

#SOSNicaragua: Exile, Dispersion, and Participation in Cross-Border Activism CROSS-BORDER



The forced migration and exile are not new phenomenon's in Nicaraguan society, whose history has been marked by dictatorial political regimes, internal armed conflicts and social-political and economic crisis. These factors, that have affected the cohesion of the social fabric due to extraterritorial displacement, gave way to the new configuration of new transnational identity spaces.

The people who forcibly emigrated or were exiled have constructed cooperation scheme, although not all of them come together in organized spaces. Given this reality, one wonders, what role do those who have an active participation in the processes of cross-border peaceful resistance? Finding some answers requires a conceptual approach to exile and dispersion. In that sense, Luis Rongier argues that exile is an institutional mechanism of exclusion that revokes the full use of citizenship rights and even more prevents the participation of the exile in the national political arena. Although it is possible to conceptualize how the entire condition of displacement from the natural place where it is intended to reside (and to which it is desired to return) and from which it had to leave due to circumstances beyond its control (generally due to violence of all type).

These conceptual approaches become relevant when analyzing the dynamics of participation of exiles how to act within the processes of cross-border activism, especially in the case of Nicaragua. Here the predominant factor that drives forced displacement is political persecution and the risk for personal security for independent activists and journalists, in particular, after the events that occurred in the sociopolitical crisis of April 2018 – which marks a before and after in Nicaragua-. In that month, a group of elderly and young people who were protesting the reforms to the social security system were attacked by the people identified as members of the Sandinista party. This gave rise to months of demonstrations throughout the country and unleashed indiscriminate repression against the unarmed civilian population. There was a balance of more than 300 deaths and thousands of injuries, according to figures from the special monitoring

machinery created by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (CIDH). This form of social security is added to the constant violations of human rights and the undermining of the institutionalist in Nicaragua. It was the drop that broke the camel's back.

In relation to the dispersion, this can be defined as a dispersed group that shares certain culture and lives outside the territory or country that granted its natural place and whose ties are crucial for its collective identity. It should be noted that the dispersion includes a human and sociopolitical formation believed both by voluntary migrations and by forced exiles, mainly. By its very nature, the dispersion constitutes an important support network for people exiled for reasons of political persecution, but they also present, together with exile, a fundamental part of the processes of mobilization and political incidence outside the borders of the country of origin. In addition, they play a preponderant role in breaking the media siege imposed by highly depressive regimes such as the one currently experienced in Nicaragua and they are effective in generating processes of international solidarity.

These social phenomena, exile and dispersion, reflect a harsh reality. According to UNHCR data, the numbers of refugees, only in Costa Rica, reach 90 thousand so far in 2021. While the United States Custom and Border Protection service reports that the number of Nicaraguans captured while also crossing into the United States 670 percent. On this aspect: only in January of this year, 575 Nicaraguans were arrested who crossed the border irregularly, by May the figure shot up to 4.427.

At the same time as the social outbreak of April 2018, an almost parallel process of organization of the Nicaraguan fire around the world emerged. What originated as an initiative to support from abroad with some resources for the attention of victims of the repression exerted by the government, quickly evolved into an international denunciation movement delivered to Nicaraguans in different parts of the world. They began to use the hashtag #SOSNicaragua on their social networks to highlight the abuses committed by Daniel Ortega and his wife Rosario

Murillo against the people who were demonstrating peacefully, who sought to neutralize the attempts at censorship and the lack of information regimes.

This movement has also promoted a permanent denunciation campaign on social networks about human rights violations in Nicaragua. In addition, there were at least two concerted actions in more than 30 cities around the world: one, which took place on June 27, 2018; and two, the march of November 7, 2021 whose purpose was to denounce electoral fraud and demand the freedom of all political prisoners.

Currently, #SOSNicaragua brings together members of the Nicaraguan dispersion and exile community, carrying out international mobilization and advocacy actions in an articulated manner between the chapters established in the United States and countries of Europe and Central America. This cross-border nonviolent action has also played a fundamental role in providing care and support networks to people who have had to go into exile in recent years as a result of repression.

The marches and actions promoted and coordinated worldwide by the members of #SOSNicaragua (or also called #SOSNicaraguaGlobal) constitute an added value that allows to continue with the activism, and it prevents dispersion of people from disengaging from internal processes in Nicaragua. As we mentioned earlier, exile is also an opportunity to capitalize on the ability to place and maintain on the international agenda, through direct incidence, the problem of authoritarian and human rights violations.

This has also been one of the main lines of work of this cross-border movement, since from the different regions of the world, they are active and conducting dialogue and lobbying with governments, regional, multilateral and civil society organizations to carry out this task.

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