

US torpedoes Cuban academics participation in LASA conference



Havana, May 24 (RHC)-- More than two hundred Cuban academics who were hoping to attend the annual Latin American Studies Association (LASA) conference were denied visas to the United States, said Cuban education officials on Thursday.

Of those who applied for visas, 212 were denied while only 24 were approved, said Rafael Cervantes Martinez, a university professor who was among those denied. Martinez denounced the move as political.

Academics reminded those at the press conference the difficulties and high costs Cubans have to bear when seeking visas in third countries after the U.S. embassy in Havana drastically cut back its consular services citing the alleged health incidents.

There has been hostile treatment, said Cervantes Martinez, who said some of his colleagues were asked if they were members of the Communist Party and were subsequently not granted visas.

"No Americans who come to Cuba are asked if they're Republicans or Democrats," said Pedro de la Hoz, Vice President of the Cuban Union of Writers and Artists.

“This reminded me of the worse times during the McCarthy era...it reminded me of the repression against American intellectuals,” de la Hoz added.

Visa denials will greatly affect the Cuban-related panels, Cervantes Martinez said, who added an emergency resolution has been signed at LASA denouncing President Donald Trump.

LASA’s next three conferences will be held in Mexico, Canada and Colombia where Cubans will not have difficulties traveling.

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