

## SWORN STATEMENT OF JF-L

I, JF-L, swear under penalty of perjury that the following is true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief. This declaration was read to me in the Spanish language before I signed it in English.

1. My name is JF-L. I was born on XXX in San Juan Ostuncalco, Quetzaltenango, Guatemala. I am a citizen of Guatemala. I suffered terrible harm in my country. My father, RFE, mistreated me and physically abused me as a child. I also witnessed severe domestic violence against my mother. I became involved with politics in Guatemala because I thought that doing so could help me get a job in the future. However, it led me to be targeted by people who did not like my support of a political party in Guatemala called UNE. I am afraid to return to Guatemala because I believe I will be harmed again because of my political opinion and my status as a young, single, indigenous woman in Guatemala.

### *Growing up in the Mam ethnic group in Guatemala*

2. I am a member of the Mam ethnic group. I learned the local language with my family and my community and later learned to speak Spanish fluently in school. I still have an accent when I speak Spanish, and it would be obvious to other people that I am not a native speaker.
3. The Mam people are different from other Guatemalans, as we speak a different language and eat differently. I endured discrimination in Guatemala because of my ethnic background and darker skin, especially from other girls at school who were not of indigenous background. We refer to the Spanish-speaking population in Guatemala as “ladinos” and to the girls as “ladinas.” The ladinas would always make comments

against me, saying that I wasn't as smart as they were and that I couldn't work with them. They would say that indigenous people are disgusting.

*Abuse by my father*

4. When I was growing up in Guatemala, I mostly lived with my mother, REL. My father came to the United States when I was just a few months old, so my memories as a young child are all with my mother. My father lived in the United States for about ten years or so. When I was about ten years old, he returned to Guatemala with another woman. That woman already had a child from a prior relationship, and he was supporting that child. That woman then became pregnant and eventually gave birth to a girl.
5. After my father came back to Guatemala, we all lived together for about a year. During that time, he was constantly abusing and mistreating my mother. He would insult her and call her names. I remember there were times when he would hit her so hard that there was blood coming out of her nose. He would also hit her in the stomach. Sometimes my mother would try to come into my room to hide. I would always try to protect my mother as best as I could. My father would also hit me, often in my head, and would say that I was just the same as my mother.
6. Around August 2010, my mother filed a complaint against my father after he abused her. He was in jail a very short time and then he returned home after he paid to be released.
7. Around November 2010, my father eventually took steps to have my mother thrown out of the house that we were living in with him. I remember clearly that I was eating beans one afternoon with my mother. Suddenly there were police officers outside,

shouting “Get out of here.” My father was there too, and he shouted to my mother “I don’t want to see you here anymore.” My mother was thrown out of the house and was not allowed to take any of her belongings with her. They told me that I had to always stay about a meter away from my mother and they kept us separated.

8. After that incident, I stayed for some time with my father because I had no other choice. I hated living with him because of the way he mistreated me and everything that he had done to my mother. My mother finally won custody of me, although my younger brother continued to live with my father. My brother ended up getting married when he was very young, just fifteen years old, and he works out in the fields to support his wife. It makes me very sad to see what has happened to my brother. He now drinks out of desperation and sadness over everything that has happened to our family.
9. My father eventually had three children with the woman that he left my mother for. The first, S, is a girl. I don’t know the names of the other two and I have never asked. I don’t like to think about these new children, especially because I have heard that my father treats them better than he ever treated my brother and me. I heard that he will take his daughter to the market and buy her sandwiches and smoothies, and that makes me feel bad. This experience I had with my father’s abuse affected me a lot and continues to affect me to this day.

### *My involvement in politics in Guatemala*

10. I decided to become involved in politics because I thought that when I finished high school, I would have the opportunity to get a job to help support my dear mother and to move forward in life. That is why I got involved with the political party TODOS in 2015. I helped to support a candidate Juan Aguilar who eventually became the mayor

of San Juan Ostuncalco. Unfortunately, once he became mayor, he did not do a very good job. He did not accomplish anything, and he never fulfilled what he had promised during his campaign. That is why I became involved with another political party in Guatemala, called UNE, in 2018. Again, I wanted to support them in order to be able to get a job in the future.

11. On June 26, 2018, we started to get organized for the June 2019 elections. That is when we started to meet at the headquarters with the young people. We went out to do projects and propaganda, to provide medical care, and to teach people simple but useful tasks, such as how to crochet. The candidate we were supporting, Felix Marroquin, is also a dentist and he would give the people free dental care.

12. Around July 8, 2018, the party that I was supporting before, TODOS, realized that I was supporting another political party. Several police officers told me as I was leaving the party headquarters to go home that, if I did not return to help TODOS, that they were going to look for me. I became frightened and started to run. They told me that, although you might run, we are going to look for you.

13. After that, I received another threat on September 15. That is Guatemala's Independence Day so there are always a lot of celebrations that day. I went to watch a parade at around 2pm. I was walking through the park and passed in front of the municipality where there were police officers who insulted me, calling me "pendeja" ("stupid") and "hipocrita" ("hypocrite"). They threatened me that they were going to rape and kill me.

*Attack in my home*

14. A few days later, on September 20, 2018, I was at home. It was around nine o'clock at night. In Guatemala, we have a custom of going into temascales (which are sort of like saunas). We have our own temascal on our property. I hadn't yet eaten when I came out of the temascal, so I went to get my food in the kitchen. I had a bad feeling and then I could hear that someone was behind me. I turned around to see two police officers were standing there. They were wearing masks so that I could not see who they were. I was extremely scared and traumatized and didn't know what to do. I am sure that they were targeting me because of my political beliefs, given that this was only five days after the other threat I had received.
15. They grabbed me by the hand and one of them had a knife in his hand. They gestured for me to be quiet. They said that they were going to take advantage of me. I am a Christian woman and I believe in God. At that moment, I asked for strength from God. All I could do was scream. My mother quickly came out to see me, as did my grandparents. When the two men heard that my mother and my grandparents were coming, they hit me in the nose and my nose began to bleed. They then ran to the fields. My grandparents lit a lantern after they left but they had already escaped.
16. My mother treated me with a natural remedy. At that moment, I was very afraid and shivering. Since that incident, I always stayed in my room from 6pm on. That feeling of fear that I had stayed with me, and I always felt that the same thing was going to happen to me again. I was always afraid of the dark and had nightmares about what had happened to me.
17. I told my mother what happened, but I did not feel like I could tell my grandparents. They are older and I knew that getting very upset could affect their health and I didn't

want to hurt them in any way. My mother and I spoke after this incident, and we made the decision that I would come to the United States.

*Coming to the United States*

18. I came to the United States so that I would have protection and would feel safe. I left Guatemala on approximately September 29, 2018 and entered the United States on October 19, 2018. I was detained by immigration officials and expressed my fear of returning to Guatemala. I was released from detention in December 2018 and came to live in Maryland.

19. I know that there were elections in Guatemala in June 2019. The UNE candidate that I was supporting, Felix Marroquin, won the election to be the mayor of San Juan Ostuncalco. I fear that the former mayor and the police officers who supported him will be even more angry now that they are out of power. I believe that they will come after me. The political situation in Guatemala is very difficult and corruption is rampant. I don't believe that I can live safely there.

20. My mother also told me that some men came to the house asking about where I was. She mentioned that I had come to the United States after having been threatened by the TODOS party. They made a comment that this was the same party that her ex-husband was supporting. This made me think that maybe my father had also been involved in paying the police to attack me. My father never loved me, and I believe he is capable of taking that type of revenge against me.

*My mother's death*

21. In October 2022, my mother died of complications from cancer at the age of forty-three. I was devastated by the news. My mother was the one person in life who fully loved me. I dreamed that one day we would be reunited and now she is gone. She did not receive good medical treatment in Guatemala. They gave her some treatment, but it only made her condition worse.
22. When I was a young girl, I had a medical exam in Guatemala and I was told that I have a hole in my heart. My mother never had the money to seek medical care for me so it went untreated. Lately I have been suffering from high blood pressure because of all the stress related to my mother's death. I have been told that it is especially dangerous for me to have high blood pressure because of my existing heart condition. I have been getting medical treatment to get my heart checked out. That makes me afraid to go back, as I am afraid that if my condition worsens I won't be able to be treated for it. Seeing what happened to my mother and how the doctors could not help her makes me even more afraid to return to Guatemala.
23. Please let me remain in the United States where I can be safe. I am very afraid to return to Guatemala.

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JF-L

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Date