



Society of Environmental Journalists

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The Honorable Merrick B. Garland
Attorney General of the United States
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530-0001

Dear Attorney General Garland:

During the recent protests over police killings of Black people in Minnesota, there were multiple incidents reported of police harassment and violence against journalists covering those protests. The Society of Environmental Journalists joins [other journalism groups and media outlets](#) in condemning those actions by law enforcement which have interfered with journalists' ability to report on matters of intense public interest and concern.

SEJ calls on the Department of Justice to expand its investigation of the Minneapolis Police Department, which you announced yesterday, to include the violations of civil rights and of the First Amendment stemming from police targeting journalists in Brooklyn Center and anywhere else in Minnesota that occurred during the recent protests.

Despite a judge's order against doing so, police have targeted journalists with arrest, physical assault, chemical agents, destruction of property and harassment. They also have cataloged journalists by photographing them, their press credentials and their identification cards.

Especially egregious was the targeting of Asian-American journalist, Carolyn Sung, from CNN, who was thrown to the ground by state troopers, zip-tied and taken to jail, despite repeatedly identifying herself as a journalist. During her detention, she reported that one officer made a racist remark, yelling "Do you speak English?" Her treatment bears disturbing similarity to the arrest of CNN journalist Omar Jimenez, who is Black, on live television last May in Minneapolis.

Additionally, Joshua Rashaad McFadden, a freelance photographer covering the protests for the *New York Times* who is Black, [was stopped and forced](#) from his car by baton-wielding police as he tried to leave the area. He reported they struck his legs and his camera lens.

These assaults represent an attack on the freedoms to which all Americans are entitled under the U.S. Constitution. Reporting, filming and photographing police and protesters on public streets are all essential to informing Americans

about what is happening and why in communities across the country that have erupted in anger and violence.

SEJ stands in solidarity with all journalists who have been assaulted or arrested while reporting on these events. We call on all law enforcement officers and agencies everywhere to respect journalists' First Amendment right to cover protests as well as police conduct. The people have a right to know, more than ever before, during this critical time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Sadie Babits". The signature is fluid and elegant, with a prominent loop at the end of the last name.

Sadie Babits
President, Society of Environmental Journalists