

The Role of the Peacekeeper



Peacekeepers are trained demonstrators who accept responsibility for the flow and tone of a demonstration.

A Peacekeeper Team will:

- Facilitate the group achieving the goals of the demonstration in a nonviolent way.
- Set the tone for action.
- Maintain nonviolent spirit and discipline.
- Provide information about the action and logistics.
- Communicate with demonstrators, organizers and others.
- Defuse and de-escalate conflicts.
- Act as buffer between demonstrators and police, counter-demonstrators, hecklers, etc.
- Keep chants and songs going, or help keep silence, depending on objective.
- Facilitate movement of people where appropriate.
- Direct media to media spokespeople.
- Help people handle their emotions; provide support and empathy.
- Help marchers move safely through traffic.
- Hand out and light candles, depending on event.
- Anticipate potential conflict situations and take pre-emptive action.
- Limit harm.
- Call for emergency medical or legal aid or support.
- Assist the demonstrators, not police them.

Three Types of Peacekeeping Activities

- **Conflict Anticipation:** Planning in advance. Thinking through and role playing possible alternative and contingency plans. Being on the lookout for potential problems and conflicts, and intervening before situations escalate.
- **Conflict Regulation:** Limiting the amount of physical or psychological harm that is done to individuals or the group as a result of conflict. Not necessarily trying to resolve conflicts as much as trying to isolate and limit its effects.
- **Conflict Resolution:** Once the intensity of the conflict has been regulated so that the potential for escalation into violence has been lowered, then the peacekeeper may focus on trying to resolve the issues involved if appropriate.

Helpful Traits and Behaviors

Be warm, friendly, helpful, creative, clear, gentle, firm, honest, calm, forgiving, trusting, cooperative, assertive, compassionate, grounded, alert, informed, trained, supportive, empathetic, visible, focused, relaxed, aware and observant.

Unhelpful Traits and Behaviors

- **Don't become "movement police,"** authoritarian or too controlling.
- Don't take on extra roles: leafletting, leading chants, holding signs, media, risking arrest, etc.
- Don't answer hostility with aggression and escalate situations.
- Don't let your buttons get pushed. Stay in control of your own behavior.

Peacekeeper Checklist

Make Sure You Know:

- Goals of the demonstration.
- Desired tone for the demonstration.
- Who are the:
 - Main Organizers
 - Peacekeeper Lead
 - Media Spokespeople
 - Police Liaison
 - MC or Stage Manager
 - Legal Observers
 - Jail Support Coordinator
 - First Aid/Medics
- Nonviolence Guidelines: see www.pjals.org/nonviolence
- Physical layout. Where will the stage, blockaders, march route, picket line be? Where are the bathrooms, water, food, shelter, first aid, regrouping area?
- Pre-planned policies about open mic access, length of speeches, people joining the action at the last minute, etc.
- Who is to make decisions during the demonstration, e.g. last-minute route changes, responding to unexpected challenges. Is there a tactical team?
- What communication will be used between peacekeepers? Text messages, radios, bikes, runners, signals.
- Legal rights. Which space is public space or private space? Is there a permit? Police escort?
- Legal support number if risk of arrest.

Useful Items:

- ✓ Bullhorns
- ✓ Weather protection
- ✓ Food and water
- ✓ Vests or armbands
- ✓ Paper and pen
- ✓ Lip balm
- ✓ Chant and song sheets
- ✓ Camera
- ✓ Cell phone

Special Roles

- Protecting stage and microphone
- In the crowd
- At front, back, or middle of march
- On traffic side or sidewalk side of march
- Organizing parking
- Messenger
- Stationary or roving
- Chant leader
- Police liaison
- First aid
- Legal observer
- Buddy system
- Escorts for targeted people

Types of Actions Where Peacekeepers Might Be Needed:

- Rally
- March
- Picket
- Blockade
- Civil disobedience
- Public meeting
- Speakout
- Occupation
- Sit-in
- Fast
- Leafletting
- Vigil

People Peacekeepers Might Interact With:

- Police
- Demonstrators
- Organizers
- Workers
- Military
- Counter-demonstrators
- Hecklers
- People on drugs/alcohol
- Provocateurs
- Car/Truck Drivers
- Media
- Passersby
- Bus Drivers and Passengers
- Guest Speakers and Celebrities
- Government Officials
- Business Owners