



May 3, 2017

Allen Kopyy
Morton County State's Attorney Office
210 2nd Ave NW
Mandan, ND 58554

Re: Drop Charges Against Independent Journalist Jenni Monet

Dear Mr. Kopyy,

On this World Press Freedom Day, Amnesty International USA urges you to take immediate steps to drop all charges against independent journalist Jenni Monet related to her work covering the protests that took place against the Dakota Access Pipeline on February 1, 2017.

Freedom of the press or other media is a human right that must be respected, protected and fulfilled in order for everyone to enjoy a free and open society. This includes the right to seek, receive and impart information, either orally, in writing, print or other media.

Arrest and Detention of Ms. Monet

Ms. Monet was covering a demonstration on February 1, 2017 at what was referred to as the Last Child Camp on the west side of Highway 1806 when she was arrested.

According to Ms. Monet's testimony, she was approached by a law enforcement officer after a general order to disperse was made. As heard from an audio recording, Ms. Monet presented her press pass when asked, to which the audible response from the law enforcement officer was "Okay, alright, now let's head this way". Ms. Monet states that she was then led to an area behind the police line where she was able to observe and take notes and photographs.

Ms. Monet states that she was approached by another law enforcement officer as the demonstration was coming to an end. She complied immediately when asked by this officer to leave

the area, but was stopped soon thereafter by another officer who informed her that she was going to be placed under arrest. She recalls telling both officers that she was a journalist, but was put in flex-cuffs nonetheless.

As soon as Ms. Monet identified herself as a journalist, she should have been released and permitted to continue her lawful exit from the premises. Not only did the officer move forward with the arrest in full knowledge of her status as a credentialed journalist, but Ms. Monet then endured a strip-search and five hours in detention within a chain-link holding cage.

Violation of International and Constitutional Standards

Ms. Monet's arrest and 30-hour detention despite her possession of a valid press pass from *Yes! Magazine* displays an abhorrent disregard for the right of journalists to seek and impart information freely—a right enshrined not only within binding international human rights covenants, but also within the U.S. Constitution.

We acknowledge that journalists are sometimes detained accidentally for a short period of time during emergency situations; however, after their identity has been made clear, it is contrary to international and Constitutional standards for them to remain detained and to be met with criminal charges simply for doing their important work.

Drop Charges Against Ms. Monet

Amnesty International USA encourages you to use the power of your office to drop the rioting and trespassing charges facing independent journalist Ms. Monet. This decision would conform not only with international human rights law and the highest principles of the U.S. Constitution, but also with the recent example set by the U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia. In January 2017, the U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia announced that rioting charges would be dropped against four journalists who were arrested while covering Inauguration Day protests.

On this day, we honor the critical role that a free press plays in North Dakota, across the United States and around the world. We ask you to recognize this day by taking immediate steps to drop the charges facing Jenni Monet.

We also request the opportunity to discuss these important matters with you at your earliest convenience. I may be reached by phone at (212) 633-4167 or by email at EWalsh@aiusa.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Emily Walsh", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Emily Walsh

Campaigner, Amnesty International USA