

Mounting threats to Academic Freedom in Brazil

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The Latin American Studies Association (LASA), with over 12,000 members, including scholars from every discipline and every region of the world whose research focuses on some aspect of Latin American society, history, and culture, considers academic freedom as crucial to its scholarly mission and to the interests of its membership.

We consider censorship as well as any form of physical aggression or verbal intimidation against members of the university communities or other centers of knowledge production to constitute a grave threat to the free exchange of ideas, so necessary for every field of scholarly inquiry. We therefore regard recent developments in Brazil with great concern.

The repeated episodes of armed police entering university campuses and threats to professors accused of making political statements in the classroom violate even the most minimal notion of academic freedom and university autonomy. Since the election there have been signs of increased interference by the so-called “Escola sem Partido,” a movement that defines appropriate education in a way that both contradicts all scholarly norms and leaves virtually every instructor vulnerable to charges of “indoctrination.” Government officials exhorting students to report on teachers who violate some imagined standard of apolitical instruction recall conditions in Brazilian universities under the military dictatorship, and such surveillance threatens to suppress the kinds of groundbreaking research and challenging ideas that have made the Brazilian academy a global site for scholarly innovation.

In light of these troubling trends, the LASA Executive Council expresses its vigorous support for academic freedom in Brazilian schools and universities. We call upon Brazilian government officials to respect the rights and autonomy of the academic community, and we urge the legislative and judicial powers to oppose attempts by supporters of the Escola sem Partido to enact laws that would suppress academic freedom and would be in violation of the rights guaranteed in the Brazilian Constitution of 1988.

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 12,000 members, over 65% 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 lasa@lasaweb.org.

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