A WITNESS TIP SHEET

WITNESS — SEE IT / FILM IT / CHANGE IT

USING VIDEO FOR HUMAN RIGHTS DOCUMENTATION

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

1. BE PREPARED

Plan what you want to capture and be prepared with the right equipment before you pick up a camera. Consider what audience your video is for, such as media, lawyers, or tribunals. Assess any risks to yourself, those you film and the communities you are filming in.

2. RECORD DATE, TIME AND LOCATION

To help news media, human rights organizations and courts verify your video, set the correct date, time and GPS location on your device so it is recorded in the original file. Alternately, film a clock, a newspaper or say the date and time into the camera. Capture the location by filming street signs, intersections and landmarks.

3. DOCUMENT WHO IS FILMING

Speak into the camera or keep a written record with the original video file. If you need to be anonymous for security reasons, use a code name.

4. FILM WITH INTENTION

Record events as they happen from start to end. Hold your shots steady and for at least 10 seconds. Move the camera very slowly and avoid unnecessary zooming. Move closer when safe and possible. Film from various viewpoints and angles to best capture the full context of the incident.

5. CAPTURE DETAILS

Capture details like police vehicles, uniforms, badges, indications of police rank and their methods of communication. Capture other visual records such as bullet holes, tear gas canisters and who was involved in an incident.

6. DOCUMENT THOSE AFFECTED

People who are not engaged in hostilities are civilians and protected by international law. Show if the victims were carrying weapons or acting peacefully. Document who was affected and if they were specifically targeted. If the victims were members of a targeted group, film identifying details of the group such as badges or uniforms.

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1

7. CONTEXTUALIZE WITH INTERVIEWS OR NARRATION

Consider narrating while you are shooting to explain the situation. When possible, add context to your video by interviewing consenting victims or witnesses. Have them explain the details of the incident. Ensure those you film are fully aware of how and where the video will be used. When possible, discuss safety risks that may occur if the video is shared publicly, online or with authorities.

8. GET GOOD SOUND

Bad sound can ruin good video. When interviewing, move close to your subject and choose a quiet place to record. Use an external microphone or lavalier if possible.

9. PROTECT IDENTITIES

If anonymity is needed, film interviewees' hands while they speak, or have the subject wrap their face in a scarf, adjust the focus to blur the image or record crowds from behind. If revealing location could put you or your subjects at risk, do not capture landmarks or other identifying details.

10. KEEP AND ORGANIZE YOUR CONTENT

Always keep your original files and do not rename them. Organize your footage and keep related, additional written documentation or reports with your video files.

5 TIPS FOR FILMING INJURIES AND CASUALTIES

1. INTERVIEWS

Try to get a doctor or medical professional to explain the injuries. Their narration offers more credibility.

2. DETAILS

Get close to the body to film injuries. Be slow and steady. Hold your shots for at least 10 seconds. Avoid zooming or quick movements. Bring a ruler or a common object such as a pencil to record the size and scope of any injuries. If possible, take photos as they may capture clearer details.

3. CONTEXT

Include shots of the entire body and the surrounding environment to establish context. Capture various viewpoints and angles to show wounds, bullet holes, bloodstains or related details.

4. LIGHTING

If filming outdoors, try not to cast a shadow on the subject. Also avoid bright lights that overexpose the image. If indoors, set up lights to support your filming.

5. AUDIENCE

When filming disturbing scenes or graphic images, keep your audience in mind. If targeting media, ensure you meet broadcast standards by recording additional footage from a few meters away and avoid close up shots of graphic images.

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2