a series of demands to the Ortega Government. The release of political prisoners before June 18; the restoration of citizens’ rights and guarantees, including freedom of the press and the right to free movement; institutional reforms to ensure clean elections; safe return of political refugees abroad; guarantees for international human rights organizations to carry out their work, in particularly the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

5- The regime responded with a maneuver: releasing [to house arrest] a hundred hostages.

How can we interpret these events? And, what should be done?

Ortega has been complying punctually with the strategy he designed to stay in power. On the one hand, use the negotiating table to distract the international community, gain time, wear down the Civic Alliance and create contradictions with other opposition organizations, as well as to discourage or demoralize the population.

At the same time, he develops actions in the international field, campaigns in communication media, machinations with national and international allies, legislative and judicial maneuvers, while maintaining repression and the suspension of rights and freedoms, to the point of directly threatening members of the Civic Alliance. The situation could be defined as a “donkey tied up with a tiger on the loose.”

On other occasions I have said that for Ortega politics is the continuation of war by other means. Consequently, he only understands about correlation of forces, de facto actions, blackmails, sudden attacks and pressure. All his life he has been using this method of political action. We have to repay him with the same language.

With this background, the position of the Blue and White Unity movement and the apparent change of strategy of the Civic Alliance can represent a breaking point to crush the strategy that Ortega has so far successfully implemented and allow us to advance more firmly in the fight for freedom, justice and democracy.

It is then a matter of giving the political battle on all fronts and intensifying the pressures. Therefore, the national strike is a necessary and timely action. It is

true that with a single national strike Ortega will not be overthrown, but it is a step in the right direction.

First, because the Civic Alliance strengthens its negotiating position, by opening up to other battle scenarios. Second, because it shows the international community that Nicaraguan society is not paralyzed, and the fiction that the regime wants to project of a return to normality is dismantled.

Third, because it restores the possibility that the Civic Alliance regains part of the lost credibility and reestablishing links with other opposition organizations. Fourth, because it revives the spirit of struggle of the population.

Expand the fronts of battle, maintain the political initiative and deepen the weaknesses of the regime. Its political weakness. Its economic weakness. Its social weakness. Its international weakness. That is what it is all about.

It is also about firmness. Because in power relations, a threat that is not fulfilled is like shooting yourself. If the Civic Alliance announced that it was withdrawing from the table until the release of the prisoners, it must hold its own and resist the pressures, wherever they come from. A setback would encourage the regime and undermine the potential advances. And, regarding the strike, we must all support it thoroughly and unambiguously. And maintain the political initiative multiplying actions both internally and abroad.

It is time to unite wills, strengths and efforts in the fight for freedom, justice and democracy.

Better late than never.