

# URGENT ACTION

## JOURNALISTS FACE CRIMINAL CHARGES

Journalist Georgia Fort, along with other members of the press, documented a protest on 18 January 2026 inside a church in Minnesota as one of the church's pastors was an Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) field office director. For this journalistic coverage, the US Department of Justice is prosecuting Fort and others representing the press, with serious criminal charges, including a hate crime. Since January 2025, the media and journalists have been targeted for reporting on the Trump administration's actions. These charges seek to intimidate and silence journalists. We urge the authorities withdraw all charges against members of the press.

### TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

**Assistant Attorney General, Harmeet K. Dhillon**

*Civil Rights Division*

*U.S. Department of Justice*

*950 Pennsylvania Avenue NW*

*Washington DC 20530 USA*

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**US Attorney for Minnesota, Daniel Rosen**

*U.S. Courthouse*

*316 N. Robert Street, Suite 404*

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*Dear Assistant Attorney General, Harmeet K. Dhillon*

*I am writing to express deep concern about the prosecution of **Georgia Fort** and other members of the press for simply covering a protest in Minneapolis on 18 January 2026. It is evident that the arrest and subsequent prosecution of Georgia Fort and others from the press underscores a disturbing escalation of a systemic disregard for human rights.*

*As I am sure you are aware, Article 19 of the International Covenant for Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which the United States has ratified, enshrines the right to freedom of expression, which protects a free press and the right of journalists to seek and share information. However, for the Department of Justice to prosecute Georgia Fort and other individuals from the press with criminal charges, including a hate crime, for reporting on a protest inside Cities Church in St. Paul, Minnesota—where one of the pastors was an acting ICE field office director at the time—is to target them for simply doing their job as journalists and breaches their human rights.*

*Reporting is not a crime. Rather, ensuring the exercise of the right to freedom of expression and of press freedom is integral to holding government officials and leaders accountable for their actions. These charges deliver a chilling and intimidating effect on journalists who are covering issues that are most pressing to communities.*

***I therefore strongly urge that you drop the charges against Georgia Fort and the other press individuals in the case of *United States v. Levy Armstrong (0:26-cr-00025)* in the District Court of Minnesota.***

*Yours sincerely,*

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

In December 2025, the Trump administration launched a federal immigration crackdown known as “Operation Metro Surge” in the St. Paul/Minneapolis, Minnesota region (“Twin Cities”). The Department of Homeland Security deployed more than 3,000 federal immigration agents, who used military tactics against residents, causing fear and panic throughout the Twin Cities. Residents began to mobilize in a number of ways, including organizing protests against “Operation Metro Surge”. Some residents of the Twin Cities described the experience as being “under siege” given the violent and hostile presence of federal immigration agents.

On 7 January 2026, ICE agents killed Renee Good, a community observer on federal immigration actions in Minneapolis. Following her death, on 18 January, a group of demonstrators protested inside a church in the city of St. Paul because one of the church’s pastors was an acting field office director for ICE there at the time. Journalist Georgia Fort and others representing the press arrived at the scene to document the protest.

Video footage of the protest made public by Don Lemon, one of the journalists at the scene, show peaceful demonstrators chanting slogans that called for justice for Renee Good. Within a few days, the protesters were arrested. The federal government sought to arrest the journalists and other members of the press at the same time, but their request was denied on three separate occasions by a magistrate judge, district court judge, and appellate court judge. The Department of Justice then called for a grand jury hearing resulting in a grand jury indictment on three felony charges, including a hate crime statute against Georgia Fort and two other members of the press who reported on the demonstrations. In the early morning on 30 January, Georgia Fort and the others from the press were arrested (an additional press member was indicted in late February).

Following their arrests, President Trump posted on social media multiple messages aimed at Don Lemon, including one calling for a 40-year-sentence to be applied to him and mocking his arrests. Georgia Fort, who is the founder of a press organization dedicated to delivering empowering stories that speak to Black communities, livestream reported federal agents arriving at her home in the early hours to arrest her.

Under the Trump administration, white supremacy and governance have been interlocked and delivering heavy-handed racist policies in immigration and law enforcement. When the Trump administration deployed more than 3,000 federal immigration agents in Minnesota, the justification was to target the Somali American community who the President publicly called “garbage.” Three out of four of the members of the press facing charges are Black Americans. They were doing their human rights protected job to report on protests and the public outrage to “Operation Metro Surge”. For being members of the press, the government has arrested them under a hate crime statute and a 19<sup>th</sup> century statute that was originally aimed to rein in the violent white supremacy hate group Ku Klux Klan’s mass assault against formerly enslaved African Americans.

Since January 2025, the Trump administration has consistently attacked journalists for reporting on its actions with scrutiny. Examples of these attacks include the deportation of USA-based journalist and asylum-seeker Mario Guevara who reported on ICE raids; the FBI seizure of personal and professional devices from a Washington, DC reporter’s home; the White House’s launch of a website focused on attacking journalists and media outlets not in line with the administration; and the weaponization of the Federal Communications Commission’s authority to approve licensing and corporate media mergers based on corporate rejection of diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives.

The active targeting and discrediting of reporters and the media by those in power is a common authoritarian practice. Narrative control and silencing dissent or non-aligned reporting are key strategies for those in power to seek to act without accountability. The right to freedom of expression and press is a way for the public to hold leaders accountable; without this, leaders are further emboldened to act with impunity.

### **PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET:** English

You can also write in your own language.

### **PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL:** 10 May 2026.

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

### **NAME AND PRONOUN:** Georgia Fort, she/her