

The United Nations Is Being Used by the U.S. in Its Propaganda War Against Nicaragua

Biased new report lends weight to U.S. regime-change operations targeting left-wing Sandinista government.

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While the United States pays little regard to the human rights of many of its own citizens, it manifests intense interest in those of countries that it regards as its enemies.

Nicaragua, designated by both Trump and Biden as a "strategic threat," is seen as one of those enemies. Of the countries selected for their own [annual human rights assessment](#) by the U.S. State Department, Nicaragua merited special attention in 2022, with a 43-page report compared with, for example, only a 36-page analysis of neighboring El Salvador, where 66,000 people have been subjected to mass arrests in the past year. This is part of a highly selective approach in which human rights violations by U.S. allies are [downplayed or ignored](#).

Image: Richard Falk [Source: [foxnews.com](#)]



Worse, the U.S. exerts extraordinary influence on international bodies to follow suit, producing their own reports in the same ilk. The Organization of American States (OAS), largely financed by Washington, will readily scrutinize the performance of left-wing

governments in Latin America at its bidding, while of course never threatening to monitor human rights in the U.S. itself. Perhaps more alarming, the United Nations human rights apparatus has been similarly instrumentalized to serve Washington's agenda, as former UN rapporteur **Richard Falk** has argued.

This was evident again in March when the UN Human Rights Council released a new report by a "group of human rights experts on Nicaragua."

The report [claimed](#) that **President Daniel Ortega's** government had "executed" 40 people, disregarding the context of violent opposition attacks using firearms. The report also claimed that the government ordered hospitals not to treat wounded demonstrators, when the then health minister had made clear that anyone injured should receive treatment. It goes on to detail a range of other alleged government human rights abuses, including torture, where the evidence is contested.

The aim of demonizing Nicaragua was apparent at the press conference to launch the report: One of the "experts," Jan-Michael Simon, a senior researcher at the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Crime, Security and Law in Germany, likened conditions in Nicaragua to those in Nazi Germany (the Sandinista government's actions are "exactly what the Nazi regime did").

Given that the group had not even visited the country, this was not only absurd but grossly irresponsible. Yet it enabled *The New York Times*, never slow to criticize the Sandinista government, [to come up with the headline](#) "Nicaragua's 'Nazis': Stunned Investigators Cite Hitler's Germany."

However it is the damaging content of the report itself that led the [Nicaraguan Solidarity Coalition](#) to launch a [petition](#) demanding that it be withdrawn, already co-signed by human rights experts **Alfred de Zayas** and **Professor Falk**.

The report's focus is on the violence in 2018, which Dan Kovalik has characterized [in his new book](#) as bringing Nicaragua "to the verge of civil war, with hundreds killed and many more injured." The group of experts was charged with examining "all alleged human rights violations and abuses committed in Nicaragua since April 2018" and they claim to have adopted a "victim-centered" approach to their task.

It is extraordinary, then, that the report focuses almost entirely on the human rights of the perpetrators of what became a violent coup attempt, rather than on the rights of the huge numbers of ordinary Nicaraguans who suffered the consequences of their violence.

It is as if the experts had produced a report focusing on, say, the attack on the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2020, or the recent attack on Brazil's presidential palace, and focused on the behavior of those repelling the attacks instead of on the injuries and mayhem caused by the attackers.

Image: Leonel Morales lying in a hospital bed. [Source: photo courtesy of Max Blumenthal]



Because it took this stance, the experts' 300-page report found no space for incidents such as the attempted murder of student leader Leonel Morales, who was [kidnapped, shot and left for dead](#) in a drainage ditch. Or the [burning down of Radio Ya](#), whose 21 workers only narrowly escaped death.

Or the sacking of the municipal depot in the city of Masaya, in which all the vehicles were destroyed and the workers so badly beaten or tortured that one [later had his arm amputated](#). Or [the attack on the police station](#) of Morrito, that left five dead and nine kidnapped and beaten.

Or countless other crimes by "protesters" whom the report describes as largely peaceful, despite the [gruesome scenes of torture and humiliation](#) they filmed and then posted on social media. It contains not a single reference to any of these victims, let alone quoting from testimony (as it does in the cases of alleged victims of government violence).

The Nicaraguan government refused to take part in this exercise, having participated in similar ones in the past and found that its evidence was largely ignored. It has produced [detailed evidence](#) to show the steps it took to facilitate access by one set of international investigators, and how its cooperation was then abused.

As a result of past experiences, it denied permission for the group to visit the country, so the experts were reliant on evidence collected remotely. In these circumstances, the group might have been expected to balance carefully the sources and material it used.

In practice the opposite happened: Its preferred sources were opposition media or NGOs, in most cases ones that had received U.S. "democracy promotion" (meaning "regime-change") funding in the years prior to the 2018 coup attempt, as Nan McCurdy has [previously described](#).

The experts themselves are opaque about how their work was done. Requests for the names of the other team members assembling the report were refused, a lack of transparency which inevitably leads to the suspicion that its researchers might well have been drawn from opposition-supporting "human rights" groups or think tanks.

The report's bias is obvious from the fact that it makes no reference at all to independent examinations of previous human rights reports, which have shown them to be unbalanced and to contain key omissions.

For example, I was part of a group who prepared the [the 2019 report *Dismissing the Truth*](#), which identified dozens of inaccuracies and omissions in a report on Nicaragua by Amnesty

International.

I also helped compile an open letter from the Alliance for Global Justice to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, about the errors in a previous “expert” report that it published.

I have shown the [bias and manipulation](#) in the work of Nicaragua’s so-called independent human rights groups, several of which are now based in Costa Rica. The new UN report uses all of these questioned or discredited sources, while ignoring the various detailed, published criticisms of them.

How does a report focused on events five years ago pretend to justify new sanctions on the Nicaraguan government?—by claiming that the government has been engaged “since April 2018 and up to the time of writing this report...[in] a widespread and systematic attack...against a part of the Nicaraguan population.”

Image: Anti-Ortega demonstrator brandishing gun. [Source: photo courtesy of Nan McCurdy]



In making this assertion, **the experts not only discount evidence of crimes by those arrested since 2018, but also ignore or downplay the many acts of clemency that took place**, culminating in a general, conditional amnesty in 2019 that covered even the organizers of fatal attacks on police stations. The strong implication is that abuses such as “extrajudicial killings” which it alleges—on highly questionable grounds—occurred in 2018, still take place now in a country which is entirely at peace.

The fundamental problem is that the expert group pretends that the opposition forces in 2018 were either unarmed or had only homemade weapons. It said that “acts of violence [were] perpetrated by some demonstrators in the context of the protests, including stone throwing, the use of homemade weapons—mainly ‘mortars,’ and some ‘contact bombs’ and Molotov bombs.”

They also “documented the use of conventional weapons in some cases.” These acts “allegedly” resulted in the deaths of 22 police officers and injuries to more than 400 more from gunfire.

Given that almost all these deaths and injuries were the result of firearm injuries, there is a very obvious disparity between the group’s assessment of the behavior of the opposition groups and what actually happened. If they had also taken into account the widespread kidnappings, torture, arson attacks, robberies and other crimes, they might have come closer to producing a report which reflected the real experience of Nicaraguans in 2018.

Instead, the UN report is clearly intended to be a whitewash of the violence which (as Kovalik says) brought the country “to the verge of civil war,” just as so-called “human rights” bodies were used to whitewash the violence of the “Contras” in the U.S.-directed war of the 1980s. The opposition explicitly aimed to overthrow the Nicaraguan government: At the start of the violence and during the [national dialogue](#) that began in May 2018, [opposition activists](#) and [their leaders](#) openly stated that their objective was the removal of President Daniel Ortega.

There is nothing surprising about the line taken by the new report, as a litany of official reports since 2018 have done the same. The danger of the UN’s latest attack on Nicaragua is that it comes at a time when Washington is clearly deliberating new sanctions.

Indeed, not failing to step up to the task, the group explicitly calls for additional sanctions in one of its recommendations. In doing so, it ignores the [UN Human Rights Council’s own assessments of sanctions issued without its authority](#) (known as “unilateral coercive measures”), which conclude that their legality is highly questionable.

Given that the “experts” who wrote this latest report are international lawyers, this is remarkably unprofessional. But it is even more extraordinary that the United Nations would publish such an unbalanced report attacking one of its own member countries, promoted in such a sensational manner. It could be tailor-made to give Washington the go-ahead to continue with the illegal measures against Nicaragua that it has already taken, and which it might now decide to strengthen still further.

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Featured image: Masked protesters backed by the CIA who were part of 2018 coup plot against Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega. [Source: [idcommunism.com](#)]

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