

May 7, 2018

Mr. David D. Rivera

Director of the New Orleans Field Office
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
1250 Poydras, Suite 325
New Orleans, LA 70113

cc: Scott L. Sutterfield: Assistant New Orleans Field Office Director, ICE

Director Rivera:

We, the undersigned organizations, are calling for the immediate release of unjustly detained journalist Manuel Duran Ortega.

As organizations advocating for press freedom, immigrant rights and racial justice, we are outraged by Duran's arrest and detainment, which are in direct violation of the First Amendment.

Duran is a well-known and respected journalist in Memphis. He is also an undocumented immigrant who fled El Salvador over a decade ago — where he worked as a TV station manager — after his life was threatened.

The Memphis police arrested Duran on April 3 while he was covering a local protest over the targeting of undocumented immigrants by local and federal law enforcement agencies. Duran was livestreaming the protest that took place during the city's commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the assassination of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

The police claim they arrested Duran for refusing orders to get off the street. Two women held onto Duran while he was being arrested and told the police several times that he was a journalist. Duran also wore a press badge around his neck. But the police arrested Duran anyway and charged him with disorderly conduct and obstruction of a highway or passageway.

The Memphis police dropped the charges against Duran on April 5. But instead of releasing him, they turned him over to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Duran is now being detained in Jena, Louisiana.

The Southern Poverty Law Center, which is representing Duran, and the Latino community in Memphis believe Duran is being targeted because of his critical coverage of the city's police department and Department of Homeland Security. He wrote stories about police abuse and misconduct, immigration detention centers and coordination between Memphis police and ICE.

Newspapers such as *The Nashville Tennessean* and *The Memphis Commercial Appeal* have also denounced his arrest and detention.

We do as well. The First Amendment guarantees a free press. That means that reporters like Duran can't be subject to censorship by the government, nor can government use any measures to prevent the expression of ideas before they are published, or to punish reporters for doing their job. Prior restraint by any official means is clearly unconstitutional.

We are calling on ICE to release Manuel Duran Ortega immediately. The unlawful arrest of Duran violates his First Amendment rights and is an attack on press freedom in our country.

Sincerely,

Joseph Torres

Free Press

Faiz Shakir

American Civil Liberties Union

Chris Faraone

Boston Institute for Nonprofit Journalism

Mike Katz-Lacabe

Center for Human Rights and Privacy

Steven Renderos

Center for Media Justice

Brandi Collins-Dexter

Color Of Change

Sue Udry

Defending Rights and Dissent

Shannon Soper

Dignity and Power Now

Colin Kinniburgh

Dissent Magazine

Janine Jackson

Fairness & Accuracy In Reporting

Joy Hyvarinen

Index on Censorship

Matt DeRienzo
Local Independent Online News Publishers (LION)

Tracy Rosenberg
Media Alliance

George Freeman
Media Law Resource Center

Bryan Mercer
Media Mobilizing Project

Monika Bauerlein
Mother Jones

Christopher Finan
National Coalition Against Censorship

Carmen Scurato
National Hispanic Media Coalition

Suzanne Nossel
PEN America

Lark Corbeil
Public News Service

Margaux Ewen
Reporters Without Borders North America

Rebecca Baker
Society for Professional Journalists

Julie Winokur
Talking Eyes Media

Brian Dolinar
Urbana-Champaign Independent Media Center

Pali Makam
WITNESS

David A. Goodman
Writers Guild of America, West