

FILMING PROTESTS AND DEMONSTRATIONS IN THE UNITED STATES

FILMING FOR HUMAN RIGHTS CAN BE DANGEROUS
BE SAFE. BE ETHICAL. BE EFFECTIVE.



WARNING

Law enforcement, Immigration and Customs Enforcement and extremist far-right groups in the United States frequently review documentation from protests in order to target activists for arrest, questioning, harassment, and physical violence. Take special care when documenting crowds!

You have the right to film police in public spaces, as long as you don't interfere and comply if you're told to back up.

PREPARE

- Assess your personal security threats and the threats of fellow organizers and attendees.
- Assess your data + internet connection.
- Have a trusted contact's info stored or handy.
- Password protect your phone- do not use TouchID or FaceID in place of a password.
- Charge your batteries and free up storage space.
- Encrypt or delete sensitive data.
- Consider downloading encrypted messaging apps like Signal or Wire.



ENSURE A GOOD SHOT

If safe, move closer to record details, avoid zooming in. Keep the sun and any additional light to your back. Keep your shots steady and hold them for 10 seconds. Film continuously, especially when documenting violence or harassment. Get in close for good sound.



FILM THE DETAILS

Document police violence. Film identifying details like police badges, license plates, weapons, etc. Also film hateful chants, signs, threats, etc. Make the video easier to verify by filming street signs and landmarks.

FILM THE ACTION

Get a variety of shots to show protest activity and the size of the crowd. Anonymize protesters by filming feet, backs or with blurred focus.



NARRATION

Stay quiet and let the video speak for itself. It's helpful for lawyers and investigators to hear what is happening. If you decide to add narration, stay calm and only share factual and unbiased information such as the time, date, location, badge numbers, number of officers, etc. Don't allege any details about victims, such as immigration status, criminal history, etc.



INTERVIEWS

Add context and capture personal stories through interviews with consenting protesters. Ensure those you film are aware of how and where the video will be used. Discuss potential safety risks for yourself and those you are filming, especially if sharing the video online. If anonymity is needed, film their hands, cover their face or use editing software.



PROTECT YOUR MEDIA

Store the original files in a safe place. Share a copy with a trusted friend securely- preferably via encrypted message or handoff of media card.

USE YOUR MEDIA WISELY

PAUSE and think strategically before sharing your video online. Always consider your own and others' safety before sharing the video publicly. When possible, work with a lawyer, trusted journalist or target of abuses before sharing the video. If you are working with a group, create protocols for how you will share and use media ahead of time.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Livestreaming Protests: wit.to/Livestreaming_Protests

Security Considerations before Sharing Videos of Police Abuse:
wit.to/ElGrito_Sharing

Checklist for Sharing Videos of Encounters with Immigration Enforcement:
wit.to/ICE_Sharing

Getting Started with Digital Security: bit.ly/DigiSecPrimer

EFF Surveillance Self-Defense: <https://ssd.eff.org/en>

Using Facebook in Era of Mass Deportation: wit.to/2LUSM07

Activists' Guide to Archiving Video: wit.to/Archiving

SEE IT. FILM IT. CHANGE IT.
library.witness.org



Filming Protests - U.S. v1.0