

Federal prosecutors charge journalist with 14 felonies for sharing unaired segments of antisemitic Tucker Carlson/Kanye West interview

Jacob Crosse
24 February 2024

In a major attack on journalists and free speech, federal prosecutors on February 15 charged independent Florida journalist Timothy Burke with 14 felonies, including conspiracy and wiretapping, for accessing and then sharing previously unaired interview footage featuring former Fox News commentator Tucker Carlson and Hitler-lover Ye (formerly Kanye West).

The indictment came more than eight months after Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) agents raided Burke's Tampa home and stole thousands of dollars worth of video, cell phone and computer equipment. The May 2023 police state raid on Burke's home, which was accompanied by a sealed warrant, prompted the Freedom of the Press Foundation, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and dozens of other press and democratic rights organizations to send a letter to Attorney General Merrick Garland last October opposing Burke's prosecution and the seizure of his equipment.

The letter to Garland noted that that the raid on Burke's home was followed by the "August police raid of the *Marion County Record* based on allegations of computer crimes by its reporters." The letter continued: "Given these and other investigations, journalists around the country are left uncertain about whether they could be prosecuted for acts of routine journalism on the mistaken grounds that they violated state or federal computer crime laws."

In the indictment, prosecutors allege that Burke and a

"CONSPIRATOR 2" communicated over Twitter, with this second "conspirator" tipping off Burke to the fact that Fox News was publicly broadcasting a "live feed" online. Prosecutors allege that Burke "illegally" obtained the "live feed" footage by accessing the feed with "compromised credentials." These credentials were apparently publicly available online as well.

Burke previously worked at *Deadspin* and the *Daily Beast* and has posted several newsworthy videos to his Twitter/X account in the last decade that went viral, including a revealing video compilation exposing the corporate domination of television by media giant Sinclair Broadcasting.

Burke specializes in recording, storing and analyzing video content broadcast by the major television networks over the airwaves and online.

In October 2022, Fox News, over two nights, aired a highly edited interview featuring former Fox News commentator and anti-Semite Ye. Prior to airing the interview with the fascistic Ye, Tucker Carlson mused, "We've rarely heard a man speak so honestly and so movingly about what he believes."

Carlson and Fox deliberately edited the interview to make Ye seem more palatable to his right-wing audience, highlighting his denunciations of Democrats while editing out newsworthy portions of the interview such as Ye's admission that he was vaccinated and his rants about Jewish people.

In the interview that aired on Fox News, Carlson ended

his segment by advising his audience that Ye was “not crazy” and “worth listening to.”

In the unaired portions of the interview, Ye/West claimed, among other things, that Planned Parenthood was created by the Ku Klux Klan “to control the Jew population,” and that he would “prefer” if “my kids knew Hanukkah [rather] than Kwanzaa,” because the former would “At least... come with some financial engineering.”

At the time of the interview, the Republican Party and Fox News were openly embracing and promoting Ye and his fascist viewpoints. After *Vice* and Media Matters for America published the unaired footage, both the GOP and Fox News distanced themselves from Ye. However, former President Donald Trump invited Ye and fellow neo-Nazi Nick Fuentes to his Mar-a-Lago club for dinner on Thanksgiving.

In a letter to the federal prosecutor in response to the charges, Burke’s lawyer, Mark Rasch, pointed to the political factors motivating the prosecution. He wrote:

Fox News was embarrassed by the broadcast of its own hypocrisy. It was embarrassed by the fact that it held racist, antisemitic and sexist remarks from public view.

Disputing the claim that the unaired broadcast footage was “stolen,” Rasch wrote that Burke “accessed publicly accessible live streams by simply finding and putting in the appropriate URL for the website. There was no ‘hacking,’ no ‘forced entry’ and no special tools necessary.”

He continued: “We emphatically insist that there are no ‘victims’ because there was no crime,” adding, “The only cases we are aware of where a prosecutor has taken the position that access by a journalist to publicly accessible information for the purpose of publishing this information was charged as a crime did not end well for the government.”

Burke’s prosecution is just the latest in a wave of an attacks on democratic rights and free speech carried out

by the US government and the Biden administration.

The foremost political prisoner in the world, Julian Assange, is still languishing in a maximum security prison in London awaiting a possible extradition to a US Supermax prison cell. In Gaza, over 110 journalists and hundreds of their family members have been assassinated by the US/NATO-backed Israel Defense Forces.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact