

Nicaragua 2024 - Between the Silenced Majority and the Critical Constituency

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Dictatorial repression in 2024 will continue to cause irreversible social losses in Nicaragua. Thanks to migration and the flow of remittances, the economy will grow by inertia and not due to the economic policies from the Christian and solidarity-based government.

The population will remain grouped around three social sectors but with major changes. First, a minuscule *pro-status quo* core; a passive, pro-democratic, and silenced majority that has adapted itself but not complacent toward the system in the face of fear and repression; and a bloc that resists the dictatorship which still find ways to demand urgent changes.

The Ortega-Murillo regime will continue to exercise their political authority in the only way they have known since 2018: repression, imprisonment, corruption, fear, and expulsion.

To many in the international community, Nicaragua is already a lost cause. However, for an important group of countries and international institutions, the cause of democracy continues. Those who support this mission have a responsibility to nourish hope with concrete signs of pressure on the dictatorship.

Rentier Economics

On the economic front, the government will continue to invest in public works in order to foment clientelist practices and intensify state capture in favor of the Ortega-Murillo family. The Nicaraguan economy will grow over 4% in 2024. However, this increase is not the result of government economic policies, but due to the massive expulsion of people and the effect of remittances on the economy.

In the macroeconomy, growth will be driven by increases in remittances. That will increase by a maximum of 8%. This growth is due to a combination of higher emigration and an increase in the amount sent by migrants. The amount sent will not increase more than 3% (to more than USD 340 per month), and the migratory increase will be akin to 2023. This means that Nicaraguans abroad will grow from 1.5 to 1.6 million from whom there will be 80,000 new "remitters" in 2024.

Table 1: Migration and Remittances, 2019-2024

Year	P2P Transactions	Migrants	Increase in Transactions	Official Migration	Volume	Growth
2019	617,038.30	681,827			\$1,682,400,000	11%
2020	624,750.00	690,349	7,711.70	14,259	\$1,851,400,000	9%
2021	704,821.2903	778,828	80,071.29	155,660	\$2,146,900,000	16%
2022	1,105,580.16	1,115,107	400,758.87	318,255	\$3,224,900,000	50%
2023	1,193,171.59	1,318,455	87,591.44	115,918	\$4,633,320,000	43%
2024	1,273,171.59	1,406,855	80,000.00	100,000	\$4,943,975,736	7%

Source: Central Bank of Nicaragua and author estimates

In short, remittances growth is stabilizing, but given that these flows are now responsible for 33% of private consumption, the pace of national growth is in the hands of remitting migrants. Investment will not grow seeing that both consumption and credit depend on the inflow of remittances. If they do not grow much, consumption patterns will follow suit.

However, migration will not be a 'lifeline' to the regime either. Many people have already left and the labor force is now a minority (40% of the population) Even though 60% of households want to migrate, according to the latest surveys, those who decide to leave and have the means and right timing to do so will be less than 100,000 people – unless they leave in family groups.

Consequently, we are in a state of economic inertia.

The Silenced Majority

For five consecutive years, the regime's criminalization of democracy has decimated Nicaragua. This has produced a culture of fear that is found among all segments of society. These segments can be divided into three groups.

These three segments are found from an analysis of [the latest CID-Gallup poll, published in CONFIDENCIAL, and previous surveys](#). A minority of 20% that is *pro-status quo*, either out of loyalty to Ortega, opportunism, or attrition, comprises the declining Sandinistas. They want work and progress – with political advantages.

The other segment of society is the *silenced majority* or *apathetic constituency*. The group is made up of 51% of Nicaraguans who believe in democracy, but whose circumstances do not allow for them to assume a more proactive role. Their main concerns are for the health of their families, tranquility, peace, democracy, and free elections.

And the rest – 29% – is a *critical constituency* that demands the end of the dictatorship, the suspension of the police state, the return of the exiles, the [release of Monsignor Álvarez](#) and political prisoners, and free elections.

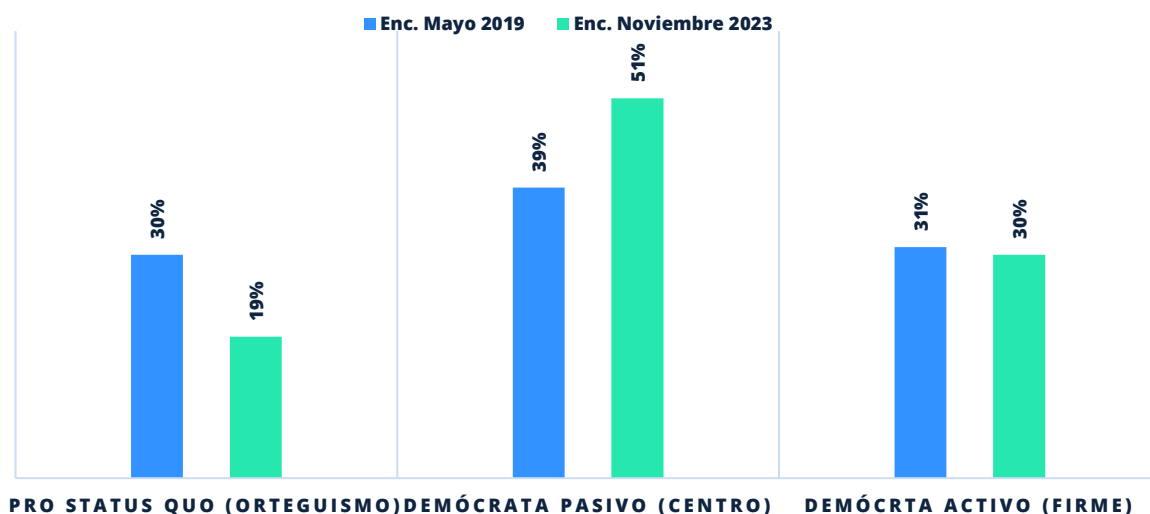
Nicaraguans are feeling the effects of the siege laid upon them yet, the vast majority (80%) want to overcome this situation. Despite their silence, even the most apathetic consider that the three great problems of the country are unemployment, corruption, and the political crisis: that is – the regime – even if they do not put a name to it. They do not believe that there will be free elections, and that Rosario Murillo will take power in 2026.

Even those who are *pro-status quo* believe that corruption is the country's third main problem. Nearly half of them (including FSLN sympathizers) believe that the military should be sanctioned, and 60% of this group wants to leave Nicaragua. For them, not everything is black and white. They do not unanimously support Ortega and Murillo and exhibit increasing discrepancies.

Meanwhile, the critical constituency questions the repression it endures. What prevails in Nicaragua is a blue and white spirit, demands for democratic change, and a better country – different from the one offered by this dictatorship.

While these segments of society have been present for the past five years, the pro-government core has declined.

CONTINUUM OF REGIME SUPPORT, 2019-2023



Purges and Persecution

It is clear to those at the top of the Ortega-Murillo regime that their capture of the state only benefits them and that this is highly unpopular. Therefore, in the face of the blue and white democratic majority, in 2024, their strategy of continuously purging their own ranks will prevail.

The regime has reduced the size of its circle of power, starting with purges mostly of middle management. However, circles closest to the family clan will start coming under the regime's scrutiny as well. The army's senior officers know this and are practically "waiting for their turn." Other loyal officials who are placed in strategic positions such as customs, taxation, the export sector, and the management of micro-enterprises and autonomous entities also know this to be true.

Now that the dictatorship has eliminated the formal judicial due process, the presidency's political authority will assume a direct role in public administration and exclude those who are looked upon with the greatest suspicion and those who have quietly enriched themselves. The persecution of the private sector will continue in 2024, especially for companies with less transnational exposure. These companies can be co-opted through extortion or intimidation and who lack lawyers and international legal resources.

The self-isolation by the regime at the international level will continue to occur while they try to leverage foreign investment in the country with "Chinese stories." Despite what has been said by Laureano Ortega or Foreign Minister Moncada, the regime has been branded as a human trafficking state, a pariah state, and a regional threat. The "coup d'état" rhetoric has also lost steam, even among the Latin American left. Their mechanisms of political control are becoming clear to all – not their clientelism – but also the threat of going along with them or going to jail.

The main enemy of the Ortega-Murillo clan is themselves – paranoia makes them entrenched, eliminate civil society, and purge their own allies.

Although the regime's plan remains to facilitate a dynastic succession in 2026, unease is very high, even for those who are *pro-status quo*. 43% of this group believes that elections in 2026 are unlikely to be free.

Guidelines for Change

In 2024, there is a stark contrast between people's democratic appetite versus state repression. This hunger is fueled by the hope that change is possible through a joint effort that includes the democratic civic movement and the international community.

External pressure will continue to target transgressors with sanctions, penalize violations of international norms, condemn the rupture of the democratic and human rights order, demand accountability from the dictatorship in the face of kleptocracy and state capture, and denounce alliances with extracontinental powers.

Meanwhile, the civic democratic movement faces the challenge of finding safe ways to resist— weakening the regime without exposing themselves to repression.

Civic resistance in the country manifests itself in many ways like saving, avoiding paying taxes to the dictatorship, denouncing those who steal and imprison, or embracing honest dissidents. Along with the pressure of international sanctions, internal pressure is essential to change the balance of power against the dictatorship.

Resistance also means fighting against disinformation and censorship, exposing the regime's propaganda, convincing public servants (civilian and military), that there is an off ramp and that the regime is not their only option. Resistance includes taking advantage of networks such as safe and compact spaces for dialogue and communication and having vehicles to denounce developments inside the country.

National protests are no longer found in the streets, they are nuanced and weaken the regime from within. Although an uphill battle, the people's hope for change to rid of the dictatorship and dynasty, remains the blueprint of the blue and white citizen.