

Trump administration attacks Costa Rican media to silence opposition to fascistic puppet regime

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The Trump administration has provoked a major political scandal in Costa Rica days prior to Friday's inauguration of president-elect Laura Fernández as the hand-picked successor of incumbent Rodrigo Chaves.

On Saturday, the US State Department revoked the travel visas for most of the editorial board of the country's "newspaper of record," *La Nación*, in an unprecedented act of political intimidation directed at silencing criticism of its key regional allies, Chaves and Fernández.

Pedro Abreu, president of the board of *La Nación*, confirmed that Washington revoked visas for five of the paper's seven board members, while the remaining two did not require visas to enter the United States. Abreu described the move as "unprecedented" and an "indirect attack on press freedom."

The visa revocations represent the latest interference by Washington in the internal politics of Latin America. They follow a pattern of open support by the Trump administration for far-right candidacies and regimes across the region, including in Honduras, Argentina and Chile. These actions are inseparable from the largest US military buildup in Latin America aimed at asserting dominance against China and other geopolitical rivals, preparing regime-change operations, and laying the groundwork for suppressing an anticipated upsurge of the working class.

Costa Rica has long played a strategic role in US imperialist operations. It served as a logistical hub for the CIA-backed Contra war against the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua and has historically functioned as a key node in securing US control over the Panama Canal and the Central American isthmus.

The targeting of *La Nación* is particularly significant given that it is closely tied to traditional factions of the Costa Rican oligarchy and has historically supported alignment with Washington, including spearheading propaganda campaigns in favor of the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA).

Despite the right-wing character of *La Nación*, the *World Socialist Web Site* denounces the visa revocations as a naked attack by a US imperialist regime seeking to crush even limited criticism of its puppet governments.

While the US State Department has refused to provide a formal explanation, reports cited by *El País* note that in August, embassy official Michael Flores stated broadly that visas are revoked from individuals deemed threats to US national security. A month later,

the State Department claimed such measures were intended to counter "corrupt influence" from China in Central America.

Since the 2022 elections, *La Nación* has published criticisms of Chaves, including warnings against naked subordination to Trump and reporting on corruption and illegal campaign financing. At the same time, international outlets such as the *New York Times* and *The Guardian* have focused on the paper's reports of past sexual harassment allegations against Chaves during his tenure at the World Bank.

Chaves has seized upon widespread popular hostility toward *La Nación* and the traditional parties it is associated with—the PLN, PUSC and PAC—to justify a broader offensive against the media. He has labeled critical outlets "enemies of the Fatherland," escalating attacks on freedom of expression.

The visa crackdown is part of a broader pattern. Last year, Washington revoked the visa of Óscar Arias, a two-time president under the National Liberation Party (PLN) and Nobel Peace Prize laureate, along with his brother Rodrigo Arias, president of the Legislative Assembly. Arias had previously criticized Chaves for "receiving orders" from Trump and opposed US mass deportations and trade war policies. Notably, Arias had also established diplomatic relations with Beijing in 2007, paving the way for other Central American countries to follow suit.

Similarly, the US visa of Leonel Baruch, owner of the major digital outlet CRHoy and a former finance minister, was revoked on the basis of corruption allegations. These measures intensified following a visit in February 2025 by US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who praised Chaves for barring Chinese firms from Costa Rica's 5G infrastructure.

Two weeks later, the State Department revoked the visas of two opposition legislators who had openly criticized the 5G decree. In total, at least 15 Costa Rican officials and citizens—including former lawmakers and judges—have had their visas canceled.

Realignment of Costa Rica's foreign policy in line with "Trump Doctrine"

These actions are bound up with a sweeping realignment of

Costa Rican policy under Chaves and Fernández. The government has attempted to present itself to Trump as a key ally in a broader recolonization drive under the banners of a “Trump Corollary” to the Monroe Doctrine and a “Greater North America.”

This alignment intensified following participation in the “Americas Shield” summit in Miami in March, which outlined a militarized alliance against China and the left comparable to the CIA-backed Operation Condor of the 1970s. A promotional video for the initiative—dubbed the Americas Counter Cartel Coalition—sparked outrage when a Costa Rican flag appeared on a military uniform, in a country that has officially abolished its army since 1948.

In March, Costa Rica carried out its first-ever extraditions of its own citizens to the United States following a 2025 constitutional reform. Among those extradited were former security minister Celso Gamboa and Edwin López Vega (“Pecho de Rata”), both accused of drug trafficking.

That same month, Costa Rica and Ecuador announced the closure of Cuban embassies and expelled their diplomatic staff, citing alleged human rights violations.

Then Costa Rica agreed to accept up to 25 deportees per week from the United States, including migrants from Africa, Eastern Europe and Asia who cannot easily be repatriated. The agreement was signed by Chaves and Kristi Noem, acting as Trump’s envoy.

Further aligning itself with US and Israeli foreign policy, the Costa Rican government in April designated Hamas, Hezbollah, Iran’s Revolutionary Guard and Yemen’s Ansar Allah as terrorist organizations—despite no evidence of their presence in the country. It has also authorized an unprecedented permanent deployment of the DEA and FBI within the US embassy.

Chaves has cultivated close ties with the fascistic Salvadoran President Nayib Bukele—another Trump ally—declaring a “historic alliance.” After visiting El Salvador’s notorious CECOT megaprison, Costa Rican officials pledged to replicate it. Construction is underway on a similar facility, the CACCO, which would expand the country’s prison capacity by nearly one-third.

Despite their current criticisms, figures such as Arias and outlets like *La Nación* have long supported anti-strike laws and police repression under previous governments. Their opposition reflects not a defense of democratic rights but concerns within sections of the ruling class about the destabilizing consequences of overt subordination to the Trump administration.

Costa Rica’s economy remains heavily dependent upon the United States, which absorbs roughly half its exports and provides nearly three-quarters of foreign direct investment. There is, moreover, broad consensus among ruling circles in favor of austerity, corporate tax cuts and financialization to incentivize further investments.

Recent economic growth—driven by nearshoring by US corporations—has masked deepening inequality. While foreign investment hit record levels and inflation remained low, the Chaves administration has funneled nearly half the national budget into debt payments, while slashing social spending.

Public healthcare and education have been systematically defunded, with hospital waiting lists ballooning and student aid drastically reduced. Government debt to the social security system

has reached record levels, while critical infrastructure projects have been abandoned.

These conditions are laying the groundwork for social unrest. Rising fuel prices linked to the US war against Iran, threaten to ignite mass protests surpassing those seen during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In this context, all factions of the Costa Rican ruling elite—whether aligned with Chaves or the traditional parties—are united in favor of strengthening the repressive apparatus of the state against the working class.

What *La Nación*, Arias and the so-called opposition fear was described by the general secretary of the PLN, Miguel Guillén last month: “Costa Rica is not a trench... This doesn’t give us leverage: it exposes us. A country without an army requires strategic prudence. The responsible thing to do is to focus on what is urgent: a serious, technical, and timely containment plan that protects families from the impact of fuel price hikes.”

The abolition of the military in 1948 by the founder of the PLN, José María Figueres, after defeating a Stalinist-Liberal Popular Front in a civil war, not only allowed the victorious faction of the coffee oligarchy to avoid paying US, Italian and other business interests who financed their war effort. This decision also helped it avoid destabilization in the Cold War from US-backed military coups, dictatorships and other conspiracies that marked and destroyed most of Central America. Today, the Figueristas speak for layers that want to maintain their privileged ties to US capitalism without being embroiled as a “trench” in a war.

For their part, the successors of the Stalinist Communist Party that ruled with Calderón Guardia in the 1940s are today grouped in the Frente Amplio, which maintains its presence in Congress. It has repeatedly joined the PLN and PAC (now Citizen’s Agenda or CAC) in an anti-Chaves coalition, fomenting illusions in bourgeois democracy.

The absence of a formal military, long touted as Costa Rica’s democratic exception, offers no protection against the emergence of a world war, authoritarian rule or even direct military intervention. The decisive question is the independent political mobilization of the working class behind an internationalist and socialist program against imperialism and its local agents.



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