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Nicaragua

Open Letter from Sergio Ramirez to President Lula da Silva

- News from around the world -



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Dear President Lula:

The last time we saw each other was many years ago, on the occasion of the first congress of the Sandinista Front, held in Managua in July 1991, when you gave a speech at the opening session. It was a speech I will never forget, and it helped those of us who were seeking to consolidate a democratic current within a party that had just suffered an electoral defeat that brought the revolution to an end.

In that speech, you said that the left's mistake was to insist on distinguishing between proletarian democracy and bourgeois democracy, when there was only one kind of democracy: one in which power was determined by the votes of the citizens.

Daniel Ortega and the doctrinaire hardliners who supported him, and who proclaimed that it had been a mistake to surrender revolutionary power in elections held "under the blackmail of Yankee imperialism," did not like what you had to say. I remember that Edmundo Jarquín, who was with me among the reformists, called me that night to tell me that the hardliners had left you alone at the hotel. So we went to get you and took you to Edmundo's house, where we spent long hours talking about the future of the left in Latin America, which had to be democratic, or it would have no future at all.

Now, all of us who were with you that night in Managua are in exile, stripped of our Nicaraguan citizenship for opposing the two-headed dictatorship of Ortega and his wife, a satrapy without parallel in the history of our country.

Eleven years after that congress, in 2002, you won the presidential election after three previous attempts, and since then you have been elected three times and are now seeking a fourth term, always faithful to Brazil's democratic system and respectful of election results when they do not favor you.

I am certain that if anyone were to say that there would be no more elections in Brazil, you would be the first to take to the streets to defend the right to choose. Because, indeed, there is only one kind of democracy: democracy based on votes. Democracy is neither right-wing nor left-wing; those who respect it are part of it.

When electoral fraud took place in Venezuela in 2024 in favor of dictator Nicolas Maduro, and Brazil demanded that the voting records be produced, Ortega lashed out at you. I quote his words: "The way Lula has behaved in response to the victory of Venezuela's legitimate president is shameful, shameful, repeating the slogans of the Yankees, the Europeans, the lackeys of Latin America..."

"You're groveling too, Lula, you're groveling..." "Who are you serving? The Yankees? The Europeans? Or are you seeking leadership so you can become the Yankees' representative in Latin America?" And he capped off his diatribe by breaking diplomatic relations with Brazil. All because you defended the legitimacy of the vote in Venezuela, a cause that transcends borders.

This year, Ortega shamelessly proclaimed that there would be no more elections in Nicaragua, thereby abolishing democracy in my country and putting us back on the political map. On August 19, the Permanent Council of the Organization of American States (OAS) considered the case and approved convening an extraordinary meeting of the hemisphere's foreign ministers on the grounds that "representative democracy, an indispensable condition for the

stability, peace, and development of the region, no longer exists in Nicaragua.” The resolution was supported by all member countries except two: Mexico abstained, and Brazil voted against it.

Your ambassador to the OAS argued: “We are all in favor of human rights. But we do not want any medicine to kill the patient.” This statement, Mr. President, represents a radical departure from your unwavering positions in defense of democracy, which must be defended by governments of both the left and the right. The patient, who buries elections and establishes himself as dictator for life, can live for many years on life support.

It no longer matters whether Ortega is a man of the left, as he proclaims in his archaic harangues, or whether he has become a traditional right-wing dictator. Dictatorships have only one dark color, and they must be fought from every position on the democratic ideological spectrum.

Ortega has abolished elections. Do not deny Nicaragua, Mr. President, the right to choose freely—the very same right that could make you president of Brazil once again.

Please do not risk creating a terrible confusion that could lead the people of Nicaragua to believe that the only way Brazil will take a clear stand against Ortega and his family dictatorship is through the victory of Flávio Bolsonaro and everything he represents.

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