

Protest Safety Tips to Guard Against Surveillance

We at DDF have compiled these tips from peer organizations and on-the-ground activists. These tips are not a substitute for professional legal advice, or your own personal expertise with your work and your community.

What threats might you face at a protest?

- Implicating and identifying photos and location data of you at a protest
- Surveillance at the protest turning into targeting by the police or government after the protest
- Confiscation of your device by police and access to sensitive info
- Injury or arrest by the police

Protest Prep....

Think through your threat model: what prevention tips might fit your personal situation?

- What about you or your identity makes you more or less of a target of police violence?
- Will you be wearing something that identifies you as a member of a certain group or organization?
- How bad would the impact be if you have a run-in with law enforcement? Are you on parole? Are you or loved ones undocumented?
- Are you immunocompromised or living with or caring for immunocompromised folks?
- Do you have medical issues that may impact you at the protest? Have and share your care plan.
- What will you do if arrested? Make sure friends who can call for you know your birthday & legal name.

Prep for your phone

These first set of tips help ensure it's more difficult to place you at the protest:

- Do you need to bring your phone? Consider leaving it at home, or turn it off or on airplane mode.
- Disable wifi
 - Clear your phone's saved wifi networks so that your phone doesn't automatically try to join a commonly named network like "Starbucks" that may be a fake network set up by an attacker.
- Disable bluetooth
- Disable location services
 - iPhone users -- clear your important location history ([screenshots here](#))

These tips can help ensure if your phone is lost or confiscated that its contents are not accessible:

- Disable login with fingerprint or face ID
 - This prevents you from being forced to unlock your phone without your consent.
- Download an encrypted messenger app: we recommend [Signal](#), turn on disappearing messages
- Encrypt your phone - iPhones are encrypted by default when you enable a passcode, on Androids and others, check privacy settings

What to wear and/or carry - help ensure you are less likely to be identified while at the protest.

- Wear a mask -- not only does this guard against COVID-19 and keep you or others who may be asymptomatic from spreading to each other, but it can interfere with facial recognition surveillance
- Wear sunglasses, a hat, or bring an umbrella -- gives you shade and interferes with facial recognition
- Cover up any identifying tattoos; write important legal or bail support numbers on your forearm.
- Dress in as nondescript clothing as you can, like all black. You want to blend in with other protesters.
- Bring a water bottle (helpful for tear gas, remember: only use water, NOT milk or liquid antacid)
- Avoid carrying a bag. If you need one, wear a backpack, so that your hands are free.

At the protest...

Buddy System:

- Stay in a group. Do NOT go alone.
- Tell somebody where you are and have them check in with you regularly.

Communicating - *help ensure your messages can't be read by others.*

- Avoid using SMS text messaging as certain surveillance tech can intercept those messages.
- Instead use an encrypted messenger app like [Signal](#).
 - In Signal: turn on the disappearing messages setting.
- Do NOT take identifying pictures/video of protest attendees.

If you are white

- Follow the lead of folks who are Black, Indigenous, or people of color.
- Do not escalate; if you witness escalation, pay attention, ask for help from bystanders or self-identified organizers, look for a legal observer (lime green hats).
- Be mindful of who is on the front lines. If it fits in your threat model, put yourself between police and Black people. Remember -- police are less likely to escalate with and harm white people.

If you see somebody getting arrested

- Without approaching dangerously close to the arrest, try to get their first and last name.
- If you choose to record using video, depending on your state, apps are available that can prevent that recording from being deleted, including the [Mobile Justice Apps](#) by the ACLU.
- Be a good bystander: try to observe and remember details so you can recall them if asked by ex: that person's legal support or family members.
- If you see ICE or CBP agents at the protest you can call [United We Dream](#)'s Migra Watch hotline: 1-844-363-1423.

If you are arrested

- Try to give your name to a supportive bystander or any available legal observer (lime green hats).
- Say "I am going to remain silent, and I want to speak to a lawyer."
 - Note: Then, you have to actually remain silent. If you need to speak—in order to advocate for medical care or other needs—refrain from talking about anything else, re-invoke again after.
- To report an arrest (including your own) call the National Lawyers Guild or local legal support hotline.
 - Your state or city may have specific jail support orgs or bail funds - write numbers on your forearm in Sharpie ahead of the protest.
- Regardless of immigration status, you are only required to tell police your name. You are not required to tell them your country of origin, citizenship, or related information. We recommend finding more [advice most relevant](#) to your immigration status provided by experts like the ACLU & [United We Dream](#).

Resources & Credits:

- EFF [Surveillance Self Defense: Attending A Protest](#)
- Digital Defense Fund [security education zines](#)
- Article on [clearing your iPhone's important locations history](#)