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9 April 2025

Guatemala: Smear campaign and harassment against Nelton Rivera and other members of Prensa Comunitaria

On 4 April 2025, an anonymous user uploaded a post on X (formerly Twitter), alleging an investigation by the Prosecutor's Office into independent media outlet **Prensa Comunitaria** and its co-founder journalist **Nelton Rivera**. The post uses intimidating language and calls for the detention of the journalist, sharing a photo of him and the media outlet's logo. This message is part of an ongoing smear campaign and online harassment against members of Prensa Comunitaria, which have increased since February 2025.

[Nelton Rivera](#) is a Guatemalan historian and journalist. He is the co-founder, editor and photojournalist of independent news outlet Prensa Comunitaria Kilómetro 169. His journalistic work focuses on environmental issues, and he has been involved in the Green Blood and Mining Secrets investigations, which have been high-profile cases in the country. [Prensa Comunitaria](#) is an independent news outlet comprising of a multidisciplinary team of journalists, artists, feminists and activists of Mayan origin q'anjob'al, k'iché', q'eqchi, pocomchi', kaqchikel, chuj and mestizo. Prensa Comunitaria works from a community level to rescue historical memory and draw attention to issues such as structural violence, violence against women, racial discrimination and forced migration.

Since February 2025, Nelton Rivera and other members of Prensa Comunitaria have recorded over twenty defamatory messages from different users, as part of an ongoing smear campaign and online harassment on social media platform X, aiming to undermine their community-based journalism. Other anonymous accounts, reportedly belonging to Guatemalan media outlets, have also disseminated false information about the work of journalist Nelton Rivera and Prensa Comunitaria. The posts falsely accuse them of misinforming their readers in defence of the government, receiving funds by USAID and political parties, and having links to international criminal organisations that seek to create chaos and terror in Guatemala.

Additionally, Prensa Comunitaria have reported incidents against their members, including public statements by the Prosecutor's Office employees and other local authorities threatening to take legal action against them, as well as threats linked to their journalistic work. On 27 December 2024, after interviewing the Governor of the Department of Chiquimula, a member of Prensa Comunitaria was stopped while driving by a pick-up truck, from which an unidentified person proceeded to lower their window and fire shots into the air. On 14 February 2025, Rafael Curruchiche, from the Special Prosecutor's Office against Impunity (FECI), accused Prensa Comunitaria of receiving money from USAID during an interview with another media outlet, insinuating that an investigation will be carried out against them. On 5 February, another member of Prensa Comunitaria reported receiving a call from the vice-mayor of El Estor, who offered him a contract with the municipality to write favourably about his administration. This occurred after the journalist had worked on a report regarding deficiencies in the Centro de Atención Integral Materno Infantil (CAIMI) of El Estor. On 7 February, Prensa Comunitaria released a post about the former governor of Quetzaltenango, to which he responded by labelling the media outlet as "reactionary ideological press", alleging that its content is biased because one of its writers "benefits from corruption".

Front Line Defenders expresses its deep concern over the alarming smear campaign against journalist Nelton Rivera and members of Prensa Comunitaria. The organisation considers this to be a reprisal against their community journalism in Guatemala, as their investigations and reporting

into human rights violations and corruption, particularly within the context of extractive activities, has heavily impacted Guatemalan society and obtained international attention. This smear campaign is a blatant attempt to delegitimise the work of Prensa Comunitaria and its members restrict their freedom of expression and defense of human rights.

Front Line Defenders urge authorities in Guatemala to:

1. Publicly condemn the smear campaign against Prensa Comunitaria and its members;
2. Carry out an immediate, exhaustive and impartial investigation into the smear campaign and harassment against Nelton Rivera and other members of Prensa Comunitaria, in order to identify those responsible, bring them before a competent and impartial tribunal and apply the sanctions provided for by Guatemalan law;
3. Ensure that all human rights defenders in Guatemala are able to conduct their legitimate human rights defence work in all circumstances without fear of retaliation and free from restrictions.

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