



Working with the NLG to Plan Legal Support for Demonstrations

What is the National Lawyers Guild?

The National Lawyers Guild (NLG) was founded in 1937 as the first racially integrated national bar association, and declared its mission as "in the service of the people, to the end that human rights shall be regarded as more sacred than property interests." Now including legal workers as well as lawyers, law students and jailhouse lawyers, we are active on a wide range of issues including fighting political repression; immigrants' rights; opposing mass incarceration; supporting military resisters; labor struggles; international human rights; indigenous resistance; and more.

What is the Demonstrations Committee?

The San Francisco Bay Area Demonstrations Committee started in 1984 in order to organize legal support for protests against the Democratic Convention, and has supported most Bay Area progressive demonstrations and actions ever since, from antiwar protests to Occupy, Black Lives Matter, and antifascist actions. We have gotten thousands of demo-related criminal cases dismissed and been instrumental in overhauling San Francisco, Oakland and Berkeley police crowd control policy.

Within our capacity, the Demonstrations Committee will provide legal support for any local progressive group that opposes racism, sexism, classism, heterosexism and transphobia. In addition to San Francisco and Alameda Counties, we've supported actions in all other Bay Area counties, and occasionally in more distant locations such as Sacramento and Livermore. However, we cannot always meet all legal needs. The Demonstrations Committee does not have its own staff; it is simply a group of volunteer activists. The Bay Area NLG chapter has two staffmembers to support all of its internal and external functions.

Is it free?

We can usually mobilize NLG volunteer lawyers to handle initial court appearances, and NLG lawyers often continue to defend activists pro bono (free). But we cannot guarantee a free lawyer through motions and trial in every case. We often work with sympathetic lawyers from the Public Defender's office and the county bar conflicts panel so that the court will pay the cost of defense for those eligible.

And while we are primarily unpaid activists like you, the NLG is a grassroots membership organization that relies on donations for our overhead. Please pass the hat for the NLG at your pre- or post-action meeting so that we can continue this important work. Donations can also be made at: <http://www.nlgsf.org/contribute> or sent to National Lawyers Guild SF Bay Area Chapter, 558 Capp Street, San Francisco, CA 94110.

If volunteers are available, the NLG generally CAN do the following:

Before the Demo:

- ◆ Provide the legal component of direct action training;
- ◆ Meet with organizers to answer legal questions regarding planned actions, assess legal needs, and discuss what you will need to do to plan legal support for your action;
- ◆ Train members of your group as legal observers;
- ◆ Train members of your group to help staff our legal hotline or to set up your own legal hotline;

During the Demo:

- ◆ Provide legal observers to monitor the police, document arrests and police misconduct, and help communicate with off-scene legal support regarding arrests;
- ◆ Line up lawyers who will be "on call" to deal with arrests, jail release, and immediate court hearings. If arrestees are booked in jail, joint coordination from NLG and organizers is essential through release and initial court date;
- ◆ If arranged in advance, provide a legal hotline number in the Guild office, 415-285-1011, and help staff this number in conjunction with demonstration organizers. (This legal hotline number is not automatically available, it must be requested and NLG volunteers must be available, although sometimes the Demonstrations Committee activates it on our own.)

After the Demo:

- ◆ NLG will find lawyers to meet with and defend arrestees on criminal charges. We can often, but not always, find lawyers willing to work for free - see "Is it Free?" above.
- ◆ After a large mass arrest, NLG will help organize a follow up legal meeting with arrestees, if necessary.
- ◆ NLG follows up on police misconduct issues through media and policy work and advocacy, complaints with civilian review agencies where appropriate, and on occasion, pursues civil litigation to help bring about systemic reforms.

The NLG and NLG legal observers generally do NOT:

- ◆ Communicate with the police on behalf of the demonstrators, except in an emergency or some particular situation where this has been agreed beforehand. We ask the organizing group to designate your own police liaisons or spokespeople;
- ◆ Help secure permits. You can do this yourself. NLG and/or ACLU may help where permits are denied;
- ◆ Collect arrestees' names and information – we expect organizers to gather information beforehand and to do jail outtake. (See "What Do We Want From You?" below.)
- ◆ Handle jail support logistics such as picking people up when they are released, contacting employers etc. We expect organizers to do this (See "What Do We Expect From You?" below.)
- ◆ The NLG cannot provide bail or bonds, but the Bay Area Anti-Repression Committee may be able to in certain cases. See antirepressionbayarea.com.

What do we expect from you?

- ◆ The organizing group should notify the NLG of planned actions as far in advance as possible by filling out this form: <http://www.nlgsf.org/form/legal-support-request>. If you can't fill out the on-line form please call 415-285-5067. Or, indicate on the form that there are secure details you need to share in person. At least a week's notice is preferred, although we will do our best to support emergency actions. Please note that the request form and voicemail are checked by NLG staff and interns who are not in the office on weekends.
- ◆ If you anticipate arrests, work with the Demonstrations Committee and Guild staff to plan for a legal support team. We will ask you to either set up your own legal hotline or to help staff the Guild's legal hotline (**415-285-1011**) until everyone is out of jail (sometimes, several days.) We can provide training. The legal support team answering the hotline provides a central information point and coordinates between the NLG lawyers, legal observers, and support people. The team tracks everyone in custody until they are all released, so that no one falls through the cracks. The legal phone number must have a pre-paid account set up to receive jail calls.
- ◆ For planned actions, gather a list of people risking arrest in advance, with complete legal names and dates of birth. Gather information to anticipate special problems such as medical needs, immigration problems, juveniles, out of state ID, ID in a different gender, warrants, etc. You should have a contact person who has this list and will be in touch with the on-call lawyers and the legal support team / NLG office. We suggest using the Arrestee Form attached at the end of this handout. The "Intake Information" can be filled out prior to the action.
- ◆ Train people considering risking arrest so they know what to expect. The NLG can provide a legal portion to a direct-action training.
- ◆ If your group is considering using solidarity tactics in jail, discuss these in advance and communicate with the NLG about your legal support needs in relation to solidarity.
- ◆ Make sure that people who plan to risk arrest have support people who are planning to avoid arrest, who are prepared to deal with the arrestees' children, pets, jobs, transportation from jail, and other logistical needs. In some situations support people may also be able to help arrestees obtain release without bail by gathering community references.
- ◆ **If arrests occur, it is CRUCIAL that we quickly obtain a complete list of the arrestees** with complete legal names, contact info, dates of birth, citation numbers, court dates and emails. Action organizers should station support people outside the jail, police station or processing area to have arrestees fill out the ARRESTEE FORM attached to this document. This applies when arrestees are released the same day with a citation, as is typical in the Bay Area. Following the action please input this information into our system or provide a spreadsheet – contact us for instructions.

ARRESTEE FORM
Confidential Attorney-Client Communication for Legal Team Only

Intake Information

Name and date of event: _____

Complete Legal Name _____

Preferred Name if different: _____

Date of birth: _____ Gender identity: _____

Cell phone: _____ Other phone(s): _____

Email (please write clearly): _____

Mailing Address: _____

Medical condition(s): _____

Meds/ dosage instrucs: _____

Doctor name: _____ Dr Phone: _____

U.S. Citizen? Yes No CA ID? Yes No

Support contact #1: _____

Support contact #2: _____

Notes: _____

Outtake Information

Date and time of arrest: _____

Location of arrest: _____

Charge(s): _____

Jail facility: _____ PFN _____

Was Arrestee injured: _____

Court date, time, location: _____

Arresting officer, agency, badge # (from citation): _____

Incident No. _____ Citation No. _____

Lawyer: _____

Witnesses, if known, with contact info: _____

Notes: _____

