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Friday, March 5



It's a violation of free press rights to bring to trial a Des Moines Register reporter arrested while covering a protest

CAROL HUNTER, EXECUTIVE EDITOR
THE DES MOINES REGISTER

Freedom of the press stands alongside freedom of religion, speech, assembly and petition as the rights guaranteed by the 1st Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

That makes the upcoming trial of a Des Moines Register reporter who was doing her job covering a protest last spring all the more troubling.

Andrea Sahouri is scheduled to stand trial starting March 8 on charges of failure to disperse and interference with official acts.

That this trial is happening at all is a violation of free press rights and a miscarriage of justice. The U.S. Press Freedom Tracker has documented an alarming increase in arrests and detainment of journalists in 2020: at least 126, compared to nine in all of 2019. Most of them, like Sahouri's, happened at protests as Americans took to the streets to demand change from their government after the

deaths of George Floyd and other Black Americans at the hands of police and preceding and following the tumultuous November election. As the tracker's managing editor, Kirstin McCudden, and others have noted, "for journalists the most dangerous place in America is at a protest."

It's frightening that so many arrests and detainments have happened in a country that considers itself a beacon of press freedom. There's disturbing evidence in some cases that police targeted those arrested because they were journalists. But let's give officers the benefit of the doubt and chalk up many of the arrests to the "fog of war" as officers made split-second decisions in chaotic situations that were dangerous for all involved.

And indeed, once it was made clear that the person involved was a working journalist, in the vast majority of instances, the journalist was released without being charged or the charges were quickly dropped. But charges from 2020 arrests remain pending against 16 journalists around the country, including Sahouri, according to the tracker.

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Sahouri's case and another scheduled for the same day would be the first from the 2020 arrests to go to trial.

Sahouri was arrested on May 31, the third straight day of protests in Des Moines following Floyd's death. Journalists cover protests to serve as the eyes and ears of the public, to ensure free speech and assembly rights are upheld and to seek out the truth of what unfolds, whether a protest is peaceful or violent and whether law enforcement's response is viewed as proportional or excessive.

Each day, the demonstrations in Des Moines started peacefully but devolved through the night into bottle-throwing at police, window-breaking and other vandalism. Police responded with dispersal orders, tear gas, pepper spray and arrests.

Sahouri, a public safety reporter for the Register, had covered the protests all three days. From about 3:30 to 4:30 p.m. on May 31, she covered a peaceful march near Evelyn Davis Park, north of downtown, and then was assigned to cover a growing gathering near Merle Hay Mall, about 5 miles away in northwest Des Moines. Her former boyfriend, fearing for her safety, accompanied her.

The crowd, which started with about a dozen protesters at mid-afternoon, swelled to well over 100 by 6:30 p.m., when Sahouri started tweeting photos and observations as protesters blocked traffic on Merle Hay Road and Douglas Avenue. Just before 8 p.m., police deployed tear gas and "drove vandals and other protesters away from the mall and across Douglas Avenue," the Register reported. Sahouri moved with the protesters and was across the street from the mall when she was pepper-sprayed in the face and arrested.

By department policy, the arresting officer should have activated his body camera to capture video of the arrest, but he did not. Sahouri and her boyfriend say they repeatedly identified her as a reporter. In a video shot by Sahouri while in a police transport vehicle, she says she moved away from police and repeatedly stated that she was press. Another Register reporter who was with Sahouri but was not arrested shared the same account of Sahouri's arrest. Editors and Register attorneys quickly notified authorities that Sahouri was a Register reporter on assignment to cover the protest and demanded she be released. Yet she was detained for a total of about three hours and taken to the Polk County Jail. The charges filed against her remain pending.

Polk County Attorney John Sarcone has said little publicly about his insistence on pursuing these charges.

"We strongly disagree with how this matter has been characterized and will do our talking in the courtroom, which is the proper place to deal with this case. Have a good day," Sarcone said Aug. 20 in a written statement to the Register.

Sahouri, who has worked as a reporter for the Register since August 2019, was doing her constitutionally protected job at the protest, conducting interviews, taking photos and recording what was happening.

If convicted, she'll have a criminal record and faces possible penalties of 30 days in jail and a fine of \$625 for each offense.

When reporters are arrested, assaulted or otherwise prevented from doing their jobs, it's not an attack on just a single journalist or a media company. It's an attack on everyone's rights to be informed and to hold those in power accountable for their actions.

Sarcone needs to do his job and dismiss these charges, which clearly violate free press rights.

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The Iowa Newspaper Foundation will make grants available for local journalism projects that would not be otherwise be funded or executed as well without financial support. The Foundation anticipates providing up to \$5,000 in for worthy projects.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS PROGRAM?

To advance the cause for local journalism in Iowa, by providing financial support for specific journalism initiatives that are of high value to stakeholders [INA members, general public] and address areas of particular need or could not otherwise be accomplished without the support.

WHAT CAN THE FUNDS BE USED FOR? BY WHOM?

Grant requests covering a variety of purposes will be considered; all requests must align with the statement of purpose. Proposals must be for a specific project— general or operational funding proposals will not be considered. The Grant Review Committee has discretion over the approval of grant funds. INA members, nonprofit organizations, institutions of higher education, K-12 schools, and individuals associated with these organizations may apply.

THE **STRONG COMMUNITIES STRONG NEWSPAPERS** FUND

EXAMPLES OF PROJECTS INCLUDE:

- an investigative reporting project
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WHO WILL COMPRISE THE GRANT REVIEW COMMITTEE?

All requests are considered by the Grant Review Committee. The committee is comprised of the INF Executive Committee, additional committee members may be nominated by the INF President.

HOW CAN I APPLY?

The link to apply will be available at INAnews.com from March 1-22, 2021

If you have any questions feel free to reach out to Jana Shepherd at (515) 422-9051 or jshepherd@inanews.com.

FREE MEMBER EXCHANGE

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ADVERTISING SALES OPPORTUNITIES. Eastern Iowa Media Group - Mount Vernon/Lisbon Sun in Mount Vernon, Iowa. Support your business community and your neighbors with local advertising in print and online. This position is full-time, ensures a competitive wage and is eligible for a truly comprehensive benefit package. Apply online and include your resume and a cover letter. The Mount Vernon/Lisbon Sun is a product of Woodward Community Media, a division of Woodward Communications, Inc.
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FEATURE/SPORTS REPORTER. Feature/Sports reporter needed for The News of Kalona Iowa. Must be able to cover meetings, do features and help with covering high school sports events. Full or part time position Must also be able to do some photography,. Hourly pay depends on ability and experience. Contact Ron Slechta, The News 319-400-7072 or publisher@thenews-ia.co.m

MANAGING EDITOR. Enterprise Media Group, a progressive regional publishing company headquartered in Blair, Neb., is seeking a managing editor for our community newspaper group based out of Seward, Neb. Duties will include managing an editorial staff, story assignments, reporting, photography and oversight of our online digital products. If you're an experienced journalist, with good management skills, this could be a great

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NEWS REPORTER. The Le Mars Daily Sentinel, a four-day-a-week newspaper in northwest Iowa, seeks a motivated news reporter who can generate ideas, turn in accurate and well-organized stories, meet daily deadlines and work well with our newsroom. The ideal candidate must have experience using InDesign and be comfortable with digital photography. The Daily Sentinel also offers a competitive starting salary and solid benefits package. Please forward resumé, cover letter and clips to Kim Fickett, senteditor@gmail.com, or mail to Editor, Le Mars Daily Sentinel, 41 First Ave. N.E., Le Mars, IA, 51031.

MANAGING EDITOR. What's not to like? Great newspaper town, big coverage area, assistant editor, sports editor, experienced ad and design staff, publisher from the news side, insurance and benefits, family ownership that cares about the product in addition to the bottom line - how does it get better in this modern media age? So, are you interested in discussing being the next managing editor of the Kossuth County Advance in Algona, where you will plan, write, shoot, design and impress the community with a great product? Are you ready to step in where our retiring ME is leaving off? Email your credentials, list of skill sets, accomplishments and resume to publisher@algona.com. This position requires relocation to the immediate area. All applications held in the highest confidence.

MEMBER EXCHANGE - cont. on page 5

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For sale: Northwest Iowa weekly newspaper with supplement and printing shop. County legal plus legal for four towns. Newly remodeled brick/block building, equipment, large inventory included. Selling because of age/health. Phone 712/230/1405 or e-mail rouse@nethtc.net

Considering a sale of your newspaper but not sure where to start? Iowa's newest media broker, Scenic Trail Media Brokers, LLC, is here to help you. Scenic Trail Media Brokers will work with you in every step of the process to properly market your newspaper to help you attract the right buyer for your property. We'll work with you until the final closing to make sure you get top dollar. Call Ryan Harvey today at 515-689-1151 or reach him by email at scenictrailmediabrokers@gmail.com for more information.

View and submit ads on the Internet at www.INAnews.com. Students and professionals may also submit their resumés for online viewing.

There is no charge for most of these ads. They are a free service to INA active (newspaper) members only. The name of the newspaper in the ad must be the same as published in the current INA Directory.

If you are trying to help an employee relocate, please send us the ad information on your letterhead, rather than having the employee write us. We will not run ads for persons living in a member's town without first clearing the ad with the publisher.

Please have copy to the INA office no later than noon on Monday. The INA will make the determination of whether an ad qualifies for free or paid publication. If payment for an ad is not enclosed with the ad, the INA will require payment in advance before the ad will be published.

Ads for products or services which could be marketed for a profit may be published for a fee of \$10 per insertion, paid in advance, with a 40-word maximum.

Recruitment (help wanted) ads for positions in states other than Iowa may be published for a fee of \$25 per insertion, with a 100-word maximum.

For more information, contact Cicely Gordon at cgordon@inanews.com.



Iowa Newspaper Association

Bulletin

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- How to Take Better Photos With Less



An Iowa Newspaper Foundation webinar...

HOW TO GET BETTER PHOTOS WITH LESS



Iowa New Member
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Friday, March 5 · 1-2 p.m.

Registration fee: FREE · Deadline: March 2

IN THIS WEBINAR...

Journalists are being asked to do everything these days: write, edit, post to social, take the photos, take the video, design the layout and don't miss deadline. This course will go over some basic and advanced techniques to improve your photography with whatever kind of camera and amount of time you must work with. If you're shooting with a phone or DSLR, this discussion is for you.

THE PRESENTERS...

Kelsey Kremer



Kelsey Kremer is an Emmy award winning photojournalist and life-long Iowan. She's been making photos and videos for the state's largest newspaper, the Des Moines Register, since 2013. In her time at the Register she's traveled all over the state and half-way around the world sharing stories about Iowans. In 2017, she was the recipient of a Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting grant for a two-week reporting trip to China to document Iowa's role in U.S., China relations. She is a graduate of Iowa State University's Greenlee School of Journalism and Communication.



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