

PRINCIPLES & PRACTICES



A. Preparation

PLAN

Visit the site of the assembly the day before to familiarise yourselves with the location and or route of a march; draw a map to identify any physical / environmental risks; potential escape routes / points of exit; meeting spots if team members get separated etc.

PREPARE

Familiarise yourself with expectations for the assembly e.g. have the authorities been notified; have any restrictions / bans been imposed; what are the media and social media saying about it. Familiarize yourself with the background and history of the assembly – has it been held before, have there been any incidents, etc.

EQUIP

Make sure that each team member has the necessary working equipment (note books/pens; phones; cameras; watches); appropriate clothes and shoes; food / water; ID; key phone numbers. Exchange phone numbers among monitors to stay in contact (if separated).

IDENTIFY

Monitors may choose to be visible in order to distinguish themselves from the participants in the assembly. This may be useful in case of disorder or violence. Form of ID may include high visibility jackets; distinctive headgear; badges; ID cards.

INFORM

Inform key actors in advance of the assembly to let them know that you plan to monitor, why you are doing this, how you plan to do it and what you will do with your observations e.g. write a report; speak to the media etc. Key contacts might include: Organisers (if there are any); Police; Municipality; Ministry; Ombudsman office; OSCE Mission / EU Delegation (if relevant); key civil society groups.

Basic principles

Objectives: Agree at the outset the key aims and objectives of the monitoring. These may include assessing human rights standards; monitoring police behaviour; gathering information for a report. Having clear objectives is important for recruitment, engaging with other actors and responding to queries and challenges.

Ethos: Monitors should work to an agreed Code of Conduct based on objectivity, impartiality and respect for the law. As observers rather than participants monitoring should be based on the principle of do no harm.

Recruitment: Monitors are often recruited from human rights groups, civil society organisations and from the local student population. Monitors do not need special qualifications or skills before joining.

Training: Monitors should be given basic training on the principles of monitoring, human rights standards (including the rights of monitors), local laws and the approach to be taken by the project.

Teamwork: Always monitor as part of a team. A team should include a minimum of 3 people, with 2 people on the ground and one other in support, who should remain accessible by phone.

Safety: The personal safety of monitors is always a priority. Risk and safety concerns should be reviewed before and throughout the monitoring process. If any member of the team feels unsafe then the entire team should withdraw from the assembly site.

Communication: Team members should remain in communication with each other during the assembly. Agree times to check in with the support team before, during and after the assembly.



B. Monitoring Practice

ARRIVE EARLY - STAY LATE

Aim to be at the site of the assembly well before it is due to start and before people arrive. This will enable you to identify where the police and their reserves are deployed (they will get there early); watch as people arrive; get a sense of what might happen; assess the dynamics of the situation; and decide where you will monitor from. Be prepared to remain at the site until the assembly has finished, all participants have dispersed and police have left.

INTRODUCE

Try to introduce yourself to key people (police, organisers) on the ground when you arrive and to get a sense of plans and expectations. This is not always possible, but is easier if you arrive early.

OBSERVE

Key features to observe at an assembly include: the police (how many, which units, what equipment / weapons); the participants in the assembly (how many; key groups; any banners / placards / chants); any opponents / spectators; the interactions between them; changes in mood; any acts of aggression or force, by police or participants; any arrests, injuries etc.

DOCUMENT

Record key actions and incidents in a notebook or audio and / or camera / video, with time and location of incident. Be descriptive and factual. Don't attempt to assess why something happened. Focus on things you have seen personally and always be able to distinguish between actions that you have seen, and actions that you might have been told about.



C. After Monitoring

MEDIA

Agree in advance your approach to the media and whether you will speak to them about your work. Monitors generally inform the media of what they are doing and why, but do not offer opinions of what happened. Monitors and media generally work to different agendas and timeframes / deadlines.

DEBRIEF

Bring the monitoring team together at the end of the assembly to make sure everyone is safe, have an opportunity to talk about what people have seen, raise any concerns or problems, make sure everyone can get home safely and agree next steps.

REPORT

Agree in advance what you intend to do with the information you have gathered at the assembly observation. This might involve writing a report; issuing a press release; briefing international and local human rights actors or key state bodies; releasing material to the media.

ONGOING

Decide the scope of your monitoring work. Does the monitoring end when the assembly finishes or will you monitor what happens to people who are detained / arrested / charged?