

June 20, 2025

Sent via email

Kristi Noem
Secretary of Homeland Security
Department of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Noem,

We, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) and a coalition of civil society and media organizations, are writing to express our alarm about the detention in United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) custody of journalist [Mario Guevara](#). We request that he be released on bond and that removal proceedings against him, which were triggered by three misdemeanor charges that seem to conflict with his First Amendment rights as a journalist, be dropped unequivocally and immediately.

If Guevara's case proceeds, it would represent a grim erosion of both freedom of the press and the rule of law. Journalists who are not U.S. citizens could be at risk of deportation solely because local law enforcement filed misdemeanor charges against them in retaliation for reporting without those charges ever being tried in court.

Guevara, an Emmy-award winning Spanish-language reporter, was arrested on Saturday, June 14, 2025 while covering a protest in the Embury Hills neighborhood near Atlanta, Georgia, and [charged](#) with three misdemeanors: improperly entering a roadway; obstruction of law enforcement officers; and unlawful assembly. As we stated in a [letter to local officials](#), these charges are not justified. Guevara was exercising his First Amendment rights at the time of the arrest— while wearing a vest marked “[PRESS](#)”— he was [livestreaming](#) proceedings and documenting a matter of public interest. [Video of his](#) arrest does not show any evidence of obstruction or other disorderly conduct.

It is noteworthy that, at the time he was taken into ICE custody, these charges had not been reviewed or investigated by the DeKalb County Solicitor-General's Office. Guevara has not had the opportunity to defend himself in court and present how these misdemeanor charges are violations of his First Amendment rights.

CPJ research shows that it is exceedingly rare for journalists in the United States to be arrested and charged in relation to their work given the

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Committee to Protect Journalists

protections they enjoy under the First Amendment. In the unusual cases in which journalists have been charged in relation to their protest coverage, the legal costs— at taxpayer expense— have been high, the court battles lengthy, and the results in favor of the reporters. Furthermore, arresting reporters in retaliation for their work is a crude form of censorship that harms the free flow of information and First Amendment rights enshrined in the Constitution.

Guevara's detention was extended, and bail proceedings halted after ICE issued a detainer against the journalist. On the morning of June 18, Guevara was transferred from local law enforcement custody to Folkston ICE Processing Center where he was at the time of sending this letter. It is chilling to think of the press freedom implications of a reporter facing deportation simply because they are leveled with misdemeanor charges that directly contradict the First Amendment and are unlikely to withstand a legal challenge.

Concerningly, after his transfer to ICE detention, additional misdemeanor charges were filed against Guevara on Thursday that seem to relate to an incident 31 days prior, when the reporter was livestreaming immigration official activity while driving, according to [media reports](#) and Gwinnett County records.

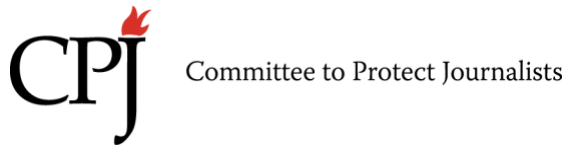
Originally from El Salvador, Guevara has lived in the United States for over 20 years and has become a fixture of the Atlanta community. He currently has work authorization in the U.S. and a path to a green card through his family: Guevara's mother and son are U.S. citizens and his brother has served in the U.S. Army.

We urge you to release Guevara on bond without delay. He was incorrectly detained based on charges that ignored his First Amendment rights as an independent reporter. It is now essential to free him from detention as an initial step to justice.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
The Committee to Protect Journalists

Atlanta Press Club
First Amendment Coalition
Freedom of the Press Foundation
Georgia First Amendment Foundation
Georgia Pro Chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ Georgia)



National Press Photographers Association
Press Freedom Defense Fund, a project of The Intercept Media, Inc.
Reporters Without Borders
Society of Professional Journalists

CC:

Todd M. Lyons, Acting Director, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
Steven Schrank, Special Agent in Charge of HSI Atlanta
Brock Nicholson, Special Agent in Charge of HSI Georgia and the Carolinas
Rep. Mark Edward Green, Chair, U.S. House Committee on Homeland
Security
Rep. Bennie G. Thompson, Ranking Member, U.S. House Committee on
Homeland Security
Sen. Rand Paul, Chair, U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security &
Governmental Affairs
Sen. Gary C. Peters, Ranking Member, U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland
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