

Best Practices: Filming in Teams for Evidence- Five Roles and Responsibilities

Filming in Teams for Evidence - Five Roles and Responsibilities

When filming protests, demonstrations and events, consider filming in teams to make sure you have multiple angles, perspectives and aspects recorded. This can not only help you create a more comprehensive and compelling video, but will also better support the use of video as evidence.

These five main roles, which cover filming as well as editing, saving and uploading, can be done in teams of two or more. Whenever possible film with a partner. The partner should be a trusted friend who will support efforts to film, move and protect the cameraperson and their footage - and is comfortable with the same level of risk. Partners can not only carry essential materials such as extra batteries, media cards and emergency contact details, they can also be responsible for communicating with other members of the filming team so the cameraperson can focus on filming. Also, these roles may also be applied to live streaming teams, with the Editor managing and featuring video feeds.

Before and during filming, assess your safety and security considerations, as well as what you hope to accomplish by filming. Always assess the risks to yourself, those you film and the communities you are apart of before you press record. Use the following suggestions and develop your filming teams to help ensure you are recording and sharing the most reliable, accurate and authentic video evidence possible.

Camera 1: Filming Details and Action Shots

Responsibilities: Film the action as close as possible, focusing on details of the protest and any incidents of police or military violence. Be intentional and hold shots steady as possible. Where available, get violators' faces and any details, such as police names, badges and identifying information such as vehicles and license plates.

Risk: Very high to high. This cameraperson is often the most at risk and should have safety and security plans in place. Moreover, if this person or team is arrested or detained, other team members should capture the incident and alert support networks.

Equipment: Must be agile when filming. Carry essentials, especially back-up memory cards, batteries, notebook and mobile phone.

Partner: Highly recommended. Camera 1's partner is their second set of eyes, responsible for assessing immediate risks as well as taking action to get needed shots or move towards safety. Recommended. Partner responsible for carrying extra equipment and also be a runner of media if needed to transfer priority footage to a safe location.

Camera 2: Filming in the Crowd

Responsibilities: Film within the crowd to get a sense of the action. Pay special focus on filming and supporting Camera 1 and getting additional footage. Suggested Camera 2 films to keep Camera 1 in view to keep context of footage and provide additional angle - particularly useful in high-risk situations. In planning, Camera 2 and partner should determine if they will replace Camera 1 if arrested or detained.

Risk: High.

Equipment: Must be agile when filming. Carry essentials, especially back-up memory cards, batteries, notebook and mobile phone.

Partner: Recommended. Partner responsible for carrying extra equipment and also be a runner of media if needed to transfer priority footage to a safe location.



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Camera 3: Filming Context at a Distance

Responsibilities: Film safely at a distance to capture the full scope of the event. Particular focus on location, movement of police or military and activity. If possible and safe, film from above - window, balcony or roof. Additionally, Camera 3 should communicate any major developments to teammates; e.g. military vehicles approaching, a new formation or weapons being prepared or used.

Risk: Low to high.

Equipment: A camera with good zoom and visual quality is important to enable good, clear footage from a distance. A tripod, monopod or surface to stabilize the camera is highly recommended.

Partner: Recommended. In addition to searching for additional shots, the partner can be responsible for communicating to the rest of the team, coordinating communication and also alerting teammates to risks or opportunities.

Camera 4: Conducting Interviews

Responsibilities: Filming first person accounts of events can add emotion, credibility or important details to your video. However, before recording you should always explain what your intentions are and how you plan to use and share the interview. In particular, the interviewee should know that if the footage is shared publicly, authorities or potential enemies who may retaliate will likely see it. We call this process informed consent.

Risk: Low to High.

Equipment: If filming with the event, focus on holding shot steady and getting the best sound possible. External microphones and tripods or monopods will help ensure better sound and image quality.

Partner: Recommended. A partner can identify and prepare any potential interviewees, particularly in conducting the informed consent process with each potential interviewee so they know what the video is for, how it will be used and be able to determine if they want to participate and be identifiable or need their identity hidden. Additionally, the partner can ask the interview questions and allow the cameraperson to focus on filming.

Editor & Uploader: Collecting, Describing and Sharing Raw or Edited Footage

Responsibilities: Working away from the immediate action, the editor and uploader receives the footage, analyzes it, adds essential details and context to the video for upload. Additionally, this person or team can blur faces and add title cards to ensure the date, time, location and event information is within the video AND in the description wherever uploaded. Responsible for saving and cataloguing all media.

Risk: Low.

Equipment: Editing equipment, strong internet access and back-up devices for saving and preserving footage.

Partner: Ideally, this role is done by a team of two or more; one person focuses on the editing footage while the other is reviewing additional raw footage, prioritizing footage to be edited and uploading finalized, edited footage. Additionally, a partner can communicate with the filming teams in real-time to get any details to ensure full context, such as specific location, time and context.

Last note: The desire to share footage immediately, particularly media that shows abuse and evidence, is understandable. However, by taking extra time to add essential context to your footage and description will make your video more findable and usable in the immediate and long-term. Additionally, by taking steps to blur faces and protect identity, you are being an ethical filmmaker - and may greatly reduce risks to subjects in your footage.

