

# Protest

A **protest** (also called a **demonstration**, **remonstration** or **remonstrance**) is a public expression of objection, disapproval or dissent towards an idea or course of action, typically a political one.<sup>[2][3]</sup> Protests can take many different forms, from individual statements to mass demonstrations. Protesters may organize a protest as a way of publicly making their opinions heard in an attempt to influence public opinion or government policy, or they may undertake direct action in an attempt to directly enact desired changes themselves.<sup>[4]</sup> Where protests are part of a systematic and peaceful nonviolent campaign to achieve a particular objective, and involve the use of pressure as well as persuasion, they go beyond mere protest and may be better described as cases of civil resistance or nonviolent resistance.<sup>[5]</sup>

Various forms of self-expression and protest are sometimes restricted by governmental policy (such as the requirement of protest permits),<sup>[6]</sup> economic circumstances, religious orthodoxy, social structures, or media monopoly. One state reaction to protests is the use of riot police. Observers have noted an increased militarization of protest policing, with police deploying armored vehicles and snipers against the protesters. When such restrictions occur, protests may assume the form of open civil disobedience, more subtle forms of resistance against the restrictions, or may spill over into other areas such as culture and emigration.

A protest itself may at times be the subject of a counter-protest. In such a case, counter-protesters demonstrate their support for the person, policy, action, etc. that is the subject of the original protest. In some cases, these protesters can violently clash.

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Demonstration against the President of Iran Mahmoud Ahmadinejad during the Rio+20 conference in Brazil, June 2012



Farmer land rights protest in Jakarta, Indonesia



A working class political protest in Greece calling for the boycott of a bookshop after an employee was fired, allegedly for her political activism



Anti-nuclear Power Plant Rally on 19 September 2011 at Meiji Shrine complex in Tokyo. Sixty thousand people marched chanting "Sayonara nuclear power" and waving banners, to call on Japan's government to abandon nuclear power, following the Fukushima nuclear disaster.<sup>[1]</sup>

## Historical notions

Unaddressed protests may grow and widen into civil resistance, dissent, activism, riots, insurgency, revolts, and political and/or social revolution. Some examples of protests include:

- Northern Europe in the early 16th century (Protestant Reformation)
- North America in the 1770s (American Revolution)
- Pennsylvania Mutiny of 1783, an anti-government protest by several hundred soldiers of the Continental Army
- France in 1789 (French Revolution)
- Haiti in 1803 (Haitian Revolution)
- The Haymarket riot, 1886, a violent labor protest led by the Anarchist Movement
- New York shirtwaist strike of 1909
- Martin Luther King's 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, a key moment in the Civil Rights Movement
- SOS (Save Our Sons) an Australian anti-conscription organization
- Protests against the Vietnam War

- Mexico 68
- The Stonewall riots in 1969 protesting the treatment of homosexuals in New York City
- The People Power Revolution in the Philippines
- The Tiananmen Square protests of 1989
- The many ACT-UP AIDS protests of the late 1980s and early 1990s
- The Seattle WTO Ministerial Conference of 1999 protest activity against the World Trade Organization
- Anti-globalization Protests in Prague in 2000
- Anti-globalization Protests in Genoa from 18 to 22 July 2001
- 15 February 2003 Iraq War Protest
- Palestinian First Intifada Second Intifada
- Anti-nuclear protests
- 2007 Bersih rally
- 2010 Thai political protests
- 2011 Iranian protests
- Arab Spring protests
- Impact of the Arab Spring
- 2011 Occupy Wall Street protests
- Gezi Park protests 2013 in Turkey
- June 2013 Egyptian protests
- Euromaidan protests in Ukraine, Nov. 2013 through Feb. 2014
- Black Lives Matter
- 2014 Hong Kong Umbrella Movement
- 2016 South Korean protests
- 2017 Jallikattu protests
- Dakota Access Pipeline protests
- 2018 Tommy Robinson protests
- 2018 Sadiq Khan protests
- 2018 Armenian Velvet Revolution
- 2019 Hong Kong anti-extradition bill protests
- Citizenship Amendment Act protests



Demonstration in front of the headquarters of the Spanish National Police in Barcelona during 2017 Catalan general strike against brutal polices during referendum



Protesters against big government fill the West Lawn of the U.S. Capitol and the National Mall on 12 September 2009.



An artist's depiction of a prototypical angry mob protesting with the threat of violence

## Forms of protest

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A protest can take many forms.<sup>[7]</sup> The Dynamics of Collective Action project and the Global Nonviolent Action Database<sup>[8]</sup> are two of the leading data collection efforts attempting to capture protest events. The<sup>[9]</sup> Dynamics of Collective Action project considers the repertoire of protest tactics (and their definitions) to include:

- **Rally or demonstration:** Demonstration, rally, etc. without reference to marching or walking in a picket line or standing in a vigil. Reference to speeches, speakers, singing, preaching, often verified by indication of sound equipment of PA and sometimes by a platform or stage. Ordinarily will include worship services, speeches, briefings.
- **March:** Reference to moving from one location to another; to be distinguished from rotating or walking in a circle with picket signs which by definition, constitutes a picket.
- **Vigil:** Most vigils have banners, placards, or leaflets so that people passing by, despite silence from participants, can ascertain for what the vigil stands.
- **Picket:** The modal activity is picketing; there may be references to picket line, to informational picketing; holding signs; "carrying signs and walking around in a circle". Holding signs or placards or banners is not the defining criteria; rather, it is holding or carrying those items and walking a circular route, a phrase sometimes surprisingly found in the permit application.
- **Civil disobedience:** Explicit protest that involves crossing barricade, sit-in of blacks where prohibited, use of "colored" bathrooms, voter registration drives, crossing barricades, tying up phone lines.
- **Ceremony:** These celebrate or protest status transitions ranging from birth, death dates of individuals, organizations or nations, seasons, to re-enlistment or commissioning of military personnel, to the anniversaries of same. These are sometimes referenced by presenting flowers or wreaths commemorating or dedicating or celebrating status transitions or its anniversary; e.g., annual Merchant Marine memorial service; celebrate Chanukah, Easter, birthday of Martin Luther King Jr.);
- **Dramaturgical demonstration**
- **Motorcade:** (Electoral campaign and other issues)
- **Information distribution:** tabling/ petition gathering, lobbying, letter-writing campaign, teach-ins.
- **Symbolic display:** e.g. Menorah, Creche Scene, graffiti, cross burnings, signs, standing displays
- **Attack** by instigators Ethnic group victim of physical attack, by collective group (not-one-on-one assault, crime, rape). Boundary motivating attack is "other group's identity," as in gay-bashing, lynching. Can also include verbal attack and/or threats, too.
- **Riot, melee, mob violence:** Large-scale (50+), use of violence by instigators against persons, property, police, or buildings separately or in combination, lasting several hours.
- **Strike, slow down and sick-ins employee work protest of any kind:** Regular air strike through failure of negotiations, or wildcat air strike. (Make note if a wildcat strike.)
- **Boycott:** Organized refusal to buy or use a product or service, rent strikes.
- **Press conference:** If specifically named as such in report, and must be the predominant activity form. Could involve disclosure of information to "educate the public" or influence various decision-makers.
- **Organization formation announcement or meeting announcement:** meeting or press conference to announce the formation of a new organization.
- **Conflict, attack or clash, no instigator:** This includes any boundary conflict in which no instigator can be identified, i.e. black/white conflicts, abortion/anti-abortion conflicts.

- **Prayer Walk:** A prayer walk is an activity that consists in walking and praying at the same time. It's done not for the physical benefit but for the spiritual exercise, either publicly functioning also as a demonstration or rally.
- **Lawsuit:** legal maneuver by social movement organization or group
- **Peopleless Protest:** Simultaneous online and offline protest developed in Europe during the Covid-19 pandemic. Involves physical representations of protesters in public spaces that are subsequently assembled online.

The Global Nonviolent Action database uses Gene Sharp's classification of 198 methods of nonviolent action. There is considerable overlap with the Dynamics of Collective Action repertoire, although the GNA repertoire includes more specific tactics. Together, the two projects help define tactics available to protesters and document instances of their use.

## Typology

Abhishek Tiwari (8-B) and Lori Hall<sup>[10]</sup> have devised a typology of six broad activity categories of the protest activities described in the Dynamics of Collective Action project.



March next to the Benito Juárez Hemicircle; 27 August 1968.  
Mexico City.

- **Literal, symbolic, aesthetic and sensory** - Artistic, dramaturgical, and symbolic displays (street theater, dancing, etc.). Use of images, objects, graphic arts, musical performances, or vocal/auditory exhibitions (speechmaking, chanting, etc.). Tactile exchanges of information (petitions, leaflets, etc.) and the destruction of objects of symbolic and/or political value. Highly visible and most diverse category of activity; impacts on society (police response, media focus, impact on potential allies, etc.) often are underestimated.
- **Solemnity and the sacred** – Vigils, prayer, rallies in format of religious service, candlelighting, cross carrying, etc., all directly related to Durkheimian *sacred* or some form of religious or spiritual practice, belief, or ideology. Events where sacred activity is the primary focus are rarely responded to by police with force or presence. Solemnity usually provides a distinct quietness or stillness, changing the energy, description, and interpretation of such events
- **Institutional and conventional** – Institutionalized activity or activity highly dependent on formal political processes and social institutions (press conferences, lawsuits, lobbying, etc.). Often conflated with non-confrontational and nonviolent activities in research as the *other* or reference category. More *acceptable* because it operates, to some degree, within the system. Historically contentious issue in regard to the practice of protest due to this integration within the system.
- **Movement in space** – Marches or parades (processional activities) from one spatio-temporal location to another, with beginning or ending places sometimes chosen for symbolic reasons. Picket lines often used in labor strikes but can be used by nonlabor actors but the key differences between picket and processions are the distance of movement. Events that take the form of a procession are logically much more difficult to police (even if it is for the safety of protesters). Marches are some of the largest events in this period.
- **Civil disobedience** – Withholding obligations, sit-ins, blockades, occupations, bannerizing, *camping*, etc., are all specific activities which constitute the tactical form of civil disobedience. In some way, these activities directly or technically break the law. Usually given most attention by researchers, media, and authorities. Often conflated with violence and threats because of direct action and confrontational nature but should serve as a distinct category of action (both in the context of tactical/ strategic planning and in the control of activity).
- **Collective violence and threats** – Collective violence such as pushing, shoving, hitting, punching, damaging property, throwing objects, verbal threats, etc., is usually committed by a relative few out of many protesters (even tens of thousands). Rare in occurrence, rarely condoned by the public or onlookers (particularly the media). Usually met with equivalent or overwhelming force in response to authorities. At times in U.S. history lauded as the only way to get results, but little empirical evidence violence succeeds in goal attainment.

Some forms of direct action listed in this article are also public demonstrations or rallies.

- Protest march, a historically and geographically common form of nonviolent action by groups of people.
- Picketing, a form of protest in which people congregate outside a place of work or location where an event is taking place. Often, this is done in an attempt to dissuade others from going in ("crossing the picket line"), but it can also be done to draw public attention to a cause.
- Street protesters demonstrate in areas with high visibility, often employing handmade placards such as sandwich boards or picket signs in order to maximize exposure and interaction with the public.
- Lockdowns and lock-ons are a way to stop movement of an object, like a structure or tree and to thwart movement of actual protesters from the location. Users employ various chains, locks and even the sleeping dragon for impairment of those trying to remove them with a matrix of composted materials.
- Die-ins are a form of protest where participants simulate being dead (with varying degrees of realism). In the simplest form of a die-in, protesters simply lie down on the ground and pretend to be dead, sometimes covering themselves with signs or banners. Much of the effectiveness depends on the posture of the protesters, for when not properly executed, the protest might look more like a "sleep-in". For added realism, simulated wounds are sometimes painted on the bodies, or (usually "bloody") bandages are used.
- Protest song is a song which protests perceived problems in society. Every major movement in Western history has been accompanied by its own collection of protest songs, from slave emancipation to women's suffrage, the labor movement, civil rights, the anti-war movement, the feminist movement, the environmental movement. Over time, the songs have come to protest more abstract, moral issues, such as injustice, racial discrimination, the morality of war in general (as opposed to purely protesting individual wars), globalization, inflation, social inequalities, and incarceration.
- Radical cheerleading. The idea is to ironically reappropriate the aesthetics of cheerleading, for example by changing the chants to promote feminism and left-wing causes. Many radical cheerleaders (some of whom are male, transgender or non-gender identified) are in appearance far from the stereotypical image of a cheerleader.
- Critical Mass bike rides have been perceived as protest activities. A 2006 *New Yorker* magazine article described Critical Mass' activity in New York City as "monthly political-protest rides", and characterized Critical Mass as a part of a social movement;<sup>[11]</sup> and the UK e-zine *Urban75*, which advertises as well as publishes photographs of the Critical Mass event in London, describes this as "the monthly protest by cyclists reclaiming the streets of London."<sup>[12]</sup> However, Critical Mass participants have insisted that these events should be viewed as "celebrations" and spontaneous gatherings, and not as protests or organized demonstrations.<sup>[13][14]</sup> This stance allows Critical Mass to argue a legal position that its events can occur without advance notification of local police.<sup>[15][16]</sup>
- Toyi-toyi is a Southern African dance originally from Zimbabwe that became famous for its use in political protests in the apartheid-era South Africa, see Protest in South Africa.

## Written demonstration

Written evidence of political or economic power, or democratic justification may also be a way of protesting.

- Petitions
- Letters (to show political power by the volume of letters): For example, some letter writing campaigns especially with signed form letter

## Civil disobedience demonstrations

Any protest could be civil disobedience if a "ruling authority" says so, but the following are *usually* civil disobedience demonstrations:

- Public nudity or topfree (to protest indecency laws or as a publicity stunt for another protest such as a war protest) or animal mistreatment (e.g. PETA's campaign against fur). See also Nudity and protest.
- Sit-in
- Photobombing or disrupting an event being broadcast live
- Raasta roko (people blocking auto traffic with their bodies)
- Silent protest



A protester photobombing a news reporter during a protest in New York City

## As a residence

- Peace camp
- Formation of a tent city
- Camp for Climate Action

## Destructive

- Vandalism – smashing windows or spraying graffiti is sometimes used as a form of protests, and is sometimes employed by black bloc groups.
- Riot – Protests or attempts to end protests sometimes lead to rioting.
- Self-immolation
- Suicide
- Hunger strike
- Bombing



Black bloc members spray graffiti during an Iraq War Protest in Washington D.C. [17]

## Non-destructive

- Silent Protests<sup>[18]</sup> – Protests/Parades in which participants are nonviolent and usually silent, in attempt to avoid violent confrontation with Military or Police Forces. This tactic was effectively used during the Arab Spring in cities such as Tehran and Cairo

## Direct action

- Civil resistance<sup>[19]</sup>
- Nonviolent resistance
- Occupation

## Against a government

- Tax resistance
- Conscientious objector
- Flag desecration



The District of Columbia issues license plates protesting the "taxation without representation" that occurs due to its special status.

## Against a military shipment

- Port Militarization Resistance – protests which attempt to prevent military cargo shipments.

## By government employees

- Bully pulpit
- Judicial activism

## Job action

- Strike action
- Walkout
- Work-to-rule

## In sports

During a sporting event, under certain circumstances, one side may choose to play a game "under protest", usually when they feel the rules are not being correctly applied. The event continues as normal, and the events causing the protest are reviewed after the fact. If the protest is held to be valid, then the results of the event are changed. Each sport has different rules for protests.



Protest in Wisconsin State Capitol.

## By management

- [Lockout](#)

## By tenants

- [Rent strike](#)

## By consumers

- [Boycott](#)
- [Consumer Court](#)

## Information

- Informative [letters](#), letter writing campaigns, letters to the editor
- [Teach-in](#)
- [Zine](#)
- [Soapboxing](#)

## Civil disobedience to censorship

- [Samizdat](#) (distributing censored materials)
- [Protest Graffiti](#)

## By Internet and social networking

Blogging and social networking have become effective tools to register protest and grievances. Protests can express views, news and use viral networking to reach out to thousands of people. With protests on the rise from the election season of 2016 going into 2017, protesters became aware that using their social media during protest could make them an easier target for government surveillance.<sup>[20]</sup>



Protesters in Zuccotti Park who are part of Occupy Wall Street using the Internet to get out their message over social networking as events happen, September 2011

## Literature, art and culture

- [Culture jamming](#)

## Against religious or ideological institutions

- [Recusancy](#)
- [Book burning](#)

## Economic effects against companies

A study of 342 US protests covered by *The New York Times* newspaper from 1962 to 1990 showed that such public activities usually affected the company's publicly traded stock price. The most intriguing aspect of the study's findings revealed that the amount of media coverage the event received was of the most importance to this study. Stock prices fell an average of one-tenth of a percent for every paragraph printed about the event.<sup>[21]</sup>



Protest march in Palmerston North, New Zealand.

## See also

- 
- [Activist Wisdom](#), a book about protesters in Australia
  - [Anti-globalization movement](#)
  - [Fare strike](#)
  - [First Amendment to the United States Constitution](#)
  - [Gandhigiri](#)
  - [I Protest](#)
  - [List of uprisings led by women](#)
  - [Protest art](#)
  - [Public Library Advocacy](#)
  - [Right to protest](#)
  - [Satyagraha](#)
  - [Social criticism](#)
  - [Tactical frivolity](#)

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Protesters outside the Oireachtas in Dublin, Republic of Ireland.

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