Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

June 25, 2026

The Honorable Harmeet K. Dhillon
Assistant Attorney General
Civil Rights Division
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Ms. Dhillon,

We write to express our grave concern over the federal indictment of independent journalist Georgia Fort, as well as other journalists, for engaging in constitutionally protected newsgathering related to documenting a protest on January 18, 2026, inside a church in Minnesota. The government does not allege that Ms. Fort committed any act of violence, made any threat, or physically obstructed any person. She has been charged with three felonies, including a hate crime, for being present at, and reporting on, a protest. This prosecution targets activity that lies at the very heart of the First Amendment's protections for the press.

Ms. Fort is a three-time regional Emmy Award-winning journalist, the founder of BLCK Press, and a co-founder of the Center for Broadcast Journalism. Over the course of a seventeen-year career in community journalism in the Twin Cities, she has covered events of major national significance, including the sentencing of Derek Chauvin. Most recently, she was on the ground documenting the federal immigration enforcement operation in Minneapolis known as "Operation Metro Surge," which deployed more than 3,000 federal agents to the region beginning in December 2025.[1]

In the wake of Renée Good's death and the escalating enforcement operation, a group of demonstrators protested on January 18 at Cities Church in St. Paul, Minnesota. The protest was directed at that particular church because its pastor, David Easterwood, simultaneously served as the acting director of the local ICE field office.[2] Ms. Fort attended the protest as a journalist. She carried a camera, identified herself as a member of the press, and documented the events as they unfolded.

As has been widely reported, the Department of Justice succeeded in obtaining an arrest warrant and successive indictment against Ms. Fort, under unusual circumstances that included the Civil Rights Division assuming control of the case rather than the United States Attorney's office in

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[1] https://www.essence.com/news/georgia-fort-journalist/

[2] https://www.startribune.com/journalists-georgia-fort-don-lemon-arrested-over-protest-during-st-paul-church-service/601573975

Minnesota.[3]Career prosecutors in the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Minnesota reportedly declined to participate in the prosecution because the facts and evidence did not support the charges.[4]

On January 30, 2026, federal agents arrived at Ms. Fort's home before dawn and arrested her in front of her children. Approximately two dozen agents were involved in the arrest of a journalist with no criminal history who had been documenting community events. That same day, Magistrate Judge Dulce Foster ordered Ms. Fort's release, rejecting the government's characterization of the alleged offenses as crimes of violence and denying the government's request for enhanced conditions of release.[5]

We want to address the specific charges. Ms. Fort has been charged under 18 U.S.C. § 241, Conspiracy Against Rights, and 18 U.S.C. § 248(a)(2), the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act. Section 241 was enacted in 1870 to protect Black Americans from the Ku Klux Klan. The FACE Act was enacted in 1994 to protect patients and providers at reproductive health clinics from violent anti-abortion extremists. We are deeply familiar with the FACE Act and its purposes to protect the vulnerable from intimidation and violence, not to criminalize journalism. The current Administration has spent years criticizing the FACE Act as an example of federal overreach when it was used to protect reproductive health care access. It is now deploying that same statute against a Black woman journalist for documenting a protest. This should trouble all Americans. As Ms. Fort herself has observed, a law written to protect Black people from racial terror and a law written to protect women seeking reproductive care are being turned against a Black woman journalist for doing her job.[6]

The First Amendment provides that "Congress shall make no law . . . abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press." The Constitution guarantees journalists the right to report freely without fear of government retribution. The Supreme Court has held that political speech and press freedom receive the highest constitutional protection because "debate on public issues should be uninhibited, robust, and wide-open."[7] Free Americans should not live in fear of their government targeting them for exercising their constitutional rights. That principle does not change because the journalist in question is covering a story the Administration finds unwelcome.

Stemming from our deep concern over the Department's decision to prosecute Ms. Fort specifically and journalists generally, we ask that you provide us answers to the following questions so that the House of Representatives can discharge its responsibility to conduct

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[3] https://www.cbsnews.com/minnesota/news/independent-journalist-georgia-fort-arrested-cities-church-protest-minneapolis/

[4] https://www.jurist.org/news/2026/02/journalist-don-lemon-pleads-not-guilty-in-minnesota-first-amendment-case/

[5] https://www.courtlistener.com/docket/72213775/united-states-v-levy-armstrong/#entry-61

[6] https://www.essence.com/news/georgia-fort-journalist/

[7] New York Times Co. v. Sullivan, 376 U.S. 254 (1964).

oversight and inform Americans about the weaponization of the federal government by this Administration:

(1) Since its enactment in 1994, how many times have criminal charges been brought under the FACE act against a journalist?

(2) Please describe the Department's view of how Ms. Fort's conduct as a journalist has differed from the conduct of journalists who have covered anti-abortion threats and intimidation against women and doctors and why the Department has not brought criminal charges in those instances?

(3) Are there other instances where Section 241 Conspiracy Against Rights charges have been brought against journalists? If so, please list them.

(4) Charges under Section 241 were notably brought against Cecil Ray Price in Mississippi in 1965 for his role in orchestrating the kidnapping and subsequent murder of civil rights workers James Chaney, Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner as a Ku Klux Klan member. Please describe any ways in which the Department believes Ms. Fort's conduct is similar to that of Mr. Price.

(5) What is the current status of any employees of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Minnesota who worked on the initial consideration of criminal charges against Ms. Fort? Have any of them been disciplined, reassigned or terminated because of their refusal to participate in the prosecution of Ms. Fort?

Reporting is not a crime. The prosecution of a journalist for bearing witness should concern every American who values a free press and the constitutional principles on which this country was founded.

Sincerely,

Sydney Kamlager-Dove
Member of Congress

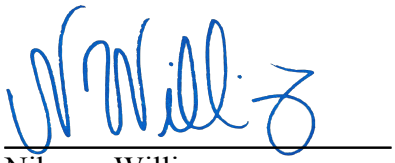
Jahana Hayes
Member of Congress

Bonnie Watson Coleman
Member of Congress

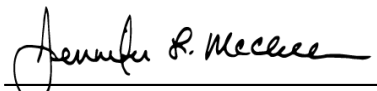
Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress



Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress



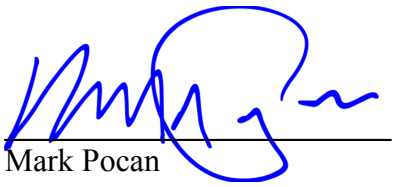
Nikema Williams
Member of Congress



Jennifer L. McClellan
Member of Congress



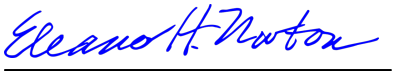
Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Member of Congress



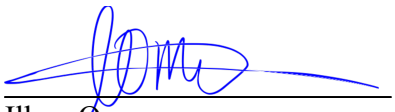
Mark Pocan
Member of Congress



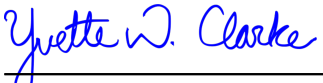
Joyce Beatty
Member of Congress



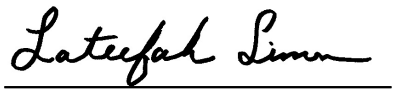
Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



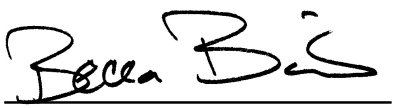
Ilhan Omar
Member of Congress



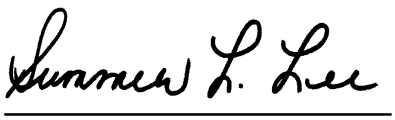
Yvette D. Clarke
Member of Congress



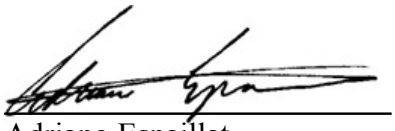
Lateefah Simon
Member of Congress



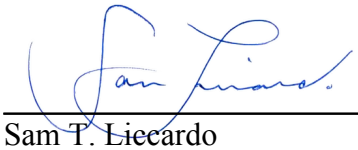
Becca Balint
Member of Congress



Summer L. Lee
Member of Congress



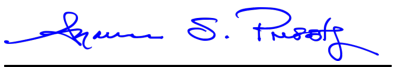
Adriano Espaillat
Member of Congress



Sam T. Liccardo
Member of Congress



Maxwell Alejandro Frost
Member of Congress



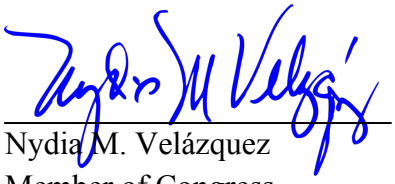
Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress



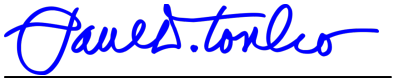
Frank Pallone, Jr.
Member of Congress



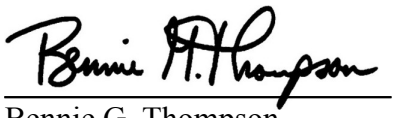
Betty McCollum
Member of Congress



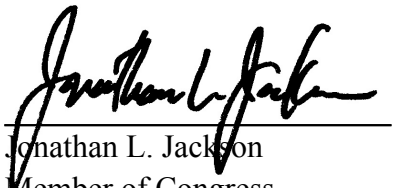
Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress



Paul D. Tonko
Member of Congress



Bennie G. Thompson
Member of Congress



Jonathan L. Jackson
Member of Congress



Terri A. Sewell
Member of Congress



James P. McGovern
Member of Congress

Delia C. Ramirez
Member of Congress

Jasmine Crockett
Member of Congress

Grace Meng
Member of Congress

André Carson
Member of Congress

Veronica Escobar
Member of Congress

Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress

Dwight Evans
Member of Congress