



Nicaragua will celebrate the 45th anniversary of the Revolution on 19th July 2024

1978-2024: 46 years of UK-Nicaragua solidarity

Annual Report 2023

A significant development during 2023 was the decision taken at the AGMs of NSCAG and NSC in July to dissolve NSC as a charity with a view to establishing a single non-charitable organisation. A step-by-step plan was put in place to address issues such as structure, governance, finance and staffing of the new organisation and it was subsequently decided that solidarity work, drawing on the best features of both NSC and NSCAG, should continue under the auspices of NSCAG. A working group was set up to deal with transitional arrangements which included expanding the membership of NSCAG to include individual as well as trade union members.

From July – December 2023, much of the work focussed on putting the necessary arrangements in place to close down NSC and set up NSCAG as a stand-alone solidarity organisation. An important element of this involved contacting individual members of NSC to ask whether they would be willing to transfer their membership to NSCAG. Plans were put in place to relaunch NSCAG in 2024 and a new mandate was agreed for NSCAG as follows: -

We **campaign** in defence of Nicaragua's sovereignty, right to self-determination and right to live in peace.

We **support** social, economic and environmental justice in Nicaragua through championing Nicaragua's successes in reducing poverty and the role played by the trade unions and the social economy.

We **work in solidarity** with trade unions, co-operatives and organisations representing the social economy by promoting their work and linking them with like-minded UK organisations.

We **reject** illegal sanctions and external aggression, in particular by the United States, and any attempts to thwart the will of the people of Nicaragua through ousting their democratically elected government

Apart from work related to the transitional arrangements, 2023 was a busy year where we continued to focus on our campaigning work, participation in a wide range of events and getting our message across

Campaigns

Efforts by the US to destabilise Nicaragua and bring about regime change continued throughout 2023. In June, Senators Marco Rubio and Tim Kaine introduced legislation which would extend the US government's authority to impose sanctions on Nicaragua until the end of December 2028. We stressed the importance of defending Nicaragua's sovereignty and right to self-determination and continued to campaign against ongoing US sanctions and to show how such sanctions serve only to harm the poorest and most vulnerable in society.

In March we co-hosted a webinar with Alliance for Global Justice – *Standing Tall to the Wrecking Ball* – which focussed on sanctions, US intervention and Nicaragua's resistance to violent overthrow.

Communications

We continued to send out monthly updates and reports on current developments and social progress in Nicaragua, highlighting advances in health, education, housing, and poverty reduction. Much of our communications work in 2023 focussed on countering the image portrayed by corporate media of Nicaragua as a pariah state and ensuring that Nicaragua is seen instead as an important progressive force in the region.

Nicaragua Now, a joint publication between NSC and NSCAG, went out to NSC and NSCAG members and supporters in June 2023. The publication highlighted Nicaragua's commitment to prioritising poverty reduction through a well-integrated national development plan.

In September, we organised a workshop – *Nicaragua: Truth Versus Lies* – where speakers John Perry, Abigail Espinoza Muñoz and Roger McKenzie described the realities of life in Nicaragua as opposed to the media hype.

We also produced and circulated new resource material on social and economic advances in Nicaragua and on Nicaraguan labour relations. The material included details of the many achievements of the Nicaraguan government in areas such as housing, health, education and trade union rights and again helped to counter the false portrayal of Nicaragua by corporate media, the US and Nicaragua's right wing opposition.

Events

As in previous years, we participated in the Latin America Conference with human rights lawyer and author Dan Kovalik as a keynote speaker. We also organised a well-attended seminar on education during the Conference.

From 24-26 March, we hosted a conference of the European Committee of Solidarity with the Sandinista People's Revolution. The conference took place in London as a hybrid meeting, with 15 participants attending in person and online participation by an additional 77 people. Apart from the UK, countries represented included Switzerland, Belgium, Denmark, Spain, France, Italy, Ireland, Sweden and Finland. The conference focussed on the defence of Nicaragua's sovereignty and its right to self-determination and on the condemnation and rejection of persistent aggression by the United States. A high-level Ministerial delegation from Nicaragua also participated in the Conference online.

In July we hosted a solidarity event together with our sister organisation Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign (NSC) – *Another Way is Possible: Nicaragua's Social Economy and Co-operatives* – where speakers Nick Hoskyns, Ben Southern Thomas and former Nicaraguan Ambassador to the UK, Guisell Morales, spoke about the way in which these sectors organise and the difference that 16 years of Sandinista government has made to their lives.

UK Trade Union Solidarity

We enjoyed continued support from our trade union affiliates and were invited to speak at a number of regional and branch meetings. EC member Julie Lamin spoke at a fringe meeting organised by UNISON NW Region at UNISON Conference and former Nicaraguan Ambassador to the UK Guisell Morales gave a keynote address at the Conference of BFAWU. EC member Francisco Dominguez also spoke at a meeting of UNISON's Cymru International Forum and Louise Richards spoke at a meeting of the UNISON West Midlands International Forum. We also participated in the NEU International Solidarity Conference and had stalls at the Conferences of GMB and NEU and at the UNITE policy conference.

In September, we were delighted to welcome a delegation of Nicaraguan teachers to the UK as part of the ongoing teacher exchange sponsored by the NEU. As well as visiting schools in the London area, the delegation were hosted in Bristol, Coventry and Liverpool. The visit was highly successful and resulted in various spin offs, including a link between a Nicaraguan school and a school in Bristol. The visit also attracted a number of young people.

Also in September, we met with Salvador Vanegas, Nicaraguan Minister Advisor on Education and arranged for him to meet Mary Bousted, then Joint General Secretary of the NEU and NEU International Secretary Celia Dignan. We also organised an interview for him with the Morning Star.

We remain grateful to our trade union affiliates and supporters for their constant and unwavering support throughout this period, particularly at a time when we are launching NSCAG as a stand-alone organisation. International solidarity has remained crucial in sustaining Nicaraguan trade unions through another difficult year which, as stated above, saw Nicaragua facing ongoing efforts by the US to oust the country's democratically elected government and return Nicaragua to the dark days of neoliberalism, a move which – if it ever happened – would see Nicaragua's trade unions stripped of all the rights they have gained since the FSLN came to power in 2007.

Affiliations have remained steady, but NSCAG continues to rely almost entirely on the support of our affiliates and individual members to sustain our work. We still need more regions and branches and individual members to join us and will continue with our affiliation drive during the coming year. At present we have around 150 regions and branches affiliated to us. At the time of writing, around 140 individual members of NSC have transferred their membership to NSCAG, but we are hoping that more will decide to do this.

Our national affiliates are: - ASLEF, BFAWU, CWU, FBU, GMB, NEU, RMT, TSSA, UNISON, UNITE and USDAW. We also have affiliations from TUC London, East & South East Region, TUC Northern Region, Battersea & Wandsworth TUC, Crewe & District TUC and Caribbean Labour Solidarity.

We would like to thank all those who have contributed to NSCAG's work.

Finances

The 2023 accounts showed a deficit of £6,216, reducing the reserves to £1,555. The closure of NSC and a restructure of the NSCAG to incorporate the work will contribute to better financials in the future.

A full copy of the NSCAG accounts is available on request.

Staff: Louise Richards

NSCAG Executive Members 2023: Dave Auger, Tony Burke, Warren Chambers, Rabiah Chohan, Ruby Cox (Chair, until October 2023), Luke Daniels, Francisco Dominguez, John Drewery, Farzana Jumma, Julie Lamin (Chair, from October 2023), David McKnight, Ken Rustidge.

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