

Obituary ISS Honorary Fellow Rodolfo Stavenhagen

It is with great sadness that in early November 2016 the ISS community heard of the passing away of one of our honorary fellows, Professor Rodolfo Stavenhagen, at the age of 84.

Born in Frankfurt in 1932 into a Jewish family, Rodolfo Stavenhagen moved to Mexico City with his family escaping Nazi Germany during World War II. He was nine years old. He completed his BA in Sociology at the Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico (UNAM) and then went on to study for a further degree at the University of Chicago. He pursued a Masters in Social Anthropology at the Escuela Nacional de Antropologia e Historia in Mexico City. He obtained his PhD degree in Sociology from the University of Paris.

Rodolfo Stavenhagen was well-known and respected in Mexico and abroad as an intellectual, a sociologist and activist for indigenous communities' rights. What characterized him were his efforts to link research to practical situations and solutions. As a professor, he worked at El Colegio de Mexico (COLMEX) and UNAM, and was also much appreciated as a visiting professor to the universities of Harvard, Stanford, Paris, Geneva and Rio de Janeiro.

Rodolfo Stavenhagen was awarded his ISS honorary fellowship in 1982. With this fellowship, ISS acknowledged Rodolfo Stavenhagen's valuable contribution to the study of and research in the area of human rights and the political relationships between indigenous people and their states. Stavenhagen published in books and academic journals but also spread his ideas to a much wider community through newspapers. Throughout his career, he combined his work as an academic with highly relevant policy positions. As a former Deputy Director General of UNESCO, from 2001 to 2008 he was the first United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people.

In the international social science field, Stavenhagen was active in the Latin American Council of Social Sciences (CLACSO), the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO), the United Nations University in Tokyo and the United Nations University for Peace in Costa Rica. He was also a member of the board of the Social Science Research Council (USA) and of its Joint Committee on Latin American Studies, as well as vice president of the Academic Council on the United Nations System (ACUNS).

His links with ISS remained close: only last year, in 2015, he worked with Dr Rosalba Icaza and dozens of indigenous community representatives in Mexico to launch the international consortium on diversity and inter-culturality, 'Tejiendo Voces' (Weaving Voices).

With his death, indigenous communities in Mexico and around the world lose one of their main allies. The Nahuatl poet Mardonio Carballo stated: "This is a sad day for indigenous struggles. Rodolfo Stavenhagen died, our loved huehue (wise elder). Thanks for your work on our behalf".

Professor Stavenhagen will be sorely missed in the academic community. He is survived by his wife Elia and their daughters Andrea and Marina. We send our deeply felt condolences to his family and wish them strength in coping with this loss.