OpenArchive's U.S. Protest Survival Guide

How to keep you, your evidentiary media, and others safe while documenting police violence, far-right extremism, and other human rights abuses.

BEFORE THE ACTION

Countering Surveillance

DO

- Join a Signal group with other people you know and trust.
  - Turn on disappearing messages and set to < 4 hours.

- Turn off biometrics (fingerprint and face unlock) on your phone & set up a 6-digit (or longer) passcode.

- Disable message previews on lock screen.

- Delete history from web browsing apps.

- Set a pin-control to access your SIM data.

- Consider leaving your primary/personal phone at home and getting a phone just for documentation.

- Enable airplane mode and disable GPS, or put your phone in a Faraday Bag.

- Study the protest route/location beforehand and find out the access points should you need to make quick escape.

- Consider deleting apps with personal info (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn).

DON'T

- Publicly post protest locations or other action details (on social media, etc.).

- Coordinate plans using unsecure messaging apps (i.e. SMS, Snapchat, Telegram, Facebook, WhatsApp, Messenger).

Why use disappearing messages?
Even if your data is protected through end-to-end encryption, keeping messages on your smartphone still puts you and those you communicate with at risk.

What to bring/what to wear

✓ A small durable backpack to hold essential items

✓ Water (for both drinking and tear gas relief)

✓ Face mask/bandana (to protect both your identity and yourself from tear gas/virus)

✓ Hat/sunglasses (to protect yourself from both the elements and surveillance)

✓ Nondescript clothing that covers any identifying features (tattoos, birthmarks, scars, etc)

✓ Walking shoes

✓ Lightweight, protein-rich snacks (jerky, granola bars, etc.)

✓ Cash

✓ Bulletproof vest

✓ Helmet (bike helmets can work)

✓ Face shield/goggles

✓ Baby wipes/wet wipes

Pro tip:
Be sure to write your local <u>National Lawyers Guild</u> number on your arm with a sharpie

What to leave at home/what not to wear

✗ Brightly colored clothing and/or clothing with logos/unique imagery

✗ Jewelry

✗ Contact lenses

✗ Makeup (tear gas easily cling to oil-based beauty products)

✗ Credit cards

✗ Anything you don't want to be arrested with

DURING THE ACTION

If you are coming to the protest as a citizen journalist or documentarian, the ultimate goal should be to document violence without exposing others to mass surveillance. Bad reporting can put people at risk of doxxing, arrest and violence.

Best practices

- Enable airplane mode and disable GPS during the action.

- If you need to disable airplane mode to communicate with others, don't connect to local wi-fi networks as you will be easily tracked.

- Focus on documenting injustice without incriminating victims.

  - Avoid photographing faces/other identifying marks of protesters and other civilians.

  - Respect boundaries. If a protester or civilian doesn't want to be filmed or photographed, listen to them.

  - Don't post location information, photos, or videos identifying protesters on social media.

- Do strip metadata* from the media you want to share on social media.

*Images sent through Signal automatically remove EXIF metadata.)

Keep in mind:
While airplane mode can circumvent some surveillance, it doesn't make you "invisible." Your GPS can still be tracked even when airplane mode is enabled, so make sure to disable GPS in your phone settings.

What is EXIF metadata?
EXIF (Exchangeable Image File Format) data contains information about your phone/camera, as well as where and when the photo or video was taken.

Why metadata matters

Surveillance Self-Defense guide

Electronic Frontier Foundation

Guide on metadata

Freedom of the Press Foundation

What to document:

- Violence instigated by police/militias

- Police badge numbers

- Flags, logos, patches, or tattoos of right-wing extremist <u>imagery</u> and symbols

- Right-wing posters, flyers, leaflets, stickers, art, or other propaganda

- Types of weapons used by police/militias

- Anything used to harm people (not property)

Keep in mind:
Sometimes capturing people's faces/other identifiable characteristics is unavoidable. If you do have this footage, and it could possibly be used for evidentiary purposes, try to share that evidence directly with the legal aid organizations. Make sure to get the protester's consent before saving it or sharing it elsewhere.

What to do if:

Your phone is lost, stolen or seized:

- Remotely track, lock, or wipe your phone.

- If confiscated: In the U.S., you have the right to decline a warrantless search of your phone. If you're arrested, be sure to verbally state that you do not consent to a search of your device.

- Refer to your secure backup to retrieve and share media preserved via **_Save_**.

Remember
Enabling location tracking on your phone can be useful if you lose it, but if you can track your phone, so can others. Always use your best judgment - considering usability vs. security trade-offs is key.

The police deploy tear gas/other chemical weapons:

- Try moving to higher ground ASAP. Close your mouth and (if possible) your eyes.

- Wash away the chemical from your skin with large amounts of cool water. Wash and lather your hands first so you don't further irritate your eyes and mouth.

- When flushing your eyes, tilt your head back so the water washes over your eyes.

- If you wear glasses, clean them out thoroughly before putting them back on. If you wear contacts (which ideally shouldn't be worn during protests) don't put them back on.

Warning
Police can still conduct a warantless search of your device if they're able to make a compelling case that it's an emergency.

You see someone get arrested:

- If you're in a safe location, document the incident.

- Try to get in touch with the arrestee and get their consent before sharing the incident.

- Remind the arrestee to request a lawyer, remain silent, and not unlock devices without their lawyer present.

- Before you share media: Determine whether it's incriminating (e.g., looting, vandalism).

You are arrested:

- Invoke your right to remain silent: The only words that should come out of your mouth are, "I want a lawyer."

- Don't let police search your phone: Police can confiscate your phone, but they can't force you to give them the password to unlock it. (This is why it's especially crucial to disable lock/unlock biometrics)

- Don't give police a DNA Sample: Do not consent to a DNA sample and do not accept anything that can be used to extract a sample (e.g., water, gum, cigarettes, etc.).

Disclamer:

It's important to know your rights but don't count on the police to always honor them.

AFTER THE ACTION

To determine whether it's safe to share the media you've documented, ask yourself these questions:

1

Can the photo/video possibly endanger or incriminate someone?

If it can, don't share it.

2

Does your photo or video contradict what the police are saying?

If so, then it's important to archive.

3

Could posting it harm the video's legal value?

If you're unsure, consult the NLG + ACLU first.

4

Are there faces, tattoos, or identifiable features in your content?

If yes, the risk of doxxing, harassment, and incrimination increases. Blur all identifiable features before posting.

5

Can you share pseudonymously or anonymously?

Protect yourself and the people in the photo from doxxing, harassment, and incrimination.

More guides and resources

Mobile Phone Security For Activists & Agitators
Riot Medicine

https://opsec.riotmedicine.net/static/downloads/mobile-phone-security.pdf

Know Your Rights
ACLU

https://www.aclu.org/know-your-rights/protesters-rights

How to Film a Protest
WITNESS

https://www.witness.org/portfolio_page/how-to-film-a-protest/

A Quick and Dirty Guide to Cell Phone Surveillance at Protests
EFF

https://www.eff.org/deeplinks/2020/06/quick-and-dirty-guide-cell-phone-surveillance-protests

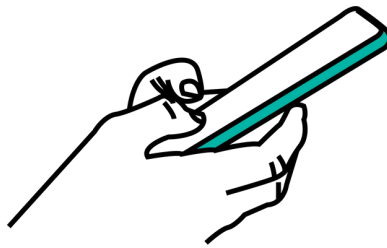**Copwatch Guide to Copwatching during Protests**
Berkeley Copwatch

https://www.berkeleycopwatch.org/_files/ugd/9faa72_f7e3368f6a4d40d3980069938712e131.pdf

What to do if your phone is seized by the police
Freedom of the Press Foundation

https://freedom.press/training/mobile-security-for-activists-and-journalists/

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