

Press-Freedom Coalition Sounds Alarm on ICE Detention of Asylum-Seeking Journalist Luis Galeano, Calls for His Immediate Release

September 18, 2026

We, a coalition of 15 civil-society and press-freedom organizations, condemn the arrest and detention of renowned Miami-based journalist Luis Galeano by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). We urge his immediate release and for his pending asylum case to proceed.

Galeano was detained on September 14, 2026, while working as a rideshare driver to support his primary role as director of the news outlet Café con Voz. Galeano came to the United States in 2018, having been exiled from Nicaragua after the Ortega-Murillo regime stripped nearly a hundred journalists of their Nicaraguan citizenship as penalty for covering the totalitarian tactics of the Nicaraguan government. Galeano's reporting in Nicaragua consistently elevated the human rights abuses of the Sandinista government.

Since arriving in the United States, Galeano has conducted Spanish-language reporting for Miami and wider communities throughout Florida. He has a Social Security number and a work permit, with a pending asylum case filed nearly seven years ago. The U.S. government's targeting and detention of Galeano are a troubling escalation of attacks on journalists and media workers, particularly immigrant journalists, who consistently provide much-needed journalism and civic information for their communities.

In the case of Galeano, there are severe dangers should the U.S. government seek to ignore his asylum case and move to deport him. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) withdrew temporary protected status (TPS) for Nicaraguan immigrants starting in July 2025. That would mean any unfounded punitive actions taken against Galeano that might lead to his deportation could very well place him in dire circumstances upon return to Nicaragua, where he was a vocal leader in the press community advocating for human rights.

Members of Congress from both parties have raised serious concerns about Galeano's detention. Secretary of State Marco Rubio noted the day after Galeano was arrested: "Whether at home or in exile, Nicaraguans' aspirations for a future free from tyranny cannot be cancelled or erased. The United States recognizes the Nicaraguan people's strong resolve and conviction and today celebrates the ties that bind our two peoples." It would be unconscionable for the United States government to deport one of those Nicaraguans who has already suffered so much under the yoke of tyranny.

Galeano's detention is part of a broader erosion of democratic norms and human rights in the United States in which immigration authorities are increasingly being used to chill free expression and undermine reporting by and for underserved communities. This practice must stop.

We call for the immediate release of Luis Galeano.

Association of Foreign Press Correspondents
Committee to Protect Journalists
First Amendment Coalition
First Amendment Foundation
Free Press
Freedom of the Press Foundation
Inter American Press Association (SIP/IAPA)
The Media and Democracy Project (MAD)
National Association of Hispanic Journalists (NAHJ)
National Press Photographers Association (NPPA)
PEN America
Radio Television Digital News Association
Reporters Without Borders (RSF)
Society of Environmental Journalists
Society of Professional Journalists