

Tuesday, September 2, 2008

Keep the light shining on convention protestors' rights.

Arrest of Democracy Now's Amy Goodman (Sept. 1, 2008). On September 1, police in Minneapolis arrested at least four journalists covering the protests during the Republican National Convention, including Amy Goodman of Democracy Now. Did the police have any good reason to arrest these journalists? Assuming for arguments' sake, probable cause to have allowed the arrests of the four journalists. Police have discretion about whether to arrest (imperfectly akin to when a police officer gives an alleged speeder a warning notice rather than a ticket). Why was such restraint not exercised here? Of course, when journalists are silenced through arrest, that will be a convenient way for police in Minneapolis to look the other way about allegations of Constitutional violations of dissenters' rights to demonstrate. When reporters' cameras roll, police managers have trouble ignoring such coverage. Concerning Amy Goodman, her arrest likely feels like a cakewalk to her, compared to her close brush with death during the 1991 massacre of East Timorese by Indonesian soldiers. However, she and the two arrested members of Democracy Now's production staff need to be released so that they may return to reporting on what is happening in the streets of Minnesota, particularly since it appears that the so-called mainstream media are giving insufficient coverage to the RNC demonstrations. Jon Katz ADDENDUM I: Around 11:30 p.m. on September 1, Allison Kilkenny at HuffingtonPost reports that Amy Goodman's arrested producers Sharif Abdel Kouddous and Nicole Salazar have been released, and are eligible to be accused of crimes later on. Amy Goodman was released around 9:15 p.m.. Thanks to TalkLeft for having covered Amy Goodman's arrest. ADDENDUM II: Democracy Now's website posted a news release that includes the following: Amy Goodman was charged with obstruction, and felony riot charges are pending against producers Kouddous and Salazar. "All three were violently manhandled by law enforcement officers. Abdel Kouddous was slammed against a wall and the ground, leaving his arms scraped and bloodied. He sustained other injuries to his chest and back. Salazar's violent arrest by baton-wielding officers, during which she was slammed to the ground while yelling, 'm Press! Press!,' resulted in her nose bleeding, as well as causing facial pain. Goodman's arm was violently yanked by police as she was arrested." Of course, such police abuse is not limited to mistreatment of journalists during demonstrations.

Posted by Jon Katz in Criminal Defense at 00:00