**We demand the immediate release of José Rubén Zamora.**

As we reach 800 days since the detention of journalist José Rubén Zamora Marroquín, the organizations ARTICLE 19 Mexico and Central America, Amnesty International, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), Free Press Unlimited, Freedom House, the Foundation for Press Freedom (FLIP), Fundamedios, Protection International Mesoamerica, and Reporters Without Borders (RSF), as well as the IFEX-ALC network, reaffirm the urgent demand for the prompt and unconditional release of the journalist and founder of *elPeriódico*. Specifically, we call on the authorities of the Public Ministry and the Judicial Organism to act justly and impartially and to guarantee his rights at all times. We urge the Guatemalan government to implement a strategy to remedy the damage done to the journalist, his family, and Guatemalan society due to the judicial harassment he has faced for exercising his freedom of expression and press.

The editorial president and founder of the now-defunct *elPeriódico*, José Rubén Zamora, has been in detention since July 29, 2022, after being accused of the alleged crime of money laundering. The accusations, his detention, and the judicial processes have been executed with [irregularities](https://www.prensalibre.com/guatemala/justicia/familia-de-jose-ruben-zamora-denuncia-al-juez-jimi-bremer-por-retrasar-proceso/) and arbitrarily perpetrated by state officials, who currently are part of the [Engel List](https://www.state.gov/reports/section-353-corrupt-and-undemocratic-actors-report-2023/) of the United States for undermining the rule of law.

On June 14, 2023, [a court convicted Zamora](https://cpj.org/es/2023/06/periodista-guatemalteco-jose-ruben-zamora-condenado-por-lavado-de-dinero-sentenciado-a-6-anos-de-prision/) and sentenced him to six years in prison for the crime of money laundering, despite the Special Prosecutor's Office Against Impunity (FECI), led by Rafael Curruchiche, requesting forty years in prison. However, in October 2023, the Appeals Court annulled this sentence and ordered a retrial. In September of this year, the Supreme Court of Justice notified that the retrial would not occur until September 2025.

Meanwhile, Zamora has been subjected to another preventive detention measure related to two new unfounded accusations of alleged obstruction of justice and document forgery.

In August of this year, a court granted him house arrest in one of the cases for the second time; however, the journalist remains imprisoned due to the measure imposed in another case. This prolonged arbitrary detention, outside legal parameters, undermines Zamora's presumption of innocence. As one of his children has stated, "My dad's preventive detention has become a preemptive sentence for a crime he did not commit."

In light of the [systematic judicial harassment against him](https://elpais.com/america/2024-07-18/el-horror-en-la-prision-de-jose-ruben-zamora-torturas-amenazas-de-muerte-y-humillaciones-estoy-como-muerto-me-siento-aplastado.html) and acts of intimidation and harassment [against his family](https://www.vozdeamerica.com/a/familia-jose-ruben-zamora-ha-soportado-represion-contra-el-periodista-guatemalteco/7433645.html) and [various lawyers](https://latamjournalismreview.org/es/articles/caso-jose-ruben-zamora-la-estrategia-del-gobierno-guatemalteco-para-silenciar-a-la-prensa-analizan-voces-expertas/) who have formed his different defenses, international organizations and agencies again speak out and alert the public as we mark 800 days of unjust and illegal detention.

The measures taken by the Public Ministry, led by Consuelo Porras, and the FECI have always been disproportionate, extraordinary, and lacking clear evidence. This constitutes a blatant repressive strategy against Zamora’s critical voice and journalistic work, including investigations into former president Alejandro Giammattei. Zamora's journalism spans over 30 years and has focused on highlighting and reporting on the networks of corruption and impunity entrenched in the Guatemalan state.

In July 2024, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), in its press conference following [its on-site visit to Guatemala](https://www.oas.org/es/cidh/prensa/ConferenciaPrensa/2024/7_26_visita_in_loco_guatemala.pdf) from July 22 to 26, pointed out the country's lack of judicial independence and the disproportionate use of the judicial system against critical voices—such as journalists.

 In May of this year, the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention also requested the immediate release of the journalist in an [expert opinion](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/detention-wg/opinions/session99/a-hrc-wgad-2024-7-guatemala-aev.pdf) regarding Zamora's case, indicating that the journalist was imprisoned for "political opinion reasons." Furthermore, it noted that the proceedings against Zamora violate six articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, including Article 19 and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Guatemala is a party.

Therefore, the signing organizations call on the Guatemalan government, especially President Bernardo Arévalo, to take the necessary measures to remedy Zamora's situation under its international human rights obligations, particularly regarding the right of access to justice, which includes comprehensive reparations for the damage done to him—including acts of [torture](https://www.ohchr.org/es/press-releases/2024/08/un-experts-raise-alarm-terrible-conditions-which-news-publisher-jose-ruben)—and to strengthen efforts to comply with recommendations made by international organizations to end his arbitrary detention.

We emphasize that the case of José Rubén Zamora is emblematic of its impact on him and his work and for the negative and dissuasive effect on the journalistic and media ecosystem in the country. Judicial harassment in retaliation for journalistic work is a flagrant attack on the rule of law in Guatemala. #ZamoraLibre

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