



Committee to Protect Journalists

Tuesday, June 17, 2025

Sent via email

Lorraine Cochran-Johnson
DeKalb County Chief Executive Officer
1300 Commerce Drive
Decatur, GA 30030

Dear Ms. Cochran-Johnson,

I am writing on behalf of the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), a nonprofit press freedom organization, to express our deep concerns about the ongoing detention of journalist [Mario Guevara](#) since his arrest on Saturday, June 14, 2025, and to request that all charges against him be immediately dropped. We strongly urge you to recognize Guevara's First Amendment rights as a journalist to document matters of public importance without fear of legal retribution.

Guevara, an Emmy-award winning Spanish-language reporter, was arrested by the Doraville Police Department while [livestreaming](#) a protest in the Embury Hills neighborhood. At the time of his arrest, Guevara was wearing a press vest and clearly identified himself to law enforcement. Video footage indicates that Guevara was in no way obstructing police activity but rather documenting the protest, a matter of public interest. The journalist was then taken to DeKalb County Jail and [charged](#) with improperly entering a roadway; obstruction of law enforcement officers; and unlawful assembly. These charges are not justified given that he was reporting at the time and in no way obstructing law enforcement activity.

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 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.

Originally from El Salvador, Guevara's case is especially acute. During a court appearance yesterday a judge [granted](#) Guevara bond. However, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) issued a detainer against the journalist, which usually sets off a deportation process. As a result, the journalist has remained in law enforcement custody. It is chilling to think that the misdemeanor charges against Guevara could trigger his deportation.

However, Guevara currently has work authorization in the country and a path to a green card through his family, according to [news reports](#). Continuing to pursue these charges against Guevara would not only set off a costly legal

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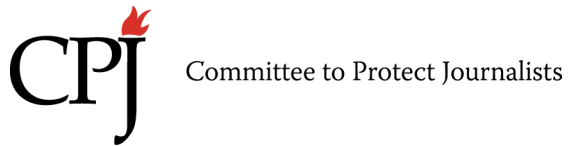
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battle about journalists' established First Amendment rights to report matters of public interest, it could create a pathway to deport a man who has been a valuable member of the Atlanta community for over 20 years.

We urge you and other law enforcement authorities to release Guevara without delay and drop all charges against him.

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

Sincerely,
Katherine Jacobsen

CC
DeKalb County District Attorney
Sherry Boston

DeKalb Solicitor-General
Donna Coleman-Stribling

DeKalb County Sheriff
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Doraville Police Chief
Charles Atkinson