

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

MAJORITY (202) 225-5074

MINORITY (202) 225-5051

<https://oversight.house.gov>

January 31, 2026

Mr. William Blier
Acting Inspector General
Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Acting Inspector General Blier:

I write with grave concern regarding the arrest of independent journalists Don Lemon and Georgia Fort by federal agents on January 29, 2026, at the direction of Attorney General Pam Bondi.¹ The circumstances around this arrest appear to be politically motivated and intended to threaten members of the press, particularly toward Mr. Lemon, who has been a decade-long target of President Trump's ire.² I call upon the Department of Justice's Office of Inspector General to investigate the DOJ's decision to charge and arrest Mr. Lemon after a federal magistrate judge already rejected federal prosecutors' bid to charge him for reporting on a protest inside a church, which was upheld by both the district and circuit courts, as well as the DOJ's decision to target Ms. Fort for the same.³

Mr. Lemon and Ms. Fort are both independent journalists who covered a protest at a St. Paul, Minnesota church in the wake of the killing of Renee Good.⁴ Neither journalist appears to have participated in the protest, but instead live-streamed the protest as they covered it.⁵ Both journalists were arrested in defiance of the clear protections for the press established by the First Amendment.

¹ *MN Journalist Georgia Fort and Former CNN Reporter Don Lemon Arrested After Covering St. Paul Church Protest*, FOX9 KMSP (Jan. 30, 2026) (online at www.fox9.com/news/mn-reporter-fort-lemon-arrest-jan-30).

² *Donald Trump Has a History of Animosity Toward Don Lemon Dating Back Nearly a Decade*, Yahoo News (Jan. 30, 2026) (online at www.yahoo.com/news/articles/donald-trump-history-animosity-toward-103000832.html).

³ *Anti-ICE Protest at Minnesota Church Leads to Arrests but No Charges for Journalist Don Lemon*, AP (Jan. 22, 2026) (online at <https://apnews.com/article/justice-department-minnesota-church-disruption-bondi-ed084f5005187f58eabe0cc627d1862b>).

⁴ *MN Journalist Georgia Fort and Former CNN Reporter Don Lemon Arrested After Covering St. Paul Church Protest*, FOX9 KMSP (Jan. 30, 2026) (online at www.fox9.com/news/mn-reporter-fort-lemon-arrest-jan-30).

⁵ *Journalists Don Lemon and Georgia Fort Taken into Custody After Minnesota Church Protest*, CNN (Jan. 30, 2026) (online at www.cnn.com/2026/01/30/politics/don-lemon-custody).

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From all appearances, it seems the arrests of these journalists are calculated to send a message to other journalists or critics of the Trump Administration. The DOJ has pursued arrest warrants for these journalists at multiple levels of the federal judiciary, only to be denied at the district court and appeals court levels.⁶ In denying the DOJ's request to reverse the magistrate judge's decision, U.S. District Court Judge Patrick Schlitz, a former clerk to Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia, stated, "[t]wo of the five protestors were not protestors at all; instead, they were a journalist and his producer. There is no evidence that those two engaged in any criminal behavior or conspired to do so."⁷ Given that the Attorney General tweeted that she directly ordered the arrest of the journalists, the free speech implications for all journalists and Americans would be damning.⁸

As Acting Inspector General, you must investigate this shocking abuse of power highlighted in this incident, including the process and circumstances leading to these arrests.

The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform is the principal oversight committee of the House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate "any matter" at "any time" under House Rule X. If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact Committee Democratic staff at (202) 225-5051. Thank you for your prompt attention to this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robert Garcia', written over a horizontal line.

Robert Garcia
Ranking Member

cc: The Honorable James Comer, Chairman

⁶ *Appeals Court Rejects Justice Dept. Push for Arrest Warrant for Don Lemon*, New York Times (Jan. 24, 2026) (online at www.nytimes.com/2026/01/24/us/politics/don-lemon-arrest-warrant.html).

⁷ *Don Lemon Arrested Over Minnesota Church Protest After Judge Previously Rejected Charge*, Politico (Jan. 30, 2026) (online at www.politico.com/news/2026/01/30/don-lemon-arrest-minnesota-protest-00756892).

⁸ *MN Journalist Georgia Fort and Former CNN Reporter Don Lemon Arrested After Covering St. Paul Church Protest*, FOX9 KMSP (Jan. 30, 2026) (online at www.fox9.com/news/mn-reporter-fort-lemon-arrest-jan-30).