

# LET'S TAKE A CLOSER LOOK AT FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLIES



**Guide for organizations planning  
observation of assemblies**

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



# Assemblies Observation

## A Guide for Organizations



*Amnesty International observers at the Equality March in Bydgoszcz, May 2019 ©Amnesty International*

Amnesty International Poland was running the project of assemblies observation from 2017 to 2019. The main impulse for it had been the introduction of the new Assembly Act, a law that goes against international standards of freedom of assembly. We set ourselves the following goal: to analyse whether in Poland those standards are respected and to pursue changes in the national law and its enforcement in order to eliminate any infringements on the freedom of assembly. In the course of our project we trained

over fifty observers, run tens of observations (both formal and informal), and published reports on most of them, aimed not only at the general public but also at the police and the decision makers. We were also conducting discussions with representatives of the police and decision makers to discuss conclusions from our observations, as well as our recommendations.

Over the course of two years we were constantly learning, improving our methods, improving the workings of the network of observers, and establishing contacts with various external actors: activists taking part in street demonstrations, assembly organizers, other organizations, representatives of media and local governments. This guidebook sums up our experiences. We hope it will help you in planning your actions.

### WHY IT IS WORTH TO RUN THE PROJECT OF ASSEMBLIES OBSERVATION?

- Real impact on respecting the human rights
- New, attractive way of engaging the activists
- Ambitious, long-term project improves the image of the organization
- A chance to develop the expert knowledge of the members of the organization, as well as to raise consciousness about the standards of freedom of assembly among participants of assemblies, representatives of media and other institutions

# 1. BEFORE YOU START

## ➔ What do you want to change?

During the planning state of the project, we set ourselves two primary goals. The first was to trigger changes in the Assembly Act (a long-term goal, more difficult to achieve). The second goal, easier to reach, was to analyse how the current law is enforced and to seek necessary changes. In the end, though, another two external goals and one internal goal were achieved:

### WHAT PURPOSES CAN THE PROJECT OF ASSEMBLIES OBSERVATION SERVE?

- A change in the national law bringing it into line with the international standards of freedom of assembly
- The investigation on how the law regulating assemblies is enforced, whether the standards of freedom of assembly are upheld and whether security of participants is ensured. This investigation also may lead to formulating and demanding necessary changes
- Providing support for people taking part in assemblies so that they feel more safe knowing that the police are being watched by the observers
- The education of general public – including people taking part in assemblies – on their rights and on standards of freedom of assembly
- Integrating the network of activists and attracting new people into it

## ➔ What are the risks of running such a project in your country, region, or city?

Since the late 2015, mass demonstrations in Poland are becoming more and more frequent. Tensions between protesters, counter-protesters, and the police have been increasing. That was one impulse for attempting the project of assemblies observation. The situation in that period has been constantly changing, resulting in the escalation of violence. In 2019 we have been conducting the observation of Pride March in Białystok that was brutally attacked by the counter-protesters. Most of the observers conducting the observation that day felt unsafe, and it was a traumatic experience for them. From the very beginning we were preparing for high-risk situations (more on that in the chapter on the implementation of the project) but every difficult event such as this one forced us to ask ourselves, whether we're not putting the observers in harm's way.

Before you decide on your own project of assemblies observation, you should first think



*Independence March in Warsaw, November 2018 @Grzegorz Żukowski*

about the situation in your country, region, or town. In our case, an observer's yellow high vis jacket usually guaranteed safety from the police (which we had informed about our plans before each observation). It was also seen as neutral or a positive by most of the protesters during most of the assemblies, but we feared it wouldn't completely secure us from violence by some of the protesters, counter-protesters or bystanders. Therefore, sometimes we conducted our observations without jackets or we would put them on only after some initial on-the-ground safety evaluation. We conducted tens of observations and there were only a few risky situations, however even one bad experience during an observation can shut the project down or, in the worst case, end up in tragedy.

A trial run – more on which in a later chapter – may help you estimate the risks. Sometimes informal observations of a couple of assemblies by the core team planning the project will do.

### **Do you have the necessary resources in order to reach your goals?**

Any project of assemblies observation requires relatively many resources. Of course, the more ambitious goals you set, the more resources you will need. The same rule applies with the estimated risks: the greater they are, the more resources you should have at your disposal. Nothing is more important than people and knowledge. At the same time, those two factors represent the greatest challenge for the project.

Remember, you must ensure trustworthiness and regularity of the observations. This is of utmost importance – without it you probably will not establish yourself as a credible, reliable partner in the dialogue with decision-makers, or a legitimate participant in the public debate on law and its enforcement.

### **WHAT ARE THE TASKS FOR A CORE TEAM PLANNING A PROJECT OF ASSEMBLIES OBSERVATION?**

- Team management, planning and conducting evaluations
- Providing expert knowledge on the national and international assembly laws
- Contacting public institutions: the police, local governments, the national government, politicians
- Writing final observation reports based on preliminary reports by observers
- Mobilizing, recruiting and training observers, as well as managing their network
- Managing observers during observations
- Ensuring safety during high-risk observations: conducting initial risk evaluation; ensuring the presence of another person prepared to provide on-the-ground support for observers; monitoring news feeds in the media and in the social media in order to identify potentially dangerous situations and inform coordinator about them
- Working with the media: preparing for basic questions about the project, its goals and implementation; informing the media about each particular observation
- Using the social media: using them to disseminate information about the project and about particular observations; monitoring them during observations in order to identify potentially dangerous situations
- Remember: the same person may be responsible for coordinating any particular observation and for managing your network of observers, or for managing your whole project.

It is important to note at this stage that in our case not only Amnesty volunteers but also some of the employees of Polish Amnesty section were recruited as the observers. This model worked well for us, but it had one important consequence. Every two months employees such as the person responsible for fundraising or the person running the office were performing additional work pertaining to observations, apart from their everyday tasks, which was affecting their working schedule. However, it was a conscious decision stemming from the project's top priority.

## 2. PLANNING AND TRIAL RUN



*Amnesty International observers' training, April 2017 ©Amnesty International*

This phase took us about eight months. After that time, we made a smooth transition to the actual project. It is important to point out several advantages of a trial run. How did the planning and the trial run went in our case?

- 🕒 We analysed the national law; we spoke with experts on the subject of freedom of assembly, and on that basis we outlined the goals of our projects.
- 🕒 We analysed the experiences of another Polish organization that had been

observing assemblies. Also, we accessed information on similar projects run by other Amnesty sections, mainly the sections in the US and Australia. Based on that, we developed the observations' rules of conduct.

- 🕒 We set preliminary rules of choosing the assemblies we would be observing. Our initial assumption was that we would be including very varied assemblies making different claims and raising different demands, varying in numbers of participants and organized in many different cities. The information on upcoming events was to be gathered by trawling through the social media, as well as webpages of local governments, since in Poland the intent of organizing an assembly ought to be registered with the local authorities who subsequently publish the details online.
- 🕒 We identified people who would be able to help us with training the observers.
- 🕒 We established the rules of managing the observers' network. We planned and organized the first two-day training course.
- 🕒 We made eight observations in five months, which we considered quite a good result. However, only one of those observations took place outside of Warsaw (where the Amnesty office is). Expanding the number of observations outside of Warsaw was quickly identified as a challenge for the future.
- 🕒 We evaluated the observations' rules of conduct, recruiting, and training observers. Because of this, we were able to conduct better observation during the actual running of the project. (Our insights and improvements implemented after the trial run will be discussed in the next chapter).

During all that time, our internal and external communication were coherent. We made it public that we intend to start the project and that we are running the trial run. Therefore we send the message that we would focus on the issue of freedom of assemblies, while clearly signalling that we were in the initial, preparatory phase. We were establishing our organization as a participant in the debate on the freedom of assembly while giving ourselves some time to prepare and work out all the details of our project.

It is important to note that learning and improvement did not stop with the end of the trial run. About one year after starting the actual project, we conducted internal evaluation of our working methods.

## 3. RUNNING THE PROJECT



*Amnesty International observers at the Equality March in Bydgoszcz, May 2019 ©Amnesty International*

### ➔ The network of observers

The biggest challenge at the beginning and during the actual project is to create, develop and sustain a network of well-trained observers, prepared to reliably perform their tasks.

**How did we recruit the observers?** We focused on engaging people who already had connections with our organization: local group activists, people who had been taking part in our educational projects, members of the organization who up to that point had not been particularly active. Nevertheless, we were also ready to recruit people from outside of Amnesty, especially activists from similar organization. Apart from volunteers, our network of observers also included the employees of the Polish Amnesty section. From the very start, the rule was that the organization would cover the costs of travel and accommodation for those who would be participating in training or observations outside of where they live.



**All the future observers had to undertake a two-day introductory training course.** Undergoing the introductory training course was essential not only to acquire basic knowledge or to get to know other observers, but mainly to properly understand the observations' rules of conduct and the entire project. The first part of the introductory training course was focused on basic information on the standards of freedom of assembly, Polish law, and the police powers and methods. This last subject turned out to be especially important, so during subsequent training courses – both introductory and additional ones – we would go back to it time and time again. We were inviting ex members of the police force so that the observers would get some practical insights and be well prepared for performing their tasks. It was crucial that the observers not only understood the basic regulations pertaining to police powers (especially the lawful use of force), learned to recognize the police equipment and found out about basic strategies of policing assemblies, but also learned how does policing really pan out in practice. Each participant received a set of learning materials so he or she could develop and cement their new knowledge on their own. The

*The Warsaw Uprising March, Warsaw, August  
2018 @Amnesty International*



second part of the introductory training course was for discussing the rules of the observers' network and the observations' rules of conduct (more on those later). It was important to give participants time to get to know each other and to integrate, despite the limited timeframe.

**Integrating our network and sustaining the observers' engagement** in the project rested on two main pillars. Firstly, the observers could exchange information and insights in a closed group on Facebook. Secondly, about twice a year we were organizing additional meetings and courses in order to develop skills and knowledge, tighten the network and evaluate our actions. Despite all that, sustaining the observers' engagement was an immense challenge. In the final evaluation, the observers judged our efforts in this regard as insufficient. Without doubt we could have implemented more integration and training solutions, especially on-line based. Some people dropped out of our project: it was mostly because of lack of time, however there was also one instance when someone resigned from being an observer due to ideological differences – this person found it difficult to observe an assembly that was completely contrary to her values and to accept that the standards of freedom of assembly applies also to people, whose ideas and beliefs could be perceived as disturbing or even deserving condemnation.

## **Selecting the assemblies to observe**

Before we move on to the matter of how we were selecting the assemblies to observe, we should mention three principal ways of gathering information on upcoming assemblies. The first one depends on monitoring the social media and the traditional media. The second source of information are the organizers of assemblies who contact you and ask you to send your observers. The more advanced and well-publicized your project of observation of assemblies is, the greatest such interest will be, so be prepared to refuse some organizers. Finally, the third source of information is your network of observers. For example, our observers would sometimes draw our attention to assemblies that were planned in their cities of residence. Those three methods of gathering information should be applied throughout the entire duration of the project. By monitoring the social media we were able to seek out important assemblies, the organizers of which did not know us or did not value our work too highly, as well as assemblies organized in towns and cities that were not covered by our network of observers. Throughout the entire duration of our project we were also regularly observing certain assemblies due to existence in the Polish law of so-called “cyclical assemblies”. (Those types of assemblies are organized regularly every month or every year and get special recognition from the state and special status because of their supposed social importance).

Since the very beginning we set ourself the task of observing mostly those assemblies that were registered with the local governments; that were making different claims and demands; and were ideologically varied (e.g. prodemocratic, nationalistic, antifascist, environmental). In reality, though, we were often observing so-called spontaneous or ad hoc assemblies. Of particular interest to us were the cases when two or more assemblies were organized in close proximity and protesters were confronted with counter-protesters.

## **A CHALLENGE: OBSERVATIONS OUTSIDE OF THE TOWN WHERE YOUR ORGANIZATION IS BASED**

The most difficult challenge we were presented with was monitoring assemblies in cities and towns other than the one in which our organization is based, as well as organizing observations there. We wanted to conduct as many such observations as possible, because it would give us a better perspective on the freedom of assemblies in our country. However, we faced some difficulties:

- Often we would get information on some upcoming assembly too late – especially since organizing observation in other towns or cities takes more time
- Because about half of our network of observers consisted of the employees of Polish Amnesty section, it was much easier to assemble a group of observers for the assemblies that were happening in Warsaw where our office is located
- It was particularly difficult to organize observations in towns and cities where we didn't have any local activists or local observers.
- When observation was conducted in towns and cities other than the one in which our organization is based, the observation coordinator usually did not know the local topography and had to rely on apps such as Google Maps or Google Street View

Therefore, if you want your project to cover many localities and regions, or even a whole country, you should from the very beginning remember about the following:

- You should constantly be monitoring news on assemblies in several localities or regions other than the one in which your organization is based
- You should develop the network of observers so that it will be as geographically extensive as possible
- Encourage your observers to monitor assemblies organized in their towns, cities or regions and to propose conducting observations there
- Motivate your observers to participate in observations conducted in other localities. You should forewarn them during the preliminary training course that some observations will probably be organized at hoc which will require them to quickly declare their willingness to participate.

## **Contacting organizers and public institutions responsible for upholding standards of freedom of assembly**

Our project aimed at changing the law or practice of upholding the freedom of assembly. Therefore it was essential to initiate and sustain relationships with relevant public institutions, namely the police (on various levels), local governments and the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Whenever we decided to conduct an observation, we would inform those institutions in advance, as well as contact the organizers of the assembly. Afterwards we would present them with our report on the assembly.

In time, those contacts became more frequent. We started to receive invitations to various meetings with local governments, concerning the assemblies organized under their



*Amnesty International observer at so-called monthly Smolensk commemoration in Warsaw, July 2017  
@ Amnesty International*

jurisdictions, as well as invitations to debates and public events focused on the freedom of assembly. Such activities often are not that much visible from the outside, but nevertheless they are important, even though they necessitate allocating significant resources.

## ➔ Communicating with the media

Media can support your project of assemblies observation by publicizing your actions. Having said that, sometimes they can make your work more troublesome. You should prepare for that. The main difficulty in dealing with the media stems from the fact that the media have their own logic and their own approach to presenting information. They often expect quick reactions and quick, catchy comment on current events. The aim of the observation, however, is to accurately and comprehensively describe the assembly, which takes time. You will not be ready to immediately comment on a particular assembly. Your PR person or press secretary must take that into account. The information you can pass on to the media before the publication of the final report may include: the scope and aim of this particular observation (without relating any insights or conclusions); the scope and goals of your project of assemblies observation; standards of freedom of assembly in general, estimated publication date of your report. Remember that observers must not comment on the observation during the assembly, even if media representatives approach them. You need to prepare them for emphatically but politely declining any comments.

## ➔ The rules of observation and reporting

Neutrality, objectivism, safety – those were our three essential aims when we were conducting our observations and preparing final reports. The principle of objectivity required the observers to only describe the situations they had witnessed themselves. They were also supposed to aim for neutrality in their behaviours and reporting, which for example meant controlling their emotions as much as possible, standing aside and keeping their distance (both physical and psychological) during observations. Finally, the safety of our

observers was always of utmost importance. To this end, they were always working in pairs that were not supposed to split up no matter what. In the course of our project we clarified and developed the rules of observations which we had set out at the very beginning. You will find the rules of conduct during observation in Appendix 2.

## The logistics of observation

You have decided to conduct observation of an assembly. What do you do next?

- Decide upon the minimal number of observers needed for this observation, depending on how large the assembly is likely to be, whether there are going to be any counter-protests or possible incidents. Ask yourself whether this number allows you for any flexibility or is it the absolute minimum – assume that of all the observers, who will volunteer for this particular observation, at least one will drop out at the last moment.
- Inform your network of observers that you are recruiting observers for this particular observation. Set out the final deadline for entries.
- As early as possible, at least a couple of days before the assembly, establish whether you have reached your minimum number of observers for this observation. This does not apply in the case of assemblies that are, for one reason or another, essential to your project and about which you only learn a day or two before the planned date. If something like this happens, you may try to organize a smaller observation or conduct an informal observation, without high vis jackets. With those observations you do not publish any final report or publicize your insights or conclusions – those are for internal use only.
- Inform the authorities which are responsible for registering and policing the assembly (in Poland those duties fall to local governments and the police, respectively). Observation coordinator should prepare a written letter of authorization for every observer, issued in their name and signed by the director of your organization. If needed, this letter is to be presented to the police or other security forces during observation.
- Observation coordinator looks for any safe spaces where observers may seek shelter should the need arise (e.g. grocery stores or cafes, provided they are open during the assembly). It is also necessary to look out for any potentially dangerous spots, where, for example, observers may get stuck or where counter-protesters are likely to gather. Check out whether there are surveillance cameras en route of the assembly. You may find apps such as Google Street View useful for this task. If it is possible, observation coordinator should in advance inspect the route of the assembly or the area where it will be happening.
- E-mail observers about the time and place of the briefing before the assembly. You may choose a park or a square in some distance to the assembly. It is essential that this place is safe, and no one is likely to overhear your instructions and arrangements. If any of the observers do not live in the city where the observa-

tion takes place or knows it only vaguely, they should spend some time on virtual studying of the route of the assembly or the spot where it will be happening.

- ① On the day of the observation, coordinator divides observers into pairs and sets up a group in an online messaging app, inviting all observers. Observation coordinator assigns a name to each of the pairs – for example Pair One, Pair Two and so on. You can use apps such as Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp, or Signal, depending on the encryption levels required. Use the same app every time and make sure observers have it installed in their phones.
- ① Everybody must be present at the briefing 30 minutes before the assembly starts at the latest. Observation coordinator distributes printed out maps of the area where the observation will be conducted, as well as written letters of authorization for every observer issued in their name. In the case of high-risk observation, the coordinator also distributes basic first-aid kits and informs everybody about any safe spaces where it is possible to seek shelter. Those spaces can also be marked on the printed out maps. Coordinator checks whether all the observers are logged into the messaging app group.
- ① Coordinator reminds everybody about the rules of the messaging app group – mainly about that this group should be used only for sharing important information, especially those relevant also to other pairs (e.g. “Police blockade in spot X”), and that each pair must answer any calls from the coordinator (e.g. “Pair 1, are you safe?”). The activity in the group should be kept to a minimum in order to avoid messaging overload and cause the coordinator to miss some essential information.
- ① Coordinator informs everybody about the deployment of the pairs. If the assembly is stationary, the position of each pair can be marked on the printed out maps. However, if the assembly is nonstationary, each pair should learn the deployment of all the other pairs and know who goes where. (Names such as “Pair out front on the left”, “Pair out front on the right”, “Pair in the middle on the right”, “Pair in the back” can be helpful). Observers should keep some distance from participants of the assembly and avoid mixing with them.
- ① Coordinator informs whether high vis jackets will be used during the assembly and under what circumstances they should be put on or taken off.
- ① Coordinator should use the briefing to motivate observers by pointing out the importance of their work. It is very important to thank everybody at the beginning and after the observation.
- ① Each observer is equipped with: a high vis jacket, ID badge, a written letter of authorization issued in the observer’s name, a fully charged smartphone (and also a power bank if the observation is expected to be a long one; it is recommended that coordinator should have at least one spare power bank that they can lend to any observer who may need it), a bottle of water, a small snack. In the case of high-risk observation, each pair should also be equipped with a basic first-aid kit, including special tissues for neutralizing the effect of tear gas. Most observers in our project used their smartphones for making notes, but some of them chose

traditional small notepads. Remember however, that a phone is less conspicuous, so it is recommended during high-risk observation, when the observers do not use their jackets and should try to blend in. The work of the observers can be made easier if they are using an app that automatically records the precise time of writing each note. Usually in each pair one person is responsible for writing notes and the other one takes photos or records videos.

- After the briefing, pairs take up their assigned positions and conduct the observation. Coordinator will move around throughout the whole assembly. Their job is to monitor the events, to react and, should it be needed, to redeploy pairs. We have been experimenting with using the Google Maps function that informed coordinator on the location of each pair, but it turned out to be quite complicated and without any significant benefits. Remember, coordinator makes crucial decisions on redeployment or, in a critical situation, on terminating the observation.
- Coordinator, using the messaging app, informs observers that the observation is finished and sets the place where the debriefing session will be conducted.
- The debriefing session may only last ten minutes, but sometimes much more time is needed. Coordinator informs observers how much time does each pair have to prepare their preliminary report. If the observation had a very strong emotional impact on observers, they will need more time to tell others about their experiences. Remember: the debriefing session cannot be treated as a substitute for written reports. The debriefing session should achieve the following four aims: 1) To make sure everybody is safe; 2) To officially end the observation and thank everybody for their work; 3) To exchange information about any problematic situations (for example removing of the counter-protesters by the police), to make sure that any of the pairs have witnessed them and to quickly establish preliminary conclusions; 4) To give observers the opportunity to discuss their experiences and to cool down before going back home.

#### **WHAT, ACCORDING TO OUR OBSERVERS, WAS ANNOYING OR DISTURBING THEM THE MOST, AND WHAT MADE THEIR WORK MORE DIFFICULT?**

- The weather
- High emotions among the participants of the observed assembly
- Negative comments issued by the protesters or counter-protesters; questions from the representatives of the media
- Boredom, repetitiveness
- The difficulty with temporary suspending the identity of an activist, someone who usually takes part in protests, taking up instead the role of the neutral observer

## ➔ Writing the preliminary report

Observers, working in the same pairs, in which they were conducting the observation, prepare the preliminary report (you will find the form in Appendix 3) and send it to the coordinator. They usually have 48 hours to do that. If one member of a pair was responsible for writing notes during the assembly, while the other member took pictures and recorded videos, they can similarly divide their responsibilities when working on the preliminary report. Each photo and video should be briefly described, including the details of when and where it was taken or recorded. It is advisable that both members of each pair read their report and agree on its contents before sending it to the coordinator. Sometimes their descriptions of the same event can slightly differ and it may be important to discuss such differences – especially if they concern some potentially controversial issue, like for example whether the police abused their powers.

Coordinator collects preliminary reports and uses them as a basis for the first draft of the final observation report. The first draft is read and edited by the core project team, including an expert on the freedom of assembly and a person responsible for contacts with the authorities (in your organization they may be the same person). Sometimes the core team will need to organize a meeting in order to discuss certain problematic issues, or, if necessary, to contact one of the pairs and clarify their description of the events during the assembly.

Final report should contain:

- 🕒 A narrative description of the assembly and main events
- 🕒 Information on and descriptions of any counter-protests (if applicable)
- 🕒 Information on and descriptions of any dangerous situations (if applicable)



*Amnesty International observer at so-called monthly Smolensk commemoration in Warsaw, June 2017  
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- 🕒 Information on how the assembly was policed. The policing and the behaviours of representatives of any security forces should be evaluated with reference to the standards of freedom of assembly.
- 🕒 Conclusions

The final report should be published on your organization's website as soon as it is possible, preferably in seven days after the observation. Meeting this deadline was always difficult for us. However, it is useful to set yourself some final deadline. After the publication we would send the report, along with the introductory letters, to relevant public institutions and sometimes also to the media along with the press release. Assemblies, protests and demonstrations are very different. Some of them cause a stir, therefore it is worth to alert the media about the report. However, sometimes you will be observing assemblies of lesser significance, with less media coverage.

## **Evaluation and feedback for the observers**

Any project of assemblies observation is a constant process of learning and improving. We were making improvements with regard to our main goal, which was the pursuit of changes in the national law and its enforcement in order to eliminate any infringements on the freedom of assembly. However, we also considered it essential to constantly be raising the quality of our observations and to guarantee our observers as excellent working conditions as possible. That is why the mid-term evaluations was important for our network. Some observers were even expressing a wish to receive some feedback after each observation, especially on their preliminary reports. You must ensure that the observers feel they are contributing to the project. Letting them have their say about it and suggest some improvements is an important way to underscore their special significance.

## **Periods of lower activity**

The project of assemblies observation must be sustained even in the periods of lower activity, when you are not preparing, conducting or summing up any observation. This too presented a great challenge for us. It is therefore worth to indicate some less visible, but indispensable tasks you must prepare for.

- 🕒 Working with the network of the observers in the periods between observations. Work with the observers so that they constantly develop their knowledge. Remember about the network integration. (Both those tasks can be accomplished through on-line activities, though face-to-face meetings are more efficient). Provide individual feedback for each observer. Remember that neglecting contacts with the observers in the periods between observations will make the observers feel treated like they are merely unimportant helpers rather than integral part of the team
- 🕒 Working with the decision makers and with public institutions responsible for upholding standards of freedom of assembly
- 🕒 Working with other organizations active in this field or needing training in standards of freedom of assembly or the practical aspects of organizing assembly

# APPENDIXES

## Appendix 1. A sample programme of the introductory training course for observers

### Day 1.

11:00–12:30 Introduction, integration, aims and terms of the course

12:30–12:45 Break

12:45–14:15 Standards of freedom of assembly

14:15–15:00 Lunch break

15:00–16:30 Freedom of assembly in Poland

16:30–16:45 Break

16:45–19:00 The Police act – police powers and policing of assemblies

### Day 2.

09:00–9:30 Introduction to the second day

09:30–11:00 How to observe assemblies – observations' rules of conduct

11:00–11:15 Break

11:15–12:45 How to act in difficult situations

12:45–13:30 Lunch break

13:30–15:15 How is the project organized

15:15–15:45 The evaluation of the training course and the ending of the course

## Appendix 2. Rules of conduct during observations

### SAFETY

1. Safety is the number one concern during observations. Observers must protect their own safety and safety of their partners. Ensuring safety of participants of assembly is not the aim of an observation. Observers should give first aid as specified by the law.
2. Observers always work in basic units of at least two people. They abide by the prearranged plan. They arrange methods and rules of communication. After an observation is finished, observers meet in a prearranged place for a debriefing session.
3. In justified cases observers can terminate observation if they fear for their safety, having informed a coordinator about their decision.
4. Observers should constantly be in touch with coordinator and follow his or her instructions.
5. Observers should keep vigilant and follow the “safety first” rule.

### GENERAL RULES

1. Observers must obey the law. They must know the law and rules concerning assemblies. They should obey any orders by the police or other security forces. If observer witnesses any unlawful actions (by the police, protesters, or other people), he or she may afterwards be called to give testimony or to present evidence. Coordinator and Amnesty International must be informed by observer about any such cases.
2. Observers should be visible, for example by dressing in high vis jacket with the word “Observer” on it. Each observer should have his or her ID badge, as well as written letter of authorization issued in the observer’s name.
3. Observers should look neatly. They should not have on them anything that in any way expresses their ideology or could in any way be perceived as provoking.
4. Observers cannot behave in a way that could damage the image of Amnesty International, especially consume alcohol, drugs or any other mind-altering substances before and during the observed assembly. They ought to treat their equipment with respect and behave with dignity.
5. Preliminary reports should be well-written, meticulous, clear, concise, precise, objective and based on what observers saw and heard themselves and not on information from other parties. Observers should resist any external influence the content of their preliminary reports. The language of the preliminary reports should be neutral and concerned only with facts and on what was observed.

6. Observers should not use any social media during observation, nor make comments on the observed assembly during and after. They should not share any photos of the observed assembly on the social media nor tag themselves. The only official statement is the final report, available on the organization's webpage in three days after the assembly.
7. Observers work in basic units of at least two people. The deployment of those units is set by observation coordinator. Observers should not change their position without informing coordinator and getting his or her consent.
8. Observers should not mix in with protesters. They should keep physical distance in order to be able to witness any important events.
9. Observers should keep their distance from the police and other security forces in order to observe their actions while avoiding obstructing it.
10. Observers must have their identity documents, equipment provided by Amnesty International and equipment ordered by coordinator. They should avoid carrying any unnecessary personal items, especially valuable ones.

## **STANDARDS OF NEUTRALITY**

1. Observers should behave in an indisputably neutral manner. Of utmost importance here is their position, their look and behaviour, including the way they communicate with themselves and other people.
2. Observers should avoid unnecessary communication with participants of the observed assembly, especially giving advice or help, sharing any opinions about the assembly, the behaviour of the participants, counter-protesters or the police and security forces.
3. Observers should not be talking to the media nor make any statements that may be construed as official statements of Amnesty International. If asked about anything, observers should only say that they conduct observation as part of the Amnesty International team and that any other information can be supplied only by the Amnesty International press secretary.
4. If asked by the police or other security forces observers should present their IDs. They should not give any information on the events they observed. They should not give the police their notes or give any testimony without the knowledge and the approval from coordinator.
5. Observers should not present their IDs if asked by participants of the observed assembly or anyone other than the police or security forces.

## Appendix 3. Public Assemblies Observation Report

<b>Name and surname:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
<b>Location of the assembly (city/town and address)</b>	
<b>Observation launched at:</b>	<b>Observation terminated at:</b>

### Public assembly

While describing the events, the precise time should be included.

Any photograph should include the precise information on where and when it was taken.

If you lack information to answer any question in the report, please write: not enough information.

## THE CHARACTER AND THE COURSE OF THE ASSEMBLY

1. Was the assembly stationary or nonstationary (describe the perimeter and route)	
2. How many people participated in the assembly? Please include the information on the changes in the number of participants over time.	
3. Were there any songs / chants / slogans or banners during the assembly? Please describe them.	
4. Describe the main points of the assembly's programme. Please include the precise timing.	
5. Describe the behaviour of protesters towards counter-protesters, the police/other security forces, outside witnesses, the media, Amnesty International observers.	
6. Describe any observed acts of violence or instances of use of force.	
7. Other relevant information on the course of events and on participants.	
8. When and by whom was the assembly disbanded? What was happening afterwards?	

**COUNTER-PROTESTS**

<p>1. How many people participated in the counter-protest?</p>	
<p>2. Were any songs/chants/ slogans or banners during the counter-protest? Please describe them.</p>	
<p>3. Describe the behaviour of the counter-protesters. Was their attitude peaceful?</p>	
<p>4. Did the counter-protesters have the chance to approach the main assembly? Were they visible and audible for the participants of the main assembly?</p>	

**POLICING OF THE ASSEMBLY**

<p>1. Please list and describe the main units of the police/other security forces present at the scene. Estimate the number of personnel in these units.</p>	
<p>2. In what arrangement were the units of the police/other security forces deployed? What was their physical distance from the assembly?</p>	

<p>3. What uniforms were the police/other security forces dressed in (ordinary, combat uniform, no uniform)?</p>	
<p>4. What gear was the police/other security forces in possession of (shields, helmets, short firearms [hand guns], long firearms, truncheons [nightsticks], body armour, tasers, gas containers, water cannons, police dogs, etc.)?</p>	
<p>5. Where were the police blockades/ barricades located? How many of them were there?</p>	
<p>6. Were any reserve units of the police/ other security forces present? List their location, size, equipment.</p>	
<p>7. Did the police use any kind of tactics (apart from a cordon)? Did that impede the participants in leaving their location? What could the possible reason for employing this tactics have been (e.g. did you observe any acts of violence caused by the protesters)?</p> <p>How long did such intervention (cutting off the main assembly from the captured group or groups) last?</p>	
<p>8. Did you observe any instances of use of force (or threats of it)? Describe any use of force by the police and all the circumstances, e.g. in order to settle a conflict between groups, calm down the riots or respond to violence?</p> <p>Did the police issued warnings before the use of force?</p> <p>When the police used force in response to violence – were the police differentiating between the violent and non-violent protesters?</p>	



<p>9. Were there any negotiations between the police and the protesters or counter-protesters? Was the anti-conflict task force present at the scene?</p>	
<p>10. Please describe any observed instances of a protester being asked for identification, arrested or issued with a fine. Did the police give reasons for such interventions?</p>	
<p>11. What was the attitude of the police towards the organizers and the participants of the assembly and towards the media? What were their reactions to provocations or aggressive behaviour?</p>	
<p>12. What was the attitude of the police towards the Amnesty International observers? Were the observers denied access to any locations?</p>	
<p>Additional commentary:</p>	

**Amnesty International is a global movement of more than 7 million people who take injustice personally. We campaign for a world where human rights are enjoyed by all.**

**We want a world free from discrimination, where people in armed conflict are protected and perpetrators are prosecuted for human rights violations.**

**In our actions, we are guided by the universality and indivisibility of human rights, impartiality and independence, international solidarity and effective actions for individuals whose rights have been violated.**

**Thanks to effective research, advocacy, campaigns, actions and education we bring the torturers to justice, change oppressive laws and free people imprisoned for expressing their opinion.**

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