

His Excellency Bernardo Arévalo
President of the Republic of Guatemala
Casa Presidencial de Guatemala
A, 6A Avenida 4-18, Ciudad de Guatemala
GUATEMALA

May 3, 2025

Dear President Arévalo:

We are dismayed that journalist **Jose Rubén Zamora**, who is renowned for his investigative work on corruption, was ordered back to prison on March 10. In May 2024, the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention classified the journalist's detention as arbitrary and recommended his immediate release. On August 1, based on rigorous documentation of the case, Amnesty International determined that the journalist was being persecuted solely for his journalistic work investigating and denouncing corruption and named him a prisoner of conscience.

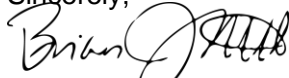
José Rubén Zamora, age 68, has founded several media outlets, including the newspaper El Periódico in 1996 but had to close it in May 2023 because its funds were frozen due to his imprisonment. Zamora was initially arrested in July 2022, only five days after his publication of corruption investigations concerning Alejandro Giammattei (the former president who in January 2024 was designated by the US State Department "as generally ineligible for entry into the United States due to his involvement in significant corruption"). Two unfounded criminal proceedings then led to his detention in July 2022. After reports of torture and solitary confinement and an international campaign calling for his release, a judge finally ordered him to house arrest in May 2024. But prosecutors persisted, and because of subsequent appeals court proceedings, he remained in pretrial detention until October 2024, having been detained for more than 800 days. Then after only four months of house arrest, an appeals court sent Jose Rubén Zamora to Mariscal Zavala prison on March 10, 2025.

José Rubén Zamora had received precautionary measures from the Inter-American Commission for Human Rights (IACHR) for nearly two decades due to the threats he faced as a journalist. His persecution and arbitrary detention are deeply distressing and, sadly, exemplifies the criminalization of journalists, environmental defenders and other social leaders who are working for justice in Guatemala. The renewed detention of Jose Rubén Zamora is clearly an attack on the freedom and integrity of the press.

We therefore strongly urge you to:

- call for the immediate and unconditional release of Jose Rubén Zamora, noting that the ability of journalists to carry out free and impartial investigations into corruption is crucial to upholding the rule of law in Guatemala
- ensure the liberty and safety of all those working for the media and reporting on justice and human rights violations

Sincerely,



Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Co-coordinators



Christine Stonebraker Martínez

copies: Lic. José Alejandro Córdova Herrera, Ombudsman for Human Rights (PDH) ~ via email
Licda. María Consuelo Porras Argueta, Fiscal General de la República / Attorney General ~ via email
Hugo Eduardo Beteta, Ambassador of Guatemala to the US ~ via email
IACHR: Andrea Pochak (Rapporteur for Guatemala) and Pedro José Vaca Villarreal (Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression) Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email
OACNUDH: Mika Kanervavuori, Oficina del Alto Comisionado de las Naciones Unidas para los Derechos Humanos en Guatemala (UNH) ~ via email
US State Department: Tobin John Bradley (US Ambassador to Guatemala) and Guatemala Desk Officers in Washington, DC ~ via email
US Senators Husted and Moreno and US Representatives Beatty, Brown, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Miller, Rulli, Sykes ~ via email

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The following people hereby urge you to take action on this matter as indicated in this letter: