

LASA condemns provisional arrest order against Dr. Rubén Ignacio Zamora Rivas

January 2024

The Latin American Studies Association (LASA) -with over 13,000 members worldwide- condemns the issuance of a provisional arrest order by the San Francisco Gotera Investigative Court on December 22, 2023 against the Salvadoran scholar and politician Dr. [Rubén Ignacio Zamora Rivas](#), who was a member of the leadership of the Legislative Assembly in 1993. In its order, the court claims that the 1993 Amnesty Law protected those who committed crimes against humanity during the 1981 massacre at El Mozote.

Dr. Zamora, former Vice President of the Legislative Assembly and member of the National Peace Commission (COPAZ), founder of the Democratic Convergence, former Ambassador of El Salvador to India, the United Nations, and the United States, former university professor and noted scholar, former Tinker Visiting Professor at Stanford University, and torture survivor (and then exiled), was neither a signatory to that law nor did he support it. He has, however, been a vocal critic of the Bukele administration for its deliberate and systematic destruction of the rule of law, of the Salvadoran Constitution, and for its egregious and massive human rights violations, particularly during the last 22 months of a State of Exception. Most recently, he condemned Bukele's unconstitutional bid for reelection in 2024. The order for his arrest has no basis in law and fits a pattern of ongoing persecution of political dissidents, which has recently included flying drones over dissidents' homes. As a result of this order, Dr. Zamora has gone into hiding, where he remains to avoid being incarcerated in jails where the documented mistreatment of inmates has led to charges of "crimes against humanity" by leading human rights organizations and the Spanish government.

The arrest order against Dr. Zamora represents a worrying trend to silence educators and dissidents and to subject higher education institutions to periodic harassment and intimidation. Reports show that [teachers](#) have been arrested and tortured under the custody of the police. In the last two years, the Jesuit-run Central American University (and especially its Human Rights Institute) has been subjected to an ongoing [smear campaign](#) by deputies in the Salvadoran Congress. Salvadoran scholars who criticize the government in social media are routinely insulted, harassed and intimidated by accounts linked to the notorious "[troll farms](#)" sponsored by the government; some have simply stopped giving interviews and appearing in talk shows. At the same time, the government of El Salvador is asphyxiating the public university system by shrinking its [budgets](#) and [autonomy](#).

LASA repudiates the ongoing targeting of educators and the instrumentalization of the Salvadoran judicial system for political purposes against dissidents, teachers, and university professors. Not only is the targeting of dissidents antithetical to democratic governance and the rule of law, but the court order does not advance justice for the victims of El Mozote. During his tenure, Mr. Bukele's actions, including the forced retirement of Judge Jorge Guzman, have had a profoundly negative impact on the pursuit of justice in the El Mozote case. If Mr. Bukele was genuinely interested in advancing justice in the case, he would permit access to the military archives about the massacre, which he has been blocking since September 2020.

LASA calls on the Salvadoran government to immediately dismiss these charges and cease the political persecution of Dr. Zamora and other critics of the government. In addition, we call upon the international community to demand an end to any political repression against scholars, dissidents, human rights activists, and journalists in El Salvador.

About LASA

The Latin American Studies Association (LASA) is the world's largest professional association constituted by individuals and institutions devoted to the study of Latin America and the Caribbean. LASA currently has over 13,000 members from around the world and a committee that defends academic freedom and human rights.

If you wish to interview a LASA Executive Council member, you can contact the LASA communications office at (412) 648-7929 or send an email to lasa@lasaweb.org.

LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION

4338 Bigelow Blvd
Pittsburgh, PA 15213
lasa@lasaweb.org
Tel: 412-648-7929
Fax: 412-624-7145

