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Student Press Law Center condemns arrest of CNN crew in Minneapolis as an affront to U.S. democracy and example of racial bias

The Student Press Law Center condemns in the strongest terms the arrest of CNN journalist Omar Jimenez and his crew in Minneapolis during a live broadcast early this morning, Friday, May 29. Jimenez was covering protests and unrest in the wake of the [death of George Floyd](#), a 46-year-old black man who died on Monday after a white police officer handcuffed and kneeled on his neck for nearly eight minutes while Floyd repeatedly said "I can't breathe."

"The arrest of Omar Jimenez and his crew is the latest in a string of egregious attacks on press freedom and attempts to stifle the reporting of important — if difficult — stories. Journalists covering protests work hard to balance the public's right to know with the safety of those around them; they should never face handcuffs simply because they are present. The racial implication of Jimenez's arrest while his white colleague worked undisturbed nearby is also cause for significant concern," said Hadar Harris, executive director of the Student Press Law Center.

[As their camera kept rolling](#) and footage was broadcast live, Jimenez, who is black and Latino, cameraman Leonel Mendez and producer Bill Kirkos all displayed their press credentials and fully cooperated with police, including when they were each placed in handcuffs and led away. Their white colleague, reporter Josh Campbell, was working nearby and not arrested. Campbell noted the differential treatment [in an interview](#): "I identified myself ... they said, 'OK, you're permitted to be in the area,'" recounted Campbell. "I was treated much differently than (Jimenez) was." Jimenez and his crew were later released by the Minnesota State Patrol without charge. Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz apologized to CNN.

"To date, there still has been no clear explanation as to why the crew was taken into custody. We join with other press freedom and civil rights organizations to demand a full explanation of the incident, disciplinary action against the officers involved, and a clear statement from the Minneapolis police affirming the right of journalists to report without fear of harassment or interference from authorities," said Harris.

Jimenez's arrest did not take place in a vacuum as anti-press rhetoric has grown and journalists have been targeted in the U.S. and around the world. [The U.S. Press Freedom Tracker](#) has documented that since 2017, 40 journalists have been arrested while covering protests.

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The Student Press Law Center (splc.org, [@splc](https://twitter.com/splc)) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit working at the intersection of law, journalism and education to promote, support and champion the rights of student journalists and their advisers at the high school and college levels. Based in Washington, D.C., the Student Press Law Center provides information, training and legal assistance at no charge to student journalists and the educators who work with them. Among other resources, the Student Press Law Center [has a guide for covering protests](#) that includes information on what student journalists can do if arrested while reporting.

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