

LASA Condemns Deportations and Persecution of International Students and Migrants

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The Latin American Studies Association (LASA) expresses its deep dismay at the mass deportations and detentions of people without due process of law, under [the Alien Enemies Act of 1798](#). It also expresses its strong opposition to the persecution and detention of international students, [the cancellation of their visas](#) and the [economic and legal reprisals against higher education institutions](#). All of these measures violate academic freedom and due process and undermine respect for human rights.

We are concerned about the implementation of repressive policies by the current U.S. administration that affect the lives of vulnerable populations and violate the fundamental rights of migrant communities. For example, Venezuelans deported to El Salvador [have not been afforded due process](#). No official procedures have been activated to notify them of their deportation; nor have [the alleged members of the Aragua Train been granted hearings](#) to defend themselves against the serious charges. According to President Donald Trump's administration, all of those deported had criminal records and ties to criminal organizations. However, in a recent court filing, an ICE official admitted that many detainees [did not have any criminal records in the U.S.](#), mainly because they had recently arrived in the country. According to reliable sources, the violation of due process [was no accident](#). Trump administration officials coordinated the deportations long before the president invoked the Alien Enemies Act. This coordination was clearly designed to [avoid judicial intervention](#).

In relation to threats to freedom of expression, LASA has followed with great concern the [cancellation of student visas in retaliation for critical thinking](#), as well as [the government's cutback of financial support to our universities](#). These are actions that clearly admonish the critical stance of the student body and faculty. These measures threaten academic freedom, undermine excellence and limit the important contributions that higher education centres and institutions make to society. Many of these threats and cancellations of federal funding are the result of university protests as well as the [implementation of DEI policies by universities](#). Diversity, equity and inclusion policies not only ensure the democratic values shared by our academic communities, but have made [our universities stronger and better than ever](#).

All of these facts are extremely alarming and reveal the weakening of a fundamental principle

of the U.S. judicial system: everyone is presumed innocent until proven guilty. Deportations, [the abuses committed in their implementation](#), and mass detentions do not represent a solution to the urgent reality faced by many migrants who leave their countries of origin in search of a better future. Likewise, the criminalization of academic freedom and reprisals against critical thinking undermine the well-being of our societies and the contribution of higher education institutions to knowledge and learning.

We urge the U.S. government to respect the due process of migrants in the United States and to contribute to the prosperity of Latin American countries. We also demand respect for critical thinking, academic freedom, and the autonomy and plurality of our institutions. The deepening of democracy and the well-being in the Latin American region helps to prevent the forced migration of citizens and contributes to regional peace. The guarantee of academic freedom, the integrity of our universities and the strengthening of a critical university body are fundamental to the preservation of democracy and human rights.

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.

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