

## STATEMENT OF ISMAEL ZAMBADA GARCÍA

Since I was brought by plane to the United States from Mexico on July 25, 2024, there have been many inaccurate reports in the media of both countries. In this statement I will provide the true facts of what happened that day. I wish to say at the outset that I did not turn myself in, and I did not come voluntarily to the United States. Nor did I have any agreement with either government. To the contrary, I was kidnapped and brought to the U.S. forcibly and against my will. The details of how this happened follow.

I was asked by Joaquín Guzmán Lopez to attend a meeting to help resolve differences among the political leaders in our state. I was aware of an ongoing dispute between Rubén Rocha Moya, the Governor of Sinaloa, and Héctor Melesio Cuen Ojeda, the former Federal congressman, Mayor of Culiacan, and Rector of the Universidad Autónoma de Sinaloa (UAS), over who should lead that institution. I was told that in addition to Hector Cuen and Governor Rocha Moya, Iván Guzmán Salazar would also be present at the meeting.

On July 25th, I went to the ranch and event center called Huertos del Pedregal just outside of Culiacan where the meeting was to occur. The meeting was scheduled for 11:00 a.m. and I arrived a little early. I saw a large number of armed men wearing green military uniforms who I assumed were gunmen for Joaquín Guzmán and his brothers. I was accompanied by four security personnel, of whom two stayed outside the perimeter. The two who entered with me were José Rosario Heras López, a Commander in the State Judicial Police of Sinaloa, and Rodolfo Chaidez, a long-time member of my security team.

While walking toward the meeting area, I saw Héctor Cuen and one of his aides. I greeted them briefly before proceeding inside to a room that had a table filled with fruit. I saw Joaquín Guzmán Lopez, whom I have known since he was a young boy, and he gestured for me to follow him. Trusting the nature of the meeting and the people involved, I followed without hesitation. I was led into another room which was dark.

As soon as I set foot inside of that room, I was ambushed. A group of men assaulted me, knocked me to the ground, and placed a dark-colored hood over my head. They tied me up and handcuffed me, then forced me into the bed of a pickup truck. During this entire ordeal, I was subjected to physical abuse, resulting in significant injuries to my back, knee and wrists. I was then driven to a landing strip about 20 or 25 minutes away, where I was forced onto a private plane.

Joaquin removed the hood from my head and bound me with zip ties to the seat. No one else was aboard the plane except Joaquin, the pilot, and myself.

The flight lasted about 2 ½ to 3 hours, without any stops until we arrived in El Paso, Texas. It was there on the tarmac that U.S. federal agents took custody of me. The notion that I surrendered or cooperated voluntarily is completely and unequivocally false. I was brought to this country forcibly and under duress, without my consent and against my will.

I am aware that the official version being told by Sinaloa state authorities is that Héctor Cuen was shot in the evening of July 25th at a gas station by two men on a motorcycle who wanted to rob his pick-up truck. That is not what happened. He was killed at the same time, and in the same place, where I was kidnapped. Héctor Cuen was a longtime friend of mine, and I deeply regret his death as well as the disappearance of José Rosario Heras López and Rodolfo Chaidez who no one has seen or heard from since.

I believe it is important for the truth to come out. This is what occurred, rather than the false stories that are circulating. I call on the governments of Mexico and the United States to be transparent and provide the truth about my abduction to the United States and about the deaths of Héctor Cuen, Rosario Heras, Rodolfo Chaidez, and anyone else who may have lost their life that day.

I also call on the people of Sinaloa to use restraint and maintain peace in our state. Nothing can be solved by violence. We have been down that road before, and everyone loses.

- Ismael Mayo Zambada