



## **International organizations reject the criminalization of prominent journalist José Rubén Zamora and strongly denounce the persecution of critical voices in Guatemala**

August 3, 2022

The international organizations that promote the defense and protection of human rights and, in particular, freedom of expression, condemn the arbitrary detention for political purposes of the prominent journalist José Rubén Zamora, founder and president of the newspaper [elPeriódico](#), who is being persecuted in retaliation for his investigative work on corruption and other issues of public interest in Guatemala.

Zamora's detention is part of a systematic policy of arbitrary persecution and criminalization, led by the Attorney General's Office, against former anti-corruption prosecutors and judges, independent journalists and human rights defenders. That same day of his arrest, authorities also detained assistant prosecutor Samari Carolina Gómez Díaz, in retaliation for her work at the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG).

On Friday, July 29, in the afternoon of Guatemala City, the police and justice department security forces raided the offices of [elPeriódico](#) and entered the house of Mr. Zamora, who was held for hours incommunicado behind a locked door, along with other people who were also inside. Hours later, around midnight, security forces escorted Mr. Zamora to the court building and charged him with money laundering, racketeering, and influence peddling. Subsequently, on Saturday, July 30, the journalist indicated that he would begin a [hunger strike](#) to protest his detention. In addition, on Monday, August 1, it was learned that the bank accounts of elPeriodico were seized at the request of the Special Prosecutor Against Corruption (FECCI). Such actions seek to censor freedom of the press and further close down the country's civic space.

Rafael Curruchiche, chief of the FECCI, was the one who [requested and announced](#) the judicial arrest warrant issued against the journalist. Mr. Curruchiche was recently included by the United States Department of State in [the list](#) of corrupt and anti-democratic actors.

International organizations have warned on multiple occasions about the repeated attacks, persecution and criminalization against justice operators, journalists and human rights defenders in Guatemala. These attacks are part of a generalized pattern that has worsened, and that has as a



common denominator the use of the criminal justice system to persecute critical voices and those who have contributed to unraveling the networks of corruption in the country.

We strongly reject the arbitrary detention of journalist José Rubén Zamora, which is a direct affront to press freedom, and the exercise of independent and investigative journalism involving powerful individuals and groups, as well as serious human rights violations and large-scale corruption. We demand that the competent national authorities immediately release the journalist Jose Ruben Zamora, cease the judicial harassment against him, and guarantee his rights to the presumption of innocence and due process. Likewise, we make an urgent call to refrain from continuing the acts of criminalization and intimidation against journalists in the country. Finally, we call on international human rights organizations and the international community to speak out decisively in rejection of these acts, which call into question the integrity of the country's democratic system and seriously endanger its journalists.

American Jewish World Service (AJWS)

ARTICLE 19 Mexico and Central America

Center for Justice and International Law (CEJIL)

Due Process of Law Foundation (DPLF)

Foundation for Press Freedom (FLIP) - Colombia

Guatemala Human Rights Commission/USA (GHRC/USA)

IFEX-ALC

Impunity Watch

Latin America Working Group (LAWG)

Plataforma Internacional contra la Impunidad (PICI)

Protection International Mesoamérica

Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights (RFKHR)