

40 years in prison for Guatemalan publisher-journalist José Rubén Zamora?

<https://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/40-years-in-prison-for-guatemalan-publisher-journalist>

Like thousands of Guatemalans before him, over the past few years, Jose Ruben Zamora has been criminalized and jailed by the U.S., Canadian and western-backed “covenant of the corrupt”, ‘open-for-global-business’ regime in power, a “democratic allie”.

- Below: Excerpts from Democracy Now interview with Jose Carlos Zamora, son of jailed publisher-journalist

“Doing Journalism Is a Crime”: Guatemalan Publisher José Rubén Zamora Faces 40 Years Behind Bars

Democracy Now, June 13, 2023

- Watch/Listen: https://www.democracynow.org/2023/6/13/jose_carlos_zamora_guatemala_censorship

Prominent Guatemalan journalist José Rubén Zamora faces 40 years in prison in his sentencing hearing Wednesday for what press freedom and human rights groups say are inflated charges of money laundering. Zamora is the founder and president of the investigative newspaper El Periódico and has long reported on Guatemalan government corruption.

El Periódico was forced to shut down last month after months of intensifying harassment and persecution from President Alejandro Giammattei’s right-wing government. The government has held Zamora “as a hostage” for nearly a year as part of its wider crackdown on the press, says his son José Carlos Zamora, a journalist based in Miami who is advocating for his father’s release.

JOSÉ RUBÉN ZAMORA: They chased me and my children in the streets in a very dangerous way. My family had to go into exile. My home was illegally raided. But they haven't gone as far as now, with them formally arresting me. I don't know how long the process will take. ... This is a narco-klepto dictatorship.

[...]

AMY GOODMAN: After Zamora's detention, El Periódico was forced to stop publication of its print edition. The newspaper then shuttered its online version May 15th, due to what the paper called judicial and financial harassment from the right-wing government of the Guatemalan President Alejandro Giammattei.

[...]

JOSE RUBEN ZAMORA: In Guatemala, there is a democratic façade, but the executive controls the judiciary. And they are using criminal law to persecute anybody who they consider a critical voice.

The Giammattei administration has been systematically attacking all democratic institutions and persecuting anybody who had anything to do with fighting corruption, including the highest-profile judges, prosecutors, activists, and in the case of my father, journalists.

[...]

My father: Throughout his 30-year career, he has been shot at, kidnapped. The entire family has been attacked and kidnapped. They attempted to assassinate him in 2008. There's been car bombs. Everything you can imagine has happened.

[...]

Before, they would do two things: attack a journalist's credibility, because they know that's the only asset a journalist has, and from the other side, they would do these death threats and assassination attempts. But then they discovered that killing journalists comes at a very high price.

So, when you control the law and the judiciary, it's much simpler to use the law to persecute anybody who you consider opposition. And that's what they are doing.

[...]

But he's been 319 days in prison today in what pretty much is solitary confinement. He spends 23 hours a day in solitary, in a very small cell that is in very bad shape.

[...]

The government had three objectives when they arrested him. One was to punish him directly. He has denounced all of their corrupt acts. So they really wanted to punish him directly. The second was to shut down the newspaper, which they finally managed to do 11 months later, because they also started harassing and attacking advertisers. And the third point was to send this really clear message to all journalists in the country, that in Guatemala, doing journalism is a crime.

[...]

The true and the root cause of migration is corruption and repression and violence, and that's really what's driving migration. And until that root cause isn't addressed, people won't stop migrating. So, you definitely can fund a military police that tries to stop people south of the border, but unless these root causes are addressed, people won't stop coming to the U.S.

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