

## LASA condemns the arbitrary detention of Rocío San Miguel and demands her immediate release

February 2024

The Latin American Studies Association (LASA) strongly condemns the arbitrary detention of university professor and human rights defender in Venezuela, Rocío San Miguel, since Friday, February 9. The professor was preparing to travel to Spain with her daughter when she was approached by agents of the General Directorate of Military Counterintelligence (DGCIM) and the Bolivarian National Intelligence Service (SEBIN) at the International Airport of Maiquetía, Venezuela. In an informal communication on his X account on Sunday, February 11, Venezuela's Attorney General informed of her arrest and linked it to suspicions of one of the alleged ongoing assassinations being investigated by the government. However, Professor San Miguel has always been known and respected for the seriousness of her investigations, the weight of her statements and her constant activity in favor of dialogue and negotiation processes. As of February 12, the Attorney General continued to provide no information, neither publicly nor to her lawyers or family, about the reasons for her detention, where she is being held, or her health. At the time of writing, her whereabouts remain unknown.

San Miguel is a lawyer and has been a professor at the Central University of Venezuela (UCV) and the Metropolitan University of Caracas in Venezuela. She taught for more than 10 years Human Rights classes in the higher schools of the National Armed Forces. She is founder and president of the non-governmental organization Control Ciudadano, which specializes in military and national security issues. In January 2012, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) had already granted precautionary measures in favor of Rocío San Miguel and her daughter in Venezuela for having been subject to harassment and threats, including death threats at their home, due to the activities she carries out as part of the mission of the NGO she directs and her criticism of recent government initiatives, such as the consultative referendum organized by the Venezuelan government on the Essequibo on December 3, 2023.

The case of Professor San Miguel, however, is not an isolated event. As [LASA](#) has previously pointed out, this case is part of the systematic harassment by the Venezuelan State against academics and human rights activists who issue critical opinions on the government's management based on their research. An emblematic case is that of Professor [Javier Tarazona](#), also arbitrarily detained in July 2021. Tarazona is a professor at Universidad Pedagógica Experimental Libertador (UPEL) and director of FundaRedes, an NGO that monitors conflicts between irregular groups and the Venezuelan Armed Forces on the border with Colombia. Professor Tarazona, like Professor San Miguel, was under precautionary protection measures issued by the IACHR on June 18, 2020.

The detention of any academic for making public the product of their research represents a serious violation of their academic freedom and related rights such as education, freedom of expression or association, among others. LASA urges the Government of Venezuela to immediately and fully release Professor San Miguel and demands that her physical and psychological integrity be respected while she remains in prison. It also calls on other academic and human rights organizations and institutions to join in this demand.

- [Venezuela accuses detained activist of links to conspiracy plot](#)
- [Comunicado conjunto: Exigimos la inmediata liberación de la defensora de derechos humanos Rocío San Miguel](#)
- [Secretario de la OEA exige liberación de Rocío San Miguel y cese a la persecución política](#)
- [Venezuela Stops Pretending. The World Should, Too](#)

## 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 13,000 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).

---

### LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION

4338 Bigelow Blvd  
Pittsburgh, PA 15213  
[lasa@lasaweb.org](mailto:lasa@lasaweb.org)  
Tel: 412-648-7929  
Fax: 412-624-7145

