

## Statement on Nicaraguan Political Prisoner Dora María Téllez

October 2022

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The Latin American Studies Association (LASA) strongly condemns the terrible conditions in which Dora María Téllez is being unjustly held in El Chipote, an infamous prison in Managua, Nicaragua. Téllez is a former Sandinista guerrilla commander, historian, and opposition political activist. She has been a LASA member, and her published work and peaceful activism in support of democracy in Nicaragua has been recognized nationally and internationally.

Téllez's historical research has documented the process of dispossession of the indigenous people of Matagalpa and Jinotega from their lands, caused by the colonization of the Nicaraguan state in the years 1820-1890. In recognition of her work as a historian, she was inducted into the Academy of Geography and History of Nicaragua, and she holds the distinguished position of Corresponding Member of the Academy of Geography and History of Guatemala. In 2004, she was appointed Visiting Professor at the Robert F. Kennedy in Latin American Studies at Harvard Divinity School, but was barred from obtaining an entry visa, despite having traveled previously to the United States. In June of 2011, the University of Helsinki awarded her the Honoris Causa in Political Science. In May 2022, while in prison, the Sorbonne University of Paris awarded her an honorary doctorate in recognition of her political and scientific trajectory.

Téllez has been in prison since she was violently arrested in her home on June 13, 2021. In February 2022, she was convicted of the so-called crime of "conspiracy and damage to the national well-being," a new law that has been utilized to prosecute, without due process, more than 90 opposition political prisoners, including business people, religious and political leaders, activists and journalists, among others. Since her arrest she has been held in solitary confinement, without access to the outdoors, and with insufficient food. The few visitors she has had during her ordeal have observed her drastic weight loss. Recently her situation has become more dire as she, along with other political prisoners, initiated a hunger strike to protest their inhumane treatment.

LASA calls upon the Government of Nicaragua to apply the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, known as the Mandela rules, to Téllez and the more than 200 political prisoners being held in Nicaraguan prisons. LASA calls for the cessation of the inhuman mistreatment, whether physical or psychological, of Téllez and other political prisoners that may constitute torture, which constitutes a crime against humanity. LASA calls for the immediate release of Tellez; while she remains in prison, it urges the immediate end to her solitary confinement; guarantees of adequate food, sanitation and medical attention; access to books and other reading materials; and regular family visits. It also calls upon the Nicaraguan government to facilitate access

to El Chipote prison by local human rights organizations, the International Red Cross, and the United Nations Human Rights Committee to guarantee that Dora María Tellez and other political prisoners are being treated according to international standards.

### **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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