



LATIN AMERICA

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PROTESTS BREAK OUT IN CURAÇAO: DUTCH TROOPS DEPLOYED

After days of unrest, the Netherlands is deploying troops on Curaçao, one of the kingdom's islands in the Caribbean. The unrest started on June 24, after the government announced austerity measures to qualify for financial support from the Netherlands, including layoffs due to the coronavirus pandemic. Nearly 200 protestors forcefully entered the government palace and looted nearby stores.

It is unclear who is responsible for the protests. While some blame local gangs and trade unions, others believe that the pro-independence opposition parties are responsible.

Tensions between Curaçao and the Netherlands are nothing new. While the island is nominally autonomous, it is financially dependent on the Netherlands. Due to this reliance, Curaçao must often agree to Dutch demands, putting a strain on the relationship.



Gerrit Schotte – Harjit Saggu (flickr.com)

Military intervention is also not uncommon for the island. Dutch intervention in 2017 stopped the election of Movement for the Future of Curaçao (MFK) leader Gerrit Schotte from forming a government without elections. The government expects that the military will relieve the local police and ease curfew restrictions. Some are concerned that the increased Dutch presence will only cause greater tension, as some islanders are resentful of the island's history as a colony.

NICARAGUAN OPPOSITION PARTIES UNITE TO OUST ORTEGA

A highly divided opposition has come together in an effort to force President Ortega out of power in next year's elections. Opposition forces Blue and White National Unity, the Farmworkers Movement, the Civic Alliance, the Constitutionalist Liberal Party, the evangelical Democratic Restoration Party and the Nicaraguan Democratic Force have formed a National Coalition promising to "fight for justice, democracy and against the dictatorship".

President Ortega has a long history of involvement in Nicaraguan politics. Former Coordinator of the Junta of National Reconstruction from 1979–85 and President from 1985–90, Ortega has been a leftist leader in politics for decades. Once a revolutionary Sandinista leader, Ortega has gradually shifted his political position to democratic socialism and has been president since 2007. Still, President Ortega is criticised for human rights violations and for taking a lax stance on the coronavirus pandemic.

Luis Fley, a former commander of the US-backed “Contras” – who fought Ortega’s Sandinistas in the 1980s – is one notable opposition leader. Uniting against a common enemy, the opposition parties are relying on the National Coalition to “make the necessary and urgent changes the country needs”, according to Fley. While opposition parties have been able to overtake Ortega’s Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) in three out of the six historical elections, Ortega has always been the runner-up. By uniting as a coalition, the divisive opposition may once again be able to defeat President Ortega.

“We’re going to fight for the freeing of the political prisoners, a new Supreme Electoral Council, election reforms, [and] believable and observed elections. The [National Coalition] is not going to pact with the dictatorship.”

- Luis Fley, former leader of the Nicaraguan “Contra” rebels