

Journalists reporting on George Floyd protests come under police attack

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Minneapolis, June 1 (RHC)-- Journalists reporting on U.S. protests over the death of unarmed Black man George Floyd in police custody have increasingly been targeted by law enforcement. Police teargassed several journalists covering demonstrations in Minneapolis, where Floyd died Monday following his violent arrest by four white police officers.

Video footage widely shared on social media show Floyd, 46, being pinned down to the ground by Derek Chauvin who held a knee over his neck for several minutes. Chauvin was arrested Friday and charged with third-degree murder. But the arrest failed to quell the angry protests that have now spread to at least 30 cities.

Molly Hennessy-Fiske, a Los Angeles Times journalist, said Minnesota state patrol "fired teargas canisters on us at point-blank range" as she and a group of other journalists were reporting outside the fifth police precinct in Minneapolis.

Hennessy-Fiske said the group had clearly identified themselves as reporters and asked the officers for instructions. "They did not tell us where to go. They didn't direct us. They just fired on us," she said in a video shared on Twitter.

The incident took place a day after an African-American journalist with the CNN was arrested and handcuffed by police in Minneapolis as he was broadcasting live on air. The journalist, Omar Jimenez, was released an hour later after Minnesota Governor Tim Waltz personally apologized for the incident.

Linda Tirado, a freelance journalist in Minneapolis, was also hit in the left eye by a rubber bullet fired by police. The journalist later announced on Twitter that she had permanently lost vision in that eye. Despite wearing protecting goggles at the time, Tirado had to undergo surgery after her left eyeball burst when she was shot.

Similarly in Louisville, Kentucky, a riot-squad policeman fired what appeared to be pepper-spray pellets at a local TV crew covering the unrest. "I'm getting shot!" Kaitlin Rust, a reporter with local TV channel WAVE-3, cried out on camera.

"Authorities in cities across the US need to instruct police not to target journalists and ensure they can report safely on the protests without fear of injury or retaliation," said a statement from the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ).

Members of the press have also come under attack by protesters as well.

In Atlanta, the CNN headquarters was attacked Friday by several dozen demonstrators. Someone in the crowd threw a flash grenade into the building's lobby.

And on Saturday morning, a Fox News reporter was attacked by protesters in front of the White House.

"If you are a protester, do what you feel is right, but don't stop us from doing what we know is the job we have to do for the public. Please do not target, intimidate, humiliate or block our efforts," said a statement from the Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ).

President Donald Trump has frequently attacked the news media as a source of what he calls "fake news," claiming that journalists are, in his words, "the enemy of the people."