

LASA expresses concern over policies limiting academic freedom in Venezuela

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The Latin American Studies Association (LASA) expresses its concern about the serious situation of professors in Venezuelan public universities, whose ability to carry out their academic work adequately is being seriously undermined by the deterioration of their salaries and working conditions. The lack of adequate remuneration affects academic freedom, the right to education of university students, compromising the scientific and social development of the country.

It is clear that in order to guarantee the right to freedom of expression and academic freedom, it is essential to ensure the labor rights of university professors so that they can have decent salaries and living conditions. According to the [Inter-American Principles on Academic Freedom and University Autonomy](#), adopted by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in 2021: “The distribution of resources cannot become a tool for attacking academic institutions and groups, nor a threat to critical thinking. The public budget must observe the necessary proportionality so that all higher education institutions can develop their activities with equal autonomy. Transparency is an indispensable requirement for States in their budgetary management.”

In that sense, LASA calls on the Venezuelan government to ensure the full right to academic freedom, fair remuneration and social benefits so that the academic community can carry out its most important tasks: researching, transmitting and sharing knowledge.

In Venezuela, the salary has been pulverized over the last two decades, being reduced by 95% from 2001 to date. Today, this salary does not cover the cost of the minimum food basket. For this reason, since January 2023, weekly mass [protests](#) throughout the country have been held involving teachers, professors of all levels and public administration workers. Negotiations by national and international organizations with the government to improve working conditions have been unsuccessful. [The government's refusal is accompanied by threats](#), arrests of demonstrators by the security forces, trials, bans on participation in protests, intimidation and the use of para-state violence.

The destruction of salaries, social security and decent working conditions for professors in public universities is the result of official policies towards the sector. The government has centralized the university budget and payroll, and in practice removed the quota and incentives for research. This has led to the [deterioration of scientific activity](#), reflected in a [sustained decline](#) in publications in both national and international scientific journals. National academics have drastically reduced their presence at international academic congresses, including [LASA](#), due to lack of resources, in addition to suffering restrictions in accessing visas and the ability to compete for international cooperation and research funding. Such a dramatic situation explains the exodus of researchers to other countries

or other sectors of the economy, the drastic decrease in student enrollment and the inability of universities to generate the necessary generational replacement within the faculty.

For these reasons, LASA calls on the Venezuelan government to guarantee public education, by ensuring salaries that are outside the indicators of extreme poverty, adequate space and indispensable resources for academic research and teaching.

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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