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for purposes of identification.*

February 27, 2017

Channing D. Phillips, Esq.
US Attorney for the District of Columbia
Judiciary Center Building
555 Fourth Street, NW
Washington, DC 20530

Dear U.S. Attorney Philips:

We write this letter in support of Aaron Cantú, the one remaining journalist still facing charges related to the protests on Inauguration Day.

It is clear that Mr. Cantú is a journalist. We question why charges are still pending and would like to know why a journalist faces indictment when it appears he was covering the protests at the time of his arrest.

Mr. Cantú has written for many publications, including [The Nation](#), [The Guardian](#), [The Baffler](#), and [VICE News](#). He has reported on a wide range of topics. Some of his most recent work includes articles covering a [police training convention](#) in Oakland, the [success of a Starbucks in Ferguson](#), Missouri, New York City [Mayor de Blasio's policy](#) toward funding pre-K education, and the potential [dangers of a gas pipeline](#) in New York.

We are aware that being in the vicinity as potential criminal behavior occurs can sometimes lead to the temporary detention of an individual while an emergency situation is ongoing. While we object to even this action being taken if it is clear that the person being detained is a journalist covering the events as they unfold, it is certainly impossible to justify the subsequent notice of felony charges against a journalist like Mr. Cantú at an initial arraignment and a presentation to a grand jury for an indictment in the absence of any facts showing that that he participated in illegal activity.

Journalists are not above the law and have no right to incite a riot or engage in acts of assault or vandalism. But the reason for Mr. Cantú's arrest, however, seems to be exactly the same as the other six journalists who have now seen the charges against them dropped. They were covering protesters and were therefore in the vicinity when a few of those protestors apparently threw rocks or smashed store windows with hammers. But being near a newsworthy event is no crime for anyone, reporters included. Journalists routinely run toward the center of any action, so they can better serve the public by reporting an event they personally witnessed, rather than something recounted by bystanders.

We appreciate the actions of this office in dismissing the charges against Mr. Cantú's fellow journalists. On the basis of the evidence on the public record, we urge you to take the same step now regarding Mr. Cantú.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "B. D. Brown". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each name being capitalized and prominent.

Bruce D. Brown
Executive Director
The Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press

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cc: Jennifer Kerkhoff, Esq.
John Borchert, Esq.
Richard Tischner, Esq.
Bill Miller