

Threat to Arrest Those Who Spread Disinformation About Coronavirus Likely Unconstitutional | PEN America

By PEN America

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On Tuesday, the public safety director of Newark, New Jersey warned that people who spread disinformation about the coronavirus could be criminally prosecuted. PEN America's Nora Benavidez, director of U.S. free expression programs, issued the following statement: "Advising people to take care in sharing reliable and fact-based information about coronavirus makes good sense. Threatening criminal prosecution for spreading misinformation in a time of great confusion, on the other hand, is both wrongheaded and likely unconstitutional. Local leaders must prioritize protecting public health and providing credible information, but they can do that without threatening to tread on the public's rights."

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