

Nicaraguan students' movement opposing ortega

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After years of growing resentment over Ortega's abuse of power, the president's decision to implement social security reforms that raised taxes while reducing pension benefits was the final straw. On April 18, peaceful demonstrations, led by elderly individuals, university students, and other activists, erupted throughout the country. These were met by violent resistance from government authorities: censoring independent media, arming pro-government mobs with weapons, and using live ammunition on peaceful protesters.

On April 19, in response to the 26 deaths of the night before, many of which were students, demonstrations grew dramatically in size. Vice President and First Lady, Rosario Murillo, made a speech mocking the demonstrators and accused them of seeking to destabilize the country by undoing its peace and development. She called for peace and unity as their police simultaneously attacked and killed unarmed civilians. Infuriated by the government's violent response and denial of culpability, students, farmers and other protesters raised barricades throughout the country. Eventually, Ortega overturned the reforms, but protests now covered more than reduced pensions. Nicaraguans were taking a stand against injustice and terror; they were fighting for democracy. Tired of rigged elections, blatant corruption, and rampant oppression, protesters demanded Ortega's resignation.

Students became the heart of the movement opposing Ortega, as several universities became sites for protester sit-ins. In defiance, students and other protesters barricaded themselves in the campuses of the Polytechnic University (Upoli) and the National Autonomous University of Nicaragua in Managua (UNAN). Over the months they were held up, they survived off

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donated food and medicine supplies. The attacks by the police force and armed government-funded mobs, resulted in the deaths of even more students. Hundreds of videos documenting the violent encounters disproved the government's persistent attempts at denying their culpability. The government instead blamed entities trying to topple their government among them drug cartels, opposition groups, and the U. S.

After weeks of conflict, a National Dialogue was instituted to negotiate a solution to the current conflicts. The business chamber, " COSEP", announced they would only participate in the negotiation if police violence, media censoring, and political incarceration of students ceased. Nicaragua's Roman Catholic Conference of Bishops called for peace, often helped the students out directly, and played a vital role as mediators of said negotiations. While the government went in hoping to " restore" peace and keep themselves in power, the student activists used their place in the negotiation table to confront the president directly and demand his immediate resignation.

Ortega's unwillingness to step down and the people's refusal to accept the government's conditions, resulted in no concrete solution and the National Dialogue was eventually called off. According to the Nicaraguan Association of Human Rights (ANPDH), there have been 512 recorded deaths, 3, 962 injured, and 1, 428 kidnapped since April 18. For the past five months, students have continued to lead hundreds of thousands Nicaraguans in taking the streets, urging justice for the students who were killed during protests and those arrested and tortured by the police. They demand Ortega,

a man known for helping overthrow a dictator who is now considered one himself, to resign immediately.