

# Miss Nicaragua pageant director quits amid treason charges

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**Online Desk:** The Miss Universe Organization said Tuesday that the director of the Miss Nicaragua pageant has resigned, after her home country charged her with treason and conspiracy and jailed members of her family.

Authorities in Nicaragua barred the director, Karen Celebertti, from returning to her homeland after the triumph of Nicaraguan Sheynnis Palacios in the global beauty contest.

Palacios was the first woman from Central America to win the title, and her victory sparked the largest celebrations in Nicaragua since street protests in 2018 jolted the government.

But the Nicaraguan government was not pleased when, after Palacios's win, images posted on social media showed her at those anti-government protests.

More than 300 people were killed in the demonstrations, according to UN experts, and the government of President Daniel Ortega, in power since 2007, has since outlawed the right to protest.

“This week, we accepted the resignation of Karen Celebertti, national director of Miss Universe Nicaragua. We thank her for her exemplary work with our organization for the past 23 years,” the Miss Universe Organization said in a statement on its Facebook page.

Celebertti announced her retirement Monday night from Mexico, less than a month after the winner of her national pageant won the global crown in El Salvador on November 18.

Afterward, Celebertti was denied entry to Nicaragua, and police accused her of treason, conspiracy against the government and money laundering.

Her husband Martin Arguello and her son Bernardo Arguello Celebertti were also detained in Managua.

Days after the Miss Universe coronation, Vice President Rosario Murillo, who is Ortega's wife, claimed that the opposition manipulated Palacios's triumph.

“We see the rude exploitation, and the crude and evil terrorist communication, that pretends to turn a nice and deserved moment of pride and celebration, into destructive coup-mongering,” Murillo told official media.

On November 25, the Miss Universe Organization asked the Nicaraguan government to “guarantee” the security of those affiliated with the local pageant.

In its remarks Tuesday, the organization said Celebertti “has asked fans to highlight Nicaragua's first international win as an achievement free of politics and regional distinctions, to be celebrated by all the country and the world.”

“We agree: Sheynnis Palacios is a remarkable woman, and we're glad to call her our Miss Universe 2023,” it added.