Back-to-School Guide:
Facing On-Campus Surveillance in College.

NATIONAL LAWYERS GUILD

EFF

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For more information: ssd.eff.org/module/attending-protest

Last semester saw an explosion of protests in colleges across the country. **Students organically called for encampments, occupations, and other tactics to demand that their universities disclose and divest from war investments fueling the genocide in Palestine.**

Instead of listening to their students, administrators responded with iron fists: **law enforcement violence, mass arrests, blanket criminal charges, and student disciplinary proceedings.**

Much of this repression relies on on-campus surveillance. Learning what your school might be using can keep you safer as you stand up against injustice!

School-Provided Accounts & Tools:

If a device, piece of software, or online account was provided by the school (*like an .edu email address or test-taking monitoring software)*, then the school may be able to access what you do on it.

Similarly, if you use a school-controlled tool (e.g. a library computer or school-licensed software), the terms and conditions might allow for the school to access your data.

Tips:

Consider compartmentalizing your organizing away from your studies. **Create and use separate accounts—and devices, if possible—for political speech to save yourself a headache down the road.**

Attendance & Access Systems:

Banal systems like campus ID cards, class attendance monitoring, and Wi-Fi access points can create a record of student locations or tip off schools to people congregating. **School Wi-Fi networks may require agreeing to complete disclosure: administrators could track all online activity.**

Tips:

Be mindful of what you log into, the devices you carry with you, and how you move around campus when participating in protests or amidst campus activism. Inform non-students of surveillance risks and provide alternatives (e.g. Wi-Fi hotspots, access to buildings not requiring an ID).

Body Worn Cameras:

These cameras are attached to officers' uniforms (often the chest or shoulder, but sometimes head-mounted) and capture interactions between police and members of the public. **In practice, these cameras are often used to capture evidence later used in prosecutions.**

Tips:

Be aware that any interaction, or even near-interaction, with an officer could be on camera. While it may be tempting to run up and confront an officer, if you are concerned about being caught on camera doing so, you may want to reconsider.

Social Media Monitoring:
Campus police have been known to employ social media software, which claims to detect possible threats to the university. This has also been used to monitor students' political activities and beliefs: **bit.ly/studentprotestsai**

Tips:
Your digital footprint can be your biggest asset when organizing and protesting, but it can also be used against you. **If you are live-tweeting protests or often share your student organizations' events, assume the school is watching.**

Biometrics:

Video surveillance technology captures identifying features with more and more reliability. In turn, face recognition can link those surveillance images with information it can access (DMV data, school IDs, online images). **This means that a camera outside of the dining commons can establish that the same person entering at 9:00 a.m. is the same person leaving at 9:45 a.m.**

Tips:

Be alert and aware of cameras and similar–looking devices! **False narratives of "campus safety" should not mean compromising your privacy when you are getting an education.**

Drones:

Campus police might own or utilize university drones to surveil students. Local law enforcement agencies are also using drones in their operations.

Tips:

If you hear the buzzing sound of a drone above you, there's a chance it's operated by campus or local police. It's also very possible that it belongs to another protester or student media. **In either case, be mindful that your actions may be recorded.**

Other Back-to-School Tips:

- Understand the technology your school uses. **Avoiding the invasive systems might be easier than having to use complex tools!**
- Talk about it with friends and movement supporters. **No amount of encryption can protect you from a person whose data is compromised!**
- **Find your allies:** Many members of faculty and staff may be able to provide forms of support to students, like institutional knowledge about school policies.
- **Resist bad narratives of "surveillance for safety" and "why be afraid if you have nothing to hide."** You should have privacy at your school!

Additional Resources

- **eff.org/deeplinks/2024/06/surveillance-defense-campus-protests**
- **eff.org/deeplinks/2021/03/scholars-under-surveillance-how-campus-police-use-high-tech-spy-students**
- **ssd.eff.org/module/privacy-students**

- NLG Mass Defense Program: **nlg.org/massdefenseprogram**
- KYR for campus protests: **bit.ly/NLGKYRProtest**
- CAIR MA & NLG MA College Disciplinary Hearings KYR: **bit.ly/CAIRMAKYR**
- NLG KYR for Faculty & Staff: **bit.ly/NLGKYRFaculty**

Image Sources:

Additional images and video from Unicorn Riot: https://unicornriot.ninja/2024/from-boston-to-palestine-student-encampments-began-in-peace-and-ended-in-handcuffs/