

An Urgent Call to Release José Rubén Zamora

Dear [Insert the name of the government official],

As part of the [StandAsMyWitness Campaign](#), we join [CIVICUS](#), a global alliance of civil society organisations and activists in calling on the Guatemalan authorities to drop all trumped-up charges against journalist and human rights defender José Rubén Zamora Marroquín and ensure his immediate and unconditional release.

José Rubén Zamora is a prominent journalist from Guatemala, known for his courageous work in exposing government corruption. He won one of the most prestigious awards for journalism in Spanish, the Recognition for Excellence at the Gabo Festival on July 6, 2024. As the founder of the renowned independent investigative newspaper "elPeriódico," Zamora oversaw dozens of investigations into corruption since it was founded in 1996.

On July 29, 2022, José Rubén Zamora was arrested after a raid on his house, facing charges of money laundering, influence peddling, and blackmail from a complaint by a former banker under investigation. Since then, the Attorney General's Office has brought two more cases against him. He has endured almost two years of arbitrary detention, including solitary confinement under harsh conditions. His newspaper, elPeriódico, was forced to shut down, and his defense has been severely hampered by harassment, prosecution, and imprisonment of his lawyers, leading to multiple changes in legal counsel. The court has consistently rejected crucial evidence and witnesses for his defense while accepting all prosecution evidence.

Despite being convicted of money laundering and sentenced to six years in prison, José Rubén Zamora's conviction was annulled by the Appeals Court in October 2023, and a retrial was ordered. However, on June 25, 2024, the Second Chamber of Appeals for Criminal, Narco-activity, and Environmental Crimes revoked his conditional release, initially granted on May 15, 2024, concerning the alleged crime of money laundering. As a result, José Rubén Zamora remains in pretrial detention, awaiting justice.

We call on you to give José Rubén Zamora's family, friends, colleagues, and many others in Guatemala a reason to renew their hopes for a country where human rights defenders are protected and respected.

We urge you to:

Immediately and unconditionally release José Rubén Zamora and other human rights defenders incarcerated for their work.

Respect the rights to freedom of expression and press, allowing human rights defenders to operate without fear of reprisals.

Stop carrying out new arrests of journalists, human rights defenders, and cracking down on critical voices.

Sincerely,

[Insert Name of Your Organisation/Movement]

Use the details below to write to Guatemalan authorities and call for the release of José Rubén Zamora:

President of the Republic of Guatemala, Bernardo Arévalo

Twitter: @BArevalodeLeon

Attorney General of the public prosecutor's office, María Consuelo Porras. Twitter: @FiscalGeneralGT

Public Prosecutor's Office. Twitter: @MPguatemala

Oswaldo Samayoa, Executive Director of the Presidential Commission on Peace & Human Rights COPADEH

@hoss06

@copadehgt

Procuraduría de Derechos Humanos de Guatemala @PDHgt

Organismo Judicial de Guatemala @OJGuatemala

@GuatemalaGob