



## THIRD MEETING OF THE COALITION FOR ACADEMIC FREEDOM IN THE AMERICAS

### CALL TO ACTION

21 November 2024

In the context of the Third Conference of the Coalition for Academic Freedom in the Americas, held in Washington, D.C., on November 20-21, the participants issue the following Call to Action:

- 1. Academic Freedom.** We recognize the importance of normative advances at the regional and international levels over the past four years that affirm academic freedom as an autonomous and interdependent human right and the obligation of States to respect, protect, and fulfil it. Despite these advances, these principles are not being put into practice. We call on States, universities, and other stakeholders to comply with the Inter-American Principles on Academic Freedom and University Autonomy and international human rights standards. We also call on the international community to establish mechanisms to hold them accountable.
- 2. University Autonomy.** University autonomy is a cornerstone of academic freedom and central to the fulfilment of their mission in a democratic society. University autonomy must be guaranteed in all its dimensions: financial, administrative, pedagogical, and physical. States must guarantee adequate funding for higher education and refrain from increasing budget cuts.
- 3. Democracy and Education.** Democratic societies need education for democracy. To achieve this, we need the freedom to teach and learn. There is an inextricable link between academic freedom, the right to education, and democracy. It is essential that educational institutions be spaces for dialogue, diversity, and critical reflection. There is no place for hate and discriminatory speech. All education must be pluralistic, inclusive, and promote human rights.
- 4. Universities are safe places for research, teaching and the respectful exchange of ideas.** States and educational institutions must avoid silencing, persecuting and criminalizing the educational community for teaching, debating or researching any issue, including race, gender, the effects of colonialism, and climate change. We must stop the censorship, self-censorship, denialism, and growing discredit from which many of our educational institutions suffer. It is not possible to exercise academic freedom in the midst of intimidation or fear. Educational institutions must be



spaces free of violence as well as police and military occupation, where the peaceful demonstration of the educational community can take place.

**5. Power Asymmetries.** We recognize that knowledge production and academic freedom are affected by power asymmetries, structural violence, and persistent social inequalities in the Americas, including those related to ethnic/racial, gender, class, sexual diversity, and location. These inequalities are reflected in the dynamics of knowledge production and teaching, access to education, and the implementation of policies to protect scholars and students from attacks. We call for the recognition of these inequalities and the design and implementation of policies and protocols to overcome them.

**6. Sexual and Gender-Based Violence.** Sexual and gender-based violence is pervasive yet made invisible. It affects female and gender-diverse teachers, students, and administrators. It is an institutional and public policy problem throughout the Americas. Yet victims are isolated and disenfranchised when they report. They are re-victimized, stigmatized, and their jobs and lives can be put at risk. There are few protocols to prevent and combat sexual and gender-based violence, and when they do exist, their implementation is not effective. We call on the authorities, regional and international human rights systems, and educational institutions to address the problem and develop common strategies to overcome it.

**7. Implementation of international standards on academic freedom and university autonomy.** As a human right, States and higher education institutions have a responsibility to implement norms, policies, and guidelines to protect academic freedom and university autonomy in the Americas. Translating regional and international frameworks into national legislation and public policy is a challenge of prime importance.

CAFA and its partners leave the III Conference on Academic Freedom with renewed hope and commitment to work together to make academic freedom and university autonomy a reality.