

# Open letter from scholars and activists regarding repression in Nicaragua

June 2019

The Central America Section of LASA urges the Nicaraguan government to stop repression and reinstate democracy in Nicaragua. A year ago, LASA positioned itself in relation to the political and social crisis that has been taking place in Nicaragua since April 18, 2018, urging the government of Daniel Ortega and Rosario Murillo to cease repression, respect human rights, and accelerate a process of democratization and justice for the people who have been subjected to violence and murdered during the crisis.

The situation has not changed, the crisis is getting worse, and human rights violations continue. The majority of the 700 people unjustly imprisoned since the beginning of the crisis are still in jail, and many of them are not even recognized by the government as political prisoners. Moreover, the political prisoners released from jail to date do not enjoy full freedom, since they are still under house arrest. Political prisoners are subjected to mistreatment and torture, and risk being murdered in jail.

On May 16, political prisoner Eddy Montes was shot and killed by a guard of the La Modelo prison system, and several other prisoners were seriously injured. Among the political prisoners there are defenders of human rights, university students, peasants, journalists, feminists as well as persons who identify as LGBTI+.

Universities have also increasingly become spaces of repression by the government, diminishing not only freedom of expression, organization, and protest of the Nicaraguan population, but also the freedom to think, investigate, reflect and speak up about the national reality.

Given this situation, we demand that the government of Nicaragua:

1. Cease repression in all its forms. We demand respect and security for public liberties and for people's right to demonstrate.
2. Release all political prisoners; furthermore, guarantee the security of those who have been released and nullify the trials of those who are being prosecuted.
3. Allow a thorough, independent and impartial investigation of all forms of violence since April 2018.
4. Reinstatement the autonomy of the universities and guarantee the safety of students, teachers and university staff.
5. Respect freedom of the press. We demand a stop to the harassment of journalists and independent media, whose only role has been to inform the population.
6. Guarantee the safe return of the tens of thousands of exiles.
7. Allow the return of international organizations, as well as the reinstatement of national human rights organizations with all the guarantees based on the international human rights conventions.

To conclude, we herein call for the solidarity of the international academic community. Critical thinking is being confined and killed in Nicaragua. It is time to position ourselves and continue to demand respect for the human rights of the Nicaraguan people.

This declaration was approved by the membership of the Central America Section of the Latin American Studies Association (LASA), which currently has 238 members. A total of 67 members voted (28% of the Central America Section's members), of which 67 approved this letter (100%). This is not a political declaration of the Latin American Studies Association, which neither supports nor rejects the declaration expressed above. The board of the Central American Section of LASA (2018-2019) and (2019-2020).

### **About LASA**

The Latin American Studies Association (LASA) is the largest professional association in the world for individuals and institutions engaged in the study of Latin America. With over 13,000 members, over 60% of whom reside outside the United States, LASA is the one association that brings together experts on Latin America from all disciplines and diverse occupational endeavors, across the globe. LASA's mission is to foster intellectual discussion, research, and teaching on Latin America, the Caribbean, and its people throughout the Americas, promote the interests of its diverse membership, and encourage civic engagement through network building and public debate.

If you wish to interview a LASA Executive Council member, you can contact the LASA communications office at (412) 648-7929 or send an email to [lasa@lasaweb.org](mailto:lasa@lasaweb.org).

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