



## Jason Puracal

Jason Puracal, an American, spent 22 months being slowly starved to death in a Nicaraguan prison before he was finally released and sent home to the US in September of 2012. Jason had been wrongfully convicted of crimes that he did not commit and sentenced to 22 years in La Modelo, the maximum security prison in Nicaragua, infamous for rampant human rights violations in addition to murder, rape, and assault of prisoners. His sister and attorney, Janis Puracal, led an international fight to save his life, and the “Free Jason P” team finally won the battle on September 13, 2012.

Jason moved from Seattle to Nicaragua in 2002 to serve in the Peace Corps. After his service, he stayed in the country and eventually bought a local RE/MAX franchise where he had been working as a sales agent. He later married Scarleth, a Nicaraguan woman, with whom he has a five-year-old son.

On November 11, 2010, the Nicaraguan police raided Jason’s home and office. Masked officers carrying AK rifles searched his real estate office and seized company computers, files, and bank accounts. They forced their way into Jason’s home where his 65-year-old mother—a medical doctor who was visiting from the U.S.—and his young son were sleeping. The warrantless searches of Jason’s office, home, and vehicle yielded no evidence of a crime, yet Jason was arrested, charged, and imprisoned anyway.

Jason was beaten while in transit to the prison and denied food, water, and proper medical care. Jason (along with ten other defendants, none of whom he knew) was charged with international drug trafficking, money laundering, and organized crime. After being held without evidence for nearly nine months, Jason was wrongfully convicted and sentenced to 22 years in a Nicaraguan prison.

While the defense was summarily prohibited from accessing pretrial discovery and presenting exculpatory evidence at trial, the prosecution’s own case effectively proved that Jason did not commit the crimes with which he was charged. Police witnesses testified that no drugs were recovered from Jason. Indeed, the prosecution did not offer a single gram of drugs from any of the defendants to support this supposed case of international drug trafficking. The prosecution also failed to establish any evidence of money laundering despite seizing scores of bank and financial records from Jason’s business. The prosecution’s financial “expert” testified that no money ever changed hands between Jason and the other ten defendants. Instead, the prosecution argued that the money coming in and out of Jason’s account through RE/MAX must be evidence of money laundering and drug activity because they were large amounts. The source of the money in the RE/MAX account was, in fact, RE/MAX clients who bought and sold property in Nicaragua using the RE/MAX escrow account.

The “Free Jason P” team fought for 22 months against all odds before Jason was finally freed on September 13, 2012. Despite Jason’s release and deportation from Nicaragua, the prosecution continues to insist upon an appeal to reinstate Jason’s conviction, which has forced Jason to seek relief in the international courts. Jason and his family continue to fight to clear his name while working to give back to the community that brought Jason home. Follow their work and Jason’s efforts to rebuild his life on Facebook (handle [Release Jason Puracal](#)) and Twitter ([@FreeJasonP](#)).