

## Politics

Violetta Barrios de Chamorro, owner of the opposition paper La Prensa, led an anti-Sandinista coalition to victory in the 1990 elections, ending 11 years of Sandinista rule. Enthusiasm for Chamorro gradually faded. Business groups were dissatisfied with the pace of reforms; some Sandinistas, upset with what they regarded as the dismantling of their earlier achievements, threatened to take up arms again; and many people were disillusioned over governmental corruption. Former Managua mayor and Conservative candidate Arnoldo Alemán won the 1996 election with Daniel Ortega as runner up. In 1998, Hurricane Mitch killed more than 9,000 people, left 2 million people homeless, and caused \$5 billion in damages. Nicaragua remains one of the poorest countries in the Western Hemisphere. In the Nov. 2001 presidential elections, Enrique Bolaños, the ruling Liberal Party leader, defeated Ortega, who was attempting a comeback. In August 2002, former president Arnoldo Alemán was charged with fraud and embezzlement, and in 2003 he was sent to prison.

Elections in November 2006 resulted in the FSLN getting the largest number of seats and forming the government. Daniel Ortega Saavedra became President of the Republic in February 2007.

## Demography (courtesy of Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign)

Full title

Republic of Nicaragua

Capital

Managua

Area

Approx. 130,000 square kms

50,000 square miles (roughly the size of England)

Currency

Córdoba

Population

5.8 million (INIDE 2010)

Ethnicity

Mestizo (mixed race) 69%, white 1 %, black 9%, other 5%

Languages

Spanish (official). Also English, Creole, Garifuna, Miskitu, Rama and Sumu/Mayangna in Atlantic/ Caribb

Life expectancy

73 years (UNICEF 2008)

Poverty rank

2nd poorest country in Latin America and the Caribbean after Haiti

% of population living below poverty line

48% (CIA 2005)

% of population under 15

38.3% (CEPAL 2010)

% of population living on less than \$1 per day

45.1% (UNDP 2005)

Literacy

81% (UNICEF 2008)

Agriculture

Coffee, bananas, sugar cane, cotton, rice, maize, tobacco, sesame, soya, beans, beef, pork, poultry

Major exports

Coffee, shrimp & lobster, tobacco, beef, sugar, bananas, gold, timber

Main trading partners

US, Canada, other Central America countries, Europe, Venezuela

GDP

\$6.1 billion (CIA 2009)

Total exports

\$2.3 billion (CIA 2009)

Total imports

\$3.9 billion (CIA 2009)

External debt

\$4.7 billion (CIA 2009)

Major political parties

Constitutionalist Liberal Party (PLC), Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN), Nicaraguan Liberal Alliance (ALC)

Head of government

José Daniel Ortega Saavedra, FSLN, elected for 5 year term 2007.