

## LASA calls for immediate release of Nicaraguan academic Oscar René Vargas

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LASA strongly condemns the arrest of the prominent Nicaraguan academic Oscar René Vargas and his imprisonment in the infamous El Chipote prison outside of Managua. Vargas, considered the dean of Nicaraguan sociology, is one of the country's most internationally renowned intellectuals. A former member of LASA, he is the author of 36 books and co-author of another 20 on Nicaragua history, economics, politics and society as well as several books on contemporary Central American, Latin American, and world affairs. In addition, he has published over 1,000 articles and commentaries. Many of his works are listed on his professional webpage: <https://oscarenevargas.com/>.

Dr. Vargas received his Ph.D from the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM). He has held professorships at: the National Autonomous University of Nicaragua; the Central American University; the Nicaraguan Polytechnic University; and the National Engineering University, among others. Among his many international appointments, Dr. Vargas worked with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Health Organization, and the United Nations Development Program, and he served as advisor to the president of the United Nations General Assembly in 2008-2009.

Dr. Vargas began his political life in the 1960s, participating in the struggle against the Somoza dictatorship. In 1967 he hid Daniel Ortega from Somoza's state security, thus saving him from imprisonment. He participated throughout the 1970s in the struggle against the dictatorship. From 1979 until 1990 he served as a political advisor to the nine-member Sandinista National Directorate, the ruling party's highest decision-making body. He broke with the Ortega government, which had returned to power in 2007, due to its violations of democratic procedures and its record of human rights abuses.

The 77-year-old Vargas had been living in exile in Costa Rica since 2018. He left the country after learning that the government has issued a warrant for his arrest due to his public criticism of the Ortega regime. On November 22, 2022 Vargas returned to Nicaragua to see his infirm sister; within ten minutes of arriving at her home, he was arrested by government authorities. He is set to be charged on December 9 for "conspiring to damage national integrity", "provocation to commit rebellion", and "propagation of false news" under the regime's draconian national security decrees.

Dr. Vargas is in fragile health. He recently underwent heart surgery and has a pacemaker installed. He requires constant medical attention. LASA calls on the Nicaraguan government to immediately release Dr. Vargas, and while he remains in custody, to be transferred from El Chipote to house arrest and to be allowed regular medical treatment.

LASA previously issued a [statement](#) on the dire situation facing the academic community in Nicaragua, in the context of a broader societal crackdown since 2018 in which the Ortega regime has sought to eliminate all sources of opposition and dissent. LASA continues to be alarmed at the ongoing repression in Nicaragua and expresses its grave concern to the international academic community over the continued violation of academic freedom and of human rights in Nicaragua.

## **About LASA**

The Latin American Studies Association (LASA) is the world's largest professional association constituted by individuals and institutions devoted to the study of Latin America and the Caribbean. LASA currently has over 12,000 members from around the world and a committee that defends academic freedom and human rights.

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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