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National Lawyers Guild Legal Observers



We're here to monitor police behavior and provide legal support to protesters.

National Lawyers Guild Legal Observers: The Green Hats At The Protests

Perhaps you've seen us at a march or rally. You can't miss the green hats; they're the brightly colored beacons that let everyone know who we are and why we are there. We are National Lawyers Guild legal observers.

The National Lawyers Guild was founded in 1937 as a progressive bar association; the first bar association in the country to be racially integrated. Our mission is "to use law for the people, uniting lawyers, law students, legal workers, and jailhouse lawyers to function as an effective force in the service of the people by valuing human rights and the rights of ecosystems over property interests." NLG's aim is to "... bring together all those who recognize the importance of safeguarding and extending the rights of workers, women, LGBTQ people, farmers, people with disabilities and people of color, upon whom the welfare of the entire nation depends; who seek actively to eliminate racism; who work to

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NLG advocates on many fronts, including environmental justice, progressive drug policy reform, prison abolition, labor movement support, international human rights work, and of course, protection of the right to protest. It is that protection that is the heart of our legal observer and mass defense programs. Our mass defense program includes legal observation on the ground, know your rights trainings, jail hotlines and jail support for those who are arrested during protests, and legal representation in protest cases.

The Role Of The Legal Observer

We only provide legal observers for events that align with our mission and our progressive values. As legal observers, we are there to document any interactions with police, especially those that could later have criminal or civil legal consequences. In the Seattle chapter, we limit legal observer work to those who are law students, lawyers, or legal workers who understand the sensitive nature of the confidential relationship that is the basis for our work. We seek to provide as much legal protection as possible for the protesters we are there to support.

In order to maintain these legal boundaries:

- We cannot give legal advice on the ground while we're observing;
- We cannot participate in the protest or the planning; and
- We must try to maintain some separation from the group during the event, including friendly socializing before or after the event.

We are not event security. We are not there to monitor or judge protesters' actions or tactics, or pass judgment on "good protesters" or "bad protesters," a distinction our chapter rejects. **We do not work with police or law enforcement agencies or act as liaisons between them and the protesters.**

What we do is document and observe police interactions. We try to get names, dates of birth, and contact information for arrestees so our mass defense team can connect them to bail funds, visit them in jail, make sure they have needed medications, or connect with friends and family to let them know where they are. We hope that our presence can be a deterrent to violent police tactics and if not, we make sure we've documented those tactics for legal advocacy later. We are

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what we do with that privilege and power is truly telling of our individual values. It is a critical moment of reckoning in our nation and one in which protest is playing a crucial role. As attorneys, NLG legal observers are using their privilege and power to advocate for protests to be safe spaces to amplify the voices of BIPOC communities that have had their voices stolen for so long. We stand with those communities, side by side, as we are pelted with chemical and physical weapons, while we document the state’s attempts to continue to silence them. We will not be deterred.

If you are an organizer in the community, we urge you to reach out to us. We do not enter spaces to which we are not invited out of respect for your group. If you would like to learn more about what we do or have legal observers at your event, email **seattlelegalobserver [at] proton.me**.



National Lawyers Guild - Seattle.

Defending the rights of people, communities, and organizations, by valuing human rights over property interests.

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