

Friday, June 27, 2025

Lisamarie N. Bristol  
Gwinnett County Solicitor-General  
75 Langley Drive  
Lawrenceville, GA 30046

Dear Solicitor-General Bristol,

I am writing on behalf of the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), a nonprofit, nonpartisan press freedom organization, to express our concern about the three misdemeanor charges facing journalist Mario Guevara. The charges, some of which relate to traffic violations from when Guevara was livestreaming as part of his reporting practices, were filed by the Gwinnett Sheriff's Department on June 17, though the incidents occurred on May 13 and May 20.

We kindly ask your office to open an investigation as to why these charges—distracted driving, failure to obey traffic control devices, and reckless driving—were only brought against Guevara approximately one month after the alleged incidents occurred and after ICE had issued a detainer. It is our understanding that these types of traffic violations usually result in an individual being stopped by law enforcement at the moment of occurrence, or shortly after. However, according to Guevara's lawyer, the journalist was not stopped by police at the time of the alleged incidents.

In a statement cited by the Gwinnett Daily Post, the Sheriff's Office said that Guevara compromised the operational integrity of an operation of the Trafficking and Child Exploitation Unit (TRACE). However, the Sheriff's Office did not specify in what way the journalist might have done so or why law enforcement did not address this issue in real-time if, indeed, the journalist had posed any sort of impediment to the unit's operation.

Guevara, an Emmy-award winning Spanish-language reporter, was arrested on June 14 by the Doraville Police Department while [livestreaming](#) a protest in the Embury Hills neighborhood. At the time of his arrest, Guevara, who has extensive experience covering immigration, was wearing a press vest and clearly identified himself to law enforcement.

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. Despite being granted bond on the DeKalb misdemeanor charges, Guevara was held in custody by an ICE detainer. On June 18, Guevara was transferred

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Committee to Protect Journalists

to ICE custody and is currently being held at a facility in Folkston, Georgia. His immigration bond hearing is scheduled for July 1.

Last week, CPJ wrote to DeKalb County Chief Executive Officer Lorraine Cochran-Johnson requesting that charges against Guevara be dropped. The charges, also misdemeanors and unrelated to the charges facing Guevara from Gwinnett County, were dropped on Wednesday due to insufficient evidence. We applaud this decision and urge you to recognize Guevara's First Amendment rights as a journalist to document matters of public importance without fear of legal retribution.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We are glad to speak with you if it would be useful.

Sincerely,  
Katherine Jacobsen  
U.S., Canada and Caribbean program coordinator

CC

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