Protestos.org

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Going to a protest? Protect yourself!

Everyone has the right to document and monitor protests

The right to protest, and monitor and document protests from a human rights perspective, is granted to everyone under international human rights laws and standards.

The right to protest formally involves the exercise of numerous fundamental human rights, and is an essential exercise in any democratic system. While important in all societies, few protests are completely free of risk or potential harm to others. Hence, international standards allow for some occasional restrictions on the right to protest; however, these are allowed only under limited and narrow circumstances. Despite existing guarantees in international human rights law, it has been widely recognised that States need greater guidance in understanding and implementing their obligations in this field. As such, the work of monitors, documentators, and journalists becomes crucial to held the governement accountable. The rights to free expression and peaceful assembly are protected by Articles 19 and 20 of the Universal
Declaration of Human Rights, as well as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Articles 19 and 21) among others.

Monitoring and reporting on a protest is crucial

Gathering and disseminating information is essential to make sure everyone is safe before, during, and after a protest.

Carrying out monitoring and documentation which leads to making impartial information about the protest and any abuses which took place publicly available, is a key strategy for maintaining a space for free assembly and association, and the right to protest. It helps the public to learn about the demands and causes that motivate the protest, and can be used to call those responsible to account in the case of abuses. Through your impartial monitoring and documentation, you can work to increase tolerance and acceptance of the right to protest among State authorities and society in general. Furthermore, monitoring and documentation can have the effect of deterring attacks against protesters, since those responsible may have their actions publicized and be held responsible before the law as a result.

While there are some technical skills which are helpful in monitoring and documentation, no professional experience is required. However, in order for monitoring and documentation to be truly effective, you must ensure the accuracy and impartiality of your information. The impact of your work depends largely on how you conduct yourself and the reliability of the information you gather. Conduct yourself with independence, transparency, and integrity in order to build trust and respect among all actors for your work. The police should facilitate the work of monitors and media alike before, during, and after a protest.

Gathering firsthand and accurate information is crucial. The impact of your work depends on how you conduct yourself and how reliable is the information provided. Conduct yourself with independence, transparency, and integrity at all time – it will build trust with affinity groups and, depending on the contexts, it might provide a strong stand before the police and other authorities.

THE STREETS BELONG TO EVERYONE. Avoid reproducing discriminatory or biased observations in your work. Pay special attention to needs and incidents of persons and groups marginalized for their sexual orientation, gender identity, ethnicity, religion, social, and educational status. Make sure to pay equal attention to opposing groups protesting at the same time and place. The presumption of innocence is crucial for effective monitoring. A person who commits a crime still has rights if arrested. There are many
methods to protest peacefully – some are more confrontational than others. Note that sometimes protesters may decide to break the law on conscience and with a purpose and will need your support. Read more (http://www.osce.org/odihr/82979?download=true).

Know the actors and understand the context

Get as much information as possible about the legal, political, and social context as well as the overall atmosphere surrounding the protest in order to prepare correctly.

If you’re not aware of it already, you should get to know the circumstances surrounding the protest. Start by learning the legal status of the protests and by taking note of public or private comments of the authorities or police in preparation to the event. Consider what the attitude of the general public and the media is towards the issue which is the subject of the protest, and whether there have been any violent incidents at such protests in the past. Identify along the route or in the site potential trouble spots; i.e. bottlenecks, tunnels, bridges, or even highly guarded public buildings, historical sites, or offices of adversaries. Threats can also come from rival groups that are planning to hold a counter-protest, violent groups and even angry bystanders for the disruption of the traffic in the nearby streets.

There are many forms of assemblies: static (meetings, mass actions, rallies, sit-ins, pickets, and flash mobs), mobile (parades, marches, and processions) or a mixture of both – each carries different threats, opportunities, and legal implications. Reach out to the organizers, take time to understand their plans. Before monitoring and documenting, you should map out the actors involved and their relationships. Begin with the protesters themselves: are they homogenous or a mixed group? What are their similar or differing objectives? Who are their adversaries: who is attempting to prevent the right to protest from being observed in this case?

These are the actors whom you are trying to dissuade from taking action against the protesters. Who are allies of the protesters, and who are your allies as monitors? Consider elements of the public and media, embassies, other human rights organisations, cooperative elements of the State and police, etc. These are a key audience for your monitoring and documentation. Furthermore, some of them may be able to exercise pressure on the adversaries in order to persuade them to respect the protest. Which emergency services will be present at the event? It may be useful to make contact with them so that they are aware of your presence and will cooperate.

Explore and understand the space occupied by the protest

Get familiar with the place where the protest is happening, know its perils and perks in case of emergencies.

You should make yourself familiar with the route of the protest and its characteristics. A protest entails the occupation of a space (physical, digital or both) with specific characteristics which can have an impact on the security of the participants. In order to conduct a proper monitoring it is important to understand the dynamics between the protesters and the terrain or platform. Get an idea of:

- the inclination of the terrain;
- the weather conditions expected;
- location of public transportation;
- public lighting;
• locations of CCTV cameras;
• distance to the nearest hospitals, emergency services and police stations

Even if you have visited the site before, take some time to check a map, it will increase your spatial awareness.

Analyse risks and threats

Reflect upon the threats protesters and monitors might face during the protest, so that you can take the right security measures.

Once you know the context of the protest, you can identify the threats to both the protesters and to your action. Common threats to protests might include making the protest illegal, or using tear gas or other forms of violence. On top of this, monitoring & documentation missions can face accusations of impartiality or reprisals for publishing details of violations.

Make a list of the threats you may face and prioritize them: which ones are most likely, and which ones would have the highest impact? Once you’ve identified the most likely and/or high-impact threats, you can think about ways of reducing their probability or impact on you. This might include collaborating with others, or taking your own measures to protect yourself. It is a good idea to carry out this analysis with some time before the protest: it gives you time to build new capacities or carry out activities to reduce the risk.

For example, you may find it useful to learn basic first aid, or may see the need to carry out advocacy with some authorities in order to foster acceptance of the mission.

It’s difficult to carry out risk analysis like this if you are in a hurry or very stressed. However passionately you feel about the cause, it’s crucial that you are in the right state of mind in the planning stage of your participation. Make sure you check your perception with your friends and whatever information is available so that you can weigh up the risks, and try not to exaggerate or minimize them. You should carry out a risk analysis before every protest, and consider changing your tactics so as to become less predictable.

Have a security plan

Agree with your colleagues about how you will reduce risk, and how you will respond to emergencies.

Based on all of this analysis, you should make a clear plan of action with your fellow monitors. The plan should include things you do in order to reduce the likelihood of the threats you identify, and a ‘plan b’, meaning actions you take in case of an emergency to reduce its impact. Your plan should also include
tactics for safe communication and how to use digital devices, as well as how to care for each other and maintain well-being after the protest and in the case that something goes wrong. The plan can be written and shared, or simply verbal. The main thing is to make sure it is clear and that everyone in the group is happy to stick to it. If you don’t have a plan it is likely you are part of someone else plan, including adversaries.

Have a work plan

Decide beforehand the nature, objective, and strategies of your work

There are too many things happening during a protest, make sure to decide beforehand the elements you want to highlight: testimonies, police interventions etc. Have a lists of things you want to observe and persons you want to meet. Identifying any potential threat is only the first step. In order to react properly to any eventuality or to protect someone else, you need to have a plan for your and your team’s security. When working as a team, resources and efforts are maximized. Roles and responsibilities should be clear and understood by everyone before the protest. Make sure to include someone that will be in charge of monitoring each member from outside and making sure information flows within the team. Reachout and coordinate with other organisations and groups of affinity. Remember: Collectiveness thumps vulnerabilities.

If you decided to work by yourself make that at least someone knows about your plans. In many cases, monitoring and documentation missions are more effective when they are publicised. As a result, the actors involved are aware of the fact that monitoring and documentation is taking place, and will change their behaviour.

Define the profile of monitoring

Decide beforehand how visible the monitoring will be to others as well and the guidelines to communicate externally with the press, authorities, organizers, and protesters.

Define the nature and objective of the mission/assignment, whether is for observation purposes, observation and reporting, or reporting only. It is also important to decide the level of intervention you are expected to undertake in specific scenarios, for example observation, mediation, or a mixture of both.

In some cases monitor (http://www.osce.org/odihr/82979?download=true) can also play a role to mediate between protesters and police and/or different groups of protesters; conflict resolution techniques (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conflict_resolution) really helpful for this purpose. There are a number of
ways in which the monitoring and documentation mission could be publicised, including:

- A public statement on your blog or website
- Advocacy meetings with police and local authorities in order to ensure them of your independence, impartiality and the (national or international) legal framework for the mission
- Advocacy meetings and subsequent letters to embassies, international human rights organisms, the press and authorities informing them of the details of the mission.
- Wearing clearly visible clothing during the event, such as vests, which draw attention to your role. In some cases however, you may feel that monitoring and documentation should be discreet until such time as material can be published.

However, even in these cases, it is a good idea to publicise your mission in a discreet way with allies who can offer you some protection in case of an attack of any kind.

**Delegate roles**

**Coordinate with other monitors on what your individual roles should be, carry out and leave the protest together.**

Be aware of your capacities and the resources at hand to support protesters and to react to any eventuality. An effective way to strengthen your abilities is drawing on the experience and knowledge of other colleagues and organizations. A medical emergency is a good example, reaching out to first aid unit beforehand, and having a direct contact with them during the protests, may help mitigate the fact that not all monitors are trained to deliver first-aids.

Threats might be motivated by different reasons, some might be related to your own attitude and body language, the perception of your work or organisation that you are affiliated with or even the value of your equipment. Reflect on the impact on your safety and your work of unwanted attention or interaction with the police, protesters, counter-protester, and even angry bystanders for the disruption of the traffic in the nearby streets.

Bearing witness to abuses or criminal acts will increase your risk. Decide on your own roles (such as facilitator, representative, media contact, medical support, ‘vibe watch’, etc) and decision-making structure. Be mindful of the limitations, expertise, and expectation of each team members while assigning roles. Everyone should be familiar with the equipment and have the required skill to undertake their tasks. Take the time to plan your action together and check one another’s perceptions.

Stay in communication during the action, respond to emergencies together, and leave together. After the action, it is a good idea for the monitor group to debrief together. Ideally, one or two members of the group should have capacities for first-aid and psycho-social care in case of emergencies. A good way to train younger or inexperienced team members is to pair them up with more experienced colleagues.

**Maintain your energy**
Monitoring and documentation of violations is stressful work. Have strategies to maintain your physical and psychological well-being before, during, and after the event.

Monitoring protests can be a demanding and stressful activity: the hours can be long and you can find yourself overwhelmed by a high workload and experiencing disturbing events. Be aware of your own limitations and share them with the rest of the team. Working as team enables mentoring between teammates which is always a good strategy on the long run.

Also consider the following before you take action:
Identify how your body and mind react when you reach an unhealthy level of stress? Identify what practices or resources help to bring you back to a healthy level, and how can you integrate them into your action. Create an atmosphere in your affinity group where you can share your fears and talk about stress and traumatic experiences openly. Practice active listening and build solidarity and care for one another.

During the protest, make sure you have enough access to food and water, and are prepared for different weather conditions. After the protest, make sure to take time to debrief with your affinity group once you have arrived in a safe location. Make time for whatever sharing and support is necessary. Take some time alone to process the experience and ‘go back’ into your daily life. Make sure that the security plan distributes responsibilities and tasks according to the experience and different risks faced by each team member, and making sure that everyone has the skills and equipment needed.

**Think about what to bring**

**Make sure to take with you**

- extra batteries or the charger of your mobile devices. A bottle of water and a quid (bandana) in case tear gas cans are shot.
- A basic first aid kit is always a good idea as well.

**Don’t bring** Devices without considering what’s on them first: is there sensitive information stored there? Remember that your mobile phone can be used to track your location, and this has been used against protesters in the past.
- Anything that might get you into trouble: anything that could be considered a weapon, any illegal drugs, or alcohol.

**Do bring**

- A copy of your press release or letters to authorities stating your mission, its objectives and characteristics
- Any special medication you need
- Some money, just in case of emergency
- Wear comfortable clothing that allows you to move easily.
- If you’re bringing a phone, consider getting a new SIM and new phone. Phone credit and a spare battery for your phone, or a charger
- Emergency contacts: consider writing the most important ones on your arm or leg.
- First Aid and hygiene: a first aid kit, toilet roll, and sanitary towels.
- Food and water: bring energy food to eat and water both for drinking and washing wounds in emergencies. Bring a bandana and swimming goggles in case of tear gas, and some antacid solution for treating burns caused by it.
- Consider bringing a camera for documenting abuses.

In some countries, not carrying ID could be a pretext for arrest, however in others, there is no obligation to carry it and it may even be used against you. Coordinate with your group on whether to bring ID and if so, what kind. In general, if your monitoring and documentation mission is ‘open’ in nature, it is a good idea to carry ID and openly identify yourself as a monitor.

**Collaborate online and communicate safely**

**Carry out your research and organisation in privacy by anonymising your online activities, and communicate anything sensitive through secure encrypted channels.**

When you are planning or organising your mission, you may want to keep some of the sensitive details involved secret, at least at first. If you’re planning or coordinating a protest over the Internet and mobile phones, you may want to consider ways of protecting your identity and that of your network. Sometimes authorities or others will put social movements under surveillance in order to predict, prevent, or disrupt protests. Governments and private companies use tactics like observation, infiltration, and automated search engines to identify usernames in social networks using specific words or images. You may want to avoid using your real name on social networks to organise or participate in an action, and consider using a VPN or the Tor browser to anonymize your browsing.

Mobile phone calls, SMS messages, and many common messenger applications are very easy to eavesdrop, and it’s increasingly common for them to be put under surveillance during a protest by authorities or other opponents. In some cases, just having your mobile device at the protest can identify you and then be used against you. If you decide to use mobile phones for communication, remember to choose a specific app based on the following characteristics:

1. [end-to-end encrypted messaging or call](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/End-to-end_encryption)
2. [open source](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open-source_software) and/or audited by external entity
3. apps owned by companies with transparent and accountable relations with authorities and/or adversaries.

Take into account that apps might become obsolete or vulnerable as time passes, check the updates in Security in a Box and the reviews provided by trusted organizations. Choose accordingly to your context, some options are: Signal (Android /IOS) : (for encrypted messaging and voice calls) and Jitsi (for computers). Before and after the protest, you can use GPG for exchanging encrypted emails. Be careful though: sometimes using encrypted channels, especially for SMS messages, can also draw unwanted attention.

Practice all secure tools and apps before the protest, so you know how to recognize if they fail and what alternatives might be.
Stay connected

Have a clear communication plan among monitors, access to emergency contacts, and a regular check-in with people outside the protest so that they know you are safe.

For a successful monitoring mission, it’s a good idea to have a clear communication plan for monitoring developments, coordinating actions, and responding to emergencies. As you may have to deal with unexpected occurrences, it helps to be clear about who you need to contact, when, and how.

You or your group should keep in contact with someone who is not present at the protest: organize times to check in with them, share security indicators, and agree what you’ll do if something goes wrong. If necessary, do this through civil society and human rights groups. Make a list of people (eg. lawyers) and organisations you can contact in case of emergency. Keep the list on your mobile, maybe with codenames, but have a written copy with you too, in case you lose your phone or run out of battery or credit. You might want to consider writing the most important numbers on your arms or legs in case you are left with nothing else.

Define periodic check-in time with your team. When you check-in provide relevant information such as your location, security status, and how much battery is left in your devices. By using a centralized check-in scheme, we can reduce the amount of worry we cause to those who are waiting for contact from us. Think of alternative means of communication (such as satellite phones, using nearby WiFi, or public telephones) in case you run out of battery or the mobile signal is jammed or blocked. Furthermore, you should strongly consider using encrypted channels for your communication since any unencrypted channels are likely to be monitored (see: protect your privacy and communicate safely (#twelve)).

Make a last-minute check

Make sure you are in the right frame of mind and calmly ensure you have everything you need before you leave. Know your rights if you are likely to be searched upon arrival at the protest.

Before you leave, take a moment to concentrate and make sure you are in the proper mental and emotional state to begin your mission. Once you’re ready, perform some last minute checks and tasks:

- Check your batteries levels of your devices;
- Take into account that a restroom might not be available during the protest, so use the bathroom before arriving at the protest;
- Take a selfie right before entering the protest and share it with your colleagues, it can be useful in case you run into trouble;
- Let your colleagues and contacts know that you are starting the monitoring operation.

It’s a common practice for authorities to stop and search protesters, in order to prevent weapons or other illegal materials such as alcohol or drugs being brought to the protest. However, this is also often used as a pretext for intimidation or sexual harassment of protesters. It’s likely that there are well-established codes of practice governing how police can search you. Consult your lawyer and know the legal restraints that
the police face around this, and what the practiced realities in each situation are. Prepare and practice any verbal resistance to a search (if it is possible to resist under certain circumstances) and ensure that you don’t carry anything illegal with you.

Record audio, photos, and video responsibly

If you’re going to record any violations on your camera or phone, don’t assume your friends want to be filmed! Make sure you’re safe before recording and try not to draw unwanted attention with your camera.

Details and general aspects of the protest are equally important while monitoring. Make sure to get enough information about the general profile of the demonstrations and elements that would give an idea about the diversity of the demonstrators, but never forget the importance of protecting their privacy.

Pay attention to the visual elements (banners, flags etc.), audio (songs, speeches, and slogans). It is very important to capture the atmosphere, the attitudes of the protesters (especially when there are more than one with opposing views) and bystanders. Regarding the police presence, it’s important to collect information on the number of deployed officers, their equipment and the attitude with which they interact with the protesters.

Close-up shots may not always be the best option. Details might be captured with zoom-in shots while avoiding getting cut in the middle of a clash or a push-forward manoeuvre by the police.

If you see a human rights violation taking place during a protest or demonstration, the first thing you may want to do is reach for your mobile phone or camera to record it and later share it online or for legal use. The use of cameras may be perceived as a threat by the police, do not stop recording until you are in safe place when ask to turn off the camera. Speaking to the camera or taking a selfie style picture might be useful afterward to prove that you were an eye-witness. It is equally important to document the incident as well as any detail of the police agents involved, such as rank, equipment, and physical appearance. Time and location are essential. Getting the name, age, and physical of the person been arrested are crucial. If possible get details of the arresting officer: physical appearance, rank, license plate of vehicles. Make sure you gather information about the time and location of the incident, use CameraV to secure and gather as much metadata for verification purposes.

If you’re storing the content on an SD card, consider encrypting your phone or make the card ‘run’ – give it to someone else who will take it to safety. For how to share the pictures or video more securely, see publish safely.

Monitor security indicators

Stay alert! The situation can change quickly, so when you see something out of the ordinary, share it with your fellow monitors or the organizers so you can take a decision together.

It’s important to share and analyse within the group anything out of the ordinary that you notice which may affect your security. These indicators can help you make a decision early to avoid a threatening situation. Try to maintain awareness and mindfulness of the situation around you at all times. It may be useful to create a security group within the monitoring mission, who can monitor these incidents and coordinate actions based on them. Be on the look-out for indicators that are internal to the group, such as someone carrying a weapon or illegal substances, someone behaving in a way which is inappropriate or may compromise your impartiality, someone attempting to use violence (they may be an agent provocateur), or someone becoming fatigued, tired, etc. Observe the behaviour of the police: what kind of equipment are they carrying? Are there plain-clothed police nearby? If you notice them, take note of who they are and observe their behaviour. When you notice anything strange, share it either verbally or over a secure communication channel with your friends, affinity group or the organisers – analyse whether it represents a threat, and take action together if need be.

Be aware of common threats

Bring lemons, water, cigarettes, or a bandana for tear-gas. Be careful around police horses and dogs, and beware of water cannons, rubber bullets, and pepper spray.

There are some threats to activists and monitors alike at protests which are quite predictable and for which it’s always a good idea to be prepared. Tear gas (http://www.eco-action.org/dod/no7/cs_gas.html) is particularly common for ‘crowd control’ and increasingly used to stifle protests. Types of chemicals used in tear gas constantly change, and so do the remedies for them. Try to find out which type of tear gas is used by the authorities. If you can get a gas mask, this will help, although avoid using old ones. Swimming goggles may also be of use. In most cases, eyes can be treated with cigarette smoke or water, although warm or hot water can increase pain from CS gas. Antacids diluted with water or diphoterine solution (a first aid product for chemical splashes) can also help. Water cannons are also very commonly used. At close range, these can be extremely dangerous, so if you see the police about to use them close to you, move away as quickly as possible and be sure to document their use. There may also be mounted police at the protest. While police horses are
usually well behaved, they can be temperamental and could seriously injure you by kicking. Avoid approaching them from behind, standing or crouching directly in front of them.

**Protect your evidence**

*If you have gathered data on violations of human rights, protect it: encrypt your phone or other devices, or share it safely online before you leave the protest.*

The information gathered by you and your team might build a strong platform for advocacy by providing evidence that can oppose what governments or newspapers are reporting. With this in mind, some may be interested in preventing you from sharing this information, such as through inspecting or seizing your devices, or reprisals against you. Encryption of your device or some of the material on it is the best measure against the possibility of a seizure by the police or a theft. Many smartphones now offer you ways to protect your data which you may not have been aware of. Smartphones with the Android operating system after version 4.0 allow for encryption of the data stored on the device. You can find the option to encrypt the phone in the security settings on the phone. It’s recommended that you encrypt the device at least a day before the protest so that you have enough time to back-up your data first and carry out the procedure. Be aware that the Micro-SD on the phone may not be encrypted by this option (but rather the phone’s own storage will be).

On an iPhone or iPad, enter the privacy settings in order to enable a passphrase to lock the screen, and ensure it says ‘Data protection is enabled’ once the passphrase is set. Some iPhones also include the option for erasing the data on the phone after 10 failed attempts to enter the passphrase. You can also use this as a means to delete sensitive data from your phone in an emergency.

On a personal computer, VeraCrypt (https://veracrypt.codeplex.com/wikipage?title=android%20%26%20ios%20support) is an open source application which facilitates encryption of full disks as well as the creation of encrypted volumes for storage of sensitive data.

Sharing the information directly to social media might be a good option if you take measures to protect your identity (https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=org.torproject.android&hl=es_419) and that of the people you are documenting (Android (https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=org.witness.sscphase1&hl=es)/IOS (https://itunes.apple.com/mx/app/obscura-camera/id915939220?mt=8)). Making duplicates and sharing it with teammates and colleagues before leaving the protests is another alternative. Evaluate the possible risks and implications before uploading it directly to a site or social network. Spideroak or Tresorit (https://securityinabox.org/en/eco-rights-africa/secure-in-the-cloud/) for Android and IOS is a file synchronization tool that will allow you to easily share files between your computers and mobile devices. Protect the information stored in mobile device: Applock (https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.domobile.applock&hl=es_419) for Android and Locker (https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.veara.ios11.locker&hl=es) for IOS allows you to password protect apps, pictures, and video. NoteCipheror (https://developer.android.com/reference/javax/crypto/Cipher.html) allows you to make encrypted text notes to be stored and shared safely. Take into account that such information will be subjected to a different standard of verification in order to be accepted as evidence in a legal procedure.

**Manage stress and fear**

Stress and fear can build up and stop us from taking effective decisions during a protest. Stay calm, communicate nonviolently, and take empowering decisions and steps to address your fears together.
When groups are under stress or suffering from fear or threats, it can have a negative impact on the group dynamics. The group can become more authoritarian and people can say and do hurtful things to one another. When you’re at a protest and need to take decisions fast, fear, stress, and the inter-personal problems they lead to could hinder your ability to make decisions and put you in danger. It’s important to have a clear decision-making structure before the protest, and clear communication channels for those decisions. Decide on non-negotiables which don’t need to be debated (e.g. an emergency exit strategy) and things which do. If an issue has to be debated, consider who needs to be involved in the discussion: the whole group, or a working group? Too many unnecessary voices in the debate can also be a hindrance. When debating, try to practice active listening so as to avoid misconceptions and ensure that everyone understands what is being talked about.

**Responding to emergencies**

*Keep calm and be methodical when responding to emergencies: know in advance whom to communicate with and what information they will need from you.*

Sometimes at a protest or demonstration, you can be witness to human rights abuses by authorities or other groups who oppose the aims of the protest. In order to coordinate a response, it will be vital to report as accurately as possible what happened. This can be especially difficult when scared or shocked.

**Leave the protest safely**

*Don’t let your guard down when you step out of the protest – stay alert so that you can get home safely.*

When a protest ends or you leave it, you may begin to relax and become distracted. This is sometimes used by authorities or attackers to identify and harass protesters as they are in smaller groups or alone. Evaluate whether your risk has increased during the protest based on the incidents you experience or witness and make plan accordingly. Make sure there are safe routes to leave the protest. Sometimes protests entail roadblocks and public transport might not be available. Changing your clothes, sharing and making back ups of your material and giving it so your teammate might help to mitigate the risk in case your are being followed. Sharing directly to social networks is also an option but a risky one. Follow the previously defined plan to protect your information in
case the police tried to seize your devices. Alert your colleagues about the route you are planning to take. Remember the following in order to stay safe:

- Stay alert: continue to monitor the situation around you until you are in a safer space.
- Don’t leave alone: leave in pairs or with your group
- Communicate: let someone outside the protest know you are leaving and when they should expect you. Try to use a secure channel for this, especially if you are planning to share the route you will take
- Counter-surveillance: if you feel you’re being followed, don’t take a direct path but rather try to confuse whoever is following you
- Don’t linger: don’t stick around too long in the area where the protest happened.
- Consider how to deal with materials: banners, flyers, and other material may make you stand out. Try to dispose of them safely.
- Consider changing clothes if you no longer feel it is safe to be identified as a monitor
- Care for the photos, audio, or videos you took: carry them hidden or have an inconspicuous ‘runner’ leave the protest with them.
- For high profile monitoring missions, it may be a good idea to leave the protest with media and journalists
- Consider walking for a while in a safe area in order to ‘land’ from the mission and begin to relax more, while maintaining awareness of your surroundings. Once you are in a safe space, debrief with your group, and try to take some time alone to ‘transition’ psychologically out of the event (such as having a shower, praying, changing your clothes, exercising).

Debrief, have a formal end of activities

After the protest, get together with your fellow monitors and debrief: check the security situation, care for those who need it, make a plan for publicising the results of the mission, and learn any lessons needed to improve next time.

After a protest, it’s a good idea to have a ‘check out’ or debrief meeting with your group in a safe space. A debrief is important for:

1. preventing further harm and doing a final threat assessment after the protest,
2. caring for people who are in distress,
3. Making a plan for sharing material and publicising the results of the mission,
4. learning lessons to improve your future protests

The event should take place not long after the protest, in a safe place. It’s a good idea to agree on the questions to ask beforehand. A sample agenda might look like this:

1. feelings check: everyone checks in and updates the group on how they feel. Any urgent necessities (medical or emotional) should be taken care of first,
2. threat assessment: sharing indicators about the current security situation, assessing any threats the group may face following the protest and how they should be dealt with (updating your security plans),
3. take the time to discuss with your team the immediate results of the monitoring. Make sure there is a safe space to share any specific concerns and details on how each member experience what they have witnessed. Make sure you know immediately what type of information you have. Prioritize the processing of material related to illegal arrests so it can help locating them. Identify what information
and material may be useful in order to challenge inaccurate or misleading information provided by government or the media. Testimonies of victims and eyewitnesses are essential, take the time to get them in order to strengthen your narrative.

4. identify opportunities for learning and improving: what went well during this protest; what should be improved for next time?

5. next steps: what decisions have to be made now before the group splits up again?

Ensure that you are patient in communicating with each other, and practice active listening (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Active_listening) to make sure everyone is clear on the lessons learned and next steps.

Publish safely and responsively

Got video, audio, or photos from the protest you want to share with the world? Great! Now avoid getting into trouble for uploading it: protect your identity and the others around you.

Take the time to discuss with a team the immediate results of the monitoring. Make sure there is a safe space to share any specific concerns and details on how each members experience what they have witnessed. Make sure you know immediately what type of information you have. Prioritize the processing of material related to illegal arrests so it can help locating them. Identify what information and material may be useful in order to challenge inaccurate or misleading information provided by government or the media. Testimonies of victims and eyewitness are essential, take the time to get them in order to strengthen your narrative.

Follow-up on emergencies

A professional and ethical monitoring entails a strategy to follow-up

Often after a protest people are tired and energy is low, so it is important to have a plan to follow up the detected abuse. For example, it might be needed to maintain the monitoring in order to contact the authorities, issue a public statement, and talk to the media or activate the solidarity network.