

The Norfolk and Norwich – El  
Viejo Friendship Link *Founded 1986*  
Registered Charity Number 1156787



**REPORT TO NORWICH CITY COUNCIL**

**TWINNING COMMITTEE**

**THURSDAY 14TH MARCH, 2019.**

Our report to the October, 2018 meeting of the Committee included reports of anti-Government violence that broke out in Nicaragua in April last year.

Sadly, that state of affairs continued until much later in the year with the result that life did not begin to return to a degree of normality until November/December. The result of those actions are still being felt.

So far as El Viejo was concerned there appears to have been little in terms of direct action in the area. The municipality is located in the far north-west of the country but it was nevertheless cut off from contact with the rest of the country and our representative, Carmela Hernandez, was unable to travel from her home in Leon, which was heavily affected by the violence, until December.

It is clear that the violence, which resulted in many deaths and a great deal of damage and destruction, was orchestrated from outside the country with the intention of bringing down the elected Government, and appears to have been 'tolerated' by the Church hierarchy in the country. It is worth pointing out that the current Government was elected in 2017 with 72% of the popular vote. The Presidential Election in 2016 returned the President, Daniel Ortega, by a similar margin.

There is little doubt that the hand of the United States was, once again, present in these events, as in the Contra affair of the 1980s under President Reagan. It now seems to have turned its attention to Venezuela supporting regime change there, no doubt with its eyes on Venezuelan oil reserves which are much more attractive than anything Nicaragua can offer – or are we becoming too cynical!

A disturbing element in the Nicaraguan situation has been the activities of Amnesty International which issued two reports accusing the Nicaraguan Government of deliberately setting out to, literally, kill off any form of opposition by using force of arms. These reports have been both extremely one sided and lacking in any authoritative evidence to support their claims. They have also been firmly denounced by one of their own declared 'Prisoners of Conscience' no less!

In addition, elements of the British Press, particularly the 'Guardian' have parroted the Amnesty claims of wanton killing of civilians protesting against the Nicaraguan Government.

The Link is affiliated to the Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign which has, in partnership with its US Counterpart, The Alliance for Global Justice, has issued a fully researched rebuttal of the Amnesty International accusations in a document entitled '*Dismissing the Truth – Why*

*Amnesty International is Wrong about Nicaragua*'. Running to over 50, pages with links to many supporting documents and evidence, it destroys any semblance of honesty, accuracy and authority by Amnesty International. On a personal level, I had been a member of Amnesty for many years seeing the organisation as a bastion of truth and justice. Sadly, having read the Amnesty reports on Nicaragua, I have to say that, from my long personal knowledge and experience of life in Nicaragua, the scales have fallen from my eyes and I have severed my association with that organisation.

I had already prepared a report on the violence in Nicaragua on behalf of the Link Committee which has been circulated to all City Councillors. If the other City Twinning organisations would like a copy, I will arrange them to be provided with one.

Hopefully, Nicaragua can now resume a peaceful existence free from outside unlawful interference and attack and the hope, also, that the US can accept that the Monroe Doctrine no longer has any relevance in this day and age to what happens outside its borders and gives that country no right or power to unilaterally interfere in other nations affairs on any pretext whatsoever.

On a more positive note so far as El Viejo is concerned, our representative has reported that a number of our scholarship pupils who completed their six years of primary education have moved on to Secondary level. We have asked Carmela to send us details of these pupils. It is unusual for this to happen for two reasons, firstly there is only one secondary school in the town and, secondly, most of the primary schools in our project are quite isolated with no regular transport (or roads!) to the city of El Viejo.

Ralph Gayton

Link Secretary.