

# Basic Safety and Legal Information for the May 1st March

At a time when right-wing authoritarians are ruling alongside fascists, we can rely on the state and its institutions (including the police) even less than before. This means we must be able to look out for one another. We ask that you adhere to a few good principles that have proven effective in the past.

## 1/ Stick together

It is best to carry out the entire action—including arrival and departure—in a group (of four to eight) friends whom you trust. This is called an “affinity group”; people in it look out for one another and do not leave each other’s side throughout the action. It’s a good idea to discuss within the group what you’ll do in potential crisis situations and map out your skills and limitations in handling them (such as training in self-defense and first aid, or the ability to navigate the city; on the other hand, possible health limitations, the need to be home early, etc.).

Unless otherwise agreed, the group should try to stay together, especially during tense moments, and not lose anyone. It’s a good idea to discuss what you’ll do if things go wrong and someone gets separated—how you’ll reconnect, where you’ll meet up, etc. It’s easy to get separated in a crowd, but you can prevent this, for example, by walking one behind the other and holding onto the shoulder or backpack of the partner in front of you when moving.

You can also come up with a name for your group that you can call out to find each other in the crowd. For this purpose, we recommend choosing easily recognizable two-syllable words that don’t reveal anything private about you. Due to the risk of confusion with another group, “stereotypically leftist” names—which multiple groups might unknowingly choose at the same time (typically “tofu,” etc.)—are not suitable. Also consider whether you want to use your real name during the event, or call out to people you meet there using it.

Throughout the event, pay attention to the well-being of your affinity group; offer each other water, food, and emotional support as needed. Your pace and energy level should adapt to the \*slowest\* and \*most vulnerable\* among you, not the other way around.

The recommendation to “stick together” applies for the entire time you are outside, including when leaving any afterparty. Especially after dark, try not to move around alone, but ideally in larger groups. Likewise, during the demonstration, stay with the event and the other participants—don’t create unnecessary gaps between yourself and others during the march, and unless you have a specific reason, don’t wander off separately from the main “mass” of the procession.

## 2/ Above all, don’t panic

We don’t expect anything dramatic to happen, but numerous examples show that crowds (such as at a demonstration) tend to act on instinct—less strategically than if people were making decisions individually. This is especially true in moments when, for example, a group of people starts running but you don’t see why.

Always make decisions for yourself (or within your affinity group and in coordination with the rest of the demonstration) based on at least a rough understanding of the current situation. Listen to the event organizers—typically those marked with armbands during the demonstration.

The May Day demonstration isn’t planning to “charge” anywhere, so if an unexpected situation arises, the most sensible thing to do is to gather your group and not rush off recklessly—especially

not away from the rest of the demonstration. If you need to retreat quickly from a certain spot, it's much better to run a few dozen meters, stop, and assess the situation. It's absolutely not advisable to retreat in the event of a conflict with a non-state actor (e.g., Nazi hooligans). Demonstrations are usually many times larger than any potential attacker. Their main weakness is not the aggressor's numerical superiority, but people's tendency to scatter or run away.

In short, don't panic. With a cool head and by sticking together, we'll handle any challenges that come our way. A good rule is to take a slow, deep breath in and out before you do anything.

### **3/ What to bring and what definitely not to bring**

Refreshments, including food, will be available on Střelecký Island during the May Day event, but we recommend not underestimating the situation and bringing your own supplies. Plenty of water is essential, and non-perishable, high-energy foods (e.g., granola bars, etc.) are recommended. On the other hand, alcohol and any illegal or semi-legal substances are strictly prohibited.

If you take medication, don't forget to pack it. It's also a good idea to bring plenty of clothing and closed-toe, sturdy, comfortable shoes that you can wear all day. Depending on the expected weather, it's a good idea to pack a hat, sunglasses, and sunscreen, and/or a waterproof jacket, raincoat, or umbrella.

It's also a good idea to bring a fully charged phone with internet access and a power bank. For communication within your affinity group and with friends, use the secure Signal app.

We remind you that masking is prohibited by law at the demonstration (i.e., balaclavas are clearly banned, and even a scarf over the face combined with a hood is unlikely to be permitted), but in practice, the police tolerate medical masks/respirators. These are mainly useful for maintaining your anonymity from cameras, streamers, or opponents with differing views.

On the day of the event, opt for inconspicuous clothing (no slogans, patches, etc.), or keep a change of clothes in your backpack, again to avoid being recognized by anyone aggressive on your way to or from the event. A larger backpack is useful if you're bringing extra clothes, banners, or a megaphone, so you can hide them on the way to the event.

### **4/ If someone takes a photo or video of you**

We strongly recommend that you do not take photos at the event and, above all, do not share them on social media afterward. These photos help give a clear picture of who was at the event.

If someone takes a photo or video of you and you don't want them to, make that clear.

If someone in the crowd is filming or taking photos of you, tell them you don't want that and ask them to delete the photo if they've already taken it. Be polite, but don't be afraid to say no firmly. If the person doesn't understand, ask those around you for help in resolving the situation.

If a journalist is filming or photographing you, the same applies. Journalists may capture faces in order to inform the public about what is happening in the "public interest." However, they must do so reasonably, with respect for your right to privacy. If you are appearing in public, you must tolerate being captured. This applies, for example, to speeches. If you are "just" at a demonstration, it is not considered a public appearance. However, journalists will likely tell you that they are doing their job. In such a case, you can contact the Police of the Czech Republic (PČR), though they themselves are often unsure in these situations, as the boundary beyond which the right to privacy begins is not entirely clear.

If a police officer is filming or photographing you, you must tolerate it. You can, of course, turn away or leave. You can wear a mask (e.g., a respirator); if the police ask you to remove it, this is an order and you must comply.

If an “alt-right streamer” is filming or photographing you, there are a few things you need to know. He’s not a journalist, so his position is exactly the same as yours. He usually livestreams his footage, so it will end up online (at least for a while) anyway. Support from the police in this matter isn’t guaranteed; the same rules apply as for journalism. Consider whether it simply makes sense to walk away, turn your back, or ignore them. Another possible approach is to not leave such a person alone and, with a few people, disrupt their footage, make noise... basically create a situation where they can’t produce quality content for their channel. Keep in mind that their goal is to capture something interesting or something they can edit into a few-second “proof of the left.” Don’t be aggressive toward them, don’t be rude, don’t be violent.

## **5/ Legal Obligations**

It is prohibited to carry weapons (or items that could be used as weapons or to threaten violence) or pyrotechnics at the gathering (this is a misdemeanor in itself). Violation of any of the aforementioned prohibitions is a misdemeanor for which you may be fined if identified and the offense proven. Participants in the gathering must follow the instructions of the Police of the Czech Republic and the organizers.

Czech citizens are not required to carry an ID card or any other documents. Citizens of other EU countries are required by law to carry an ID card or a valid passport; foreigners from non-EU countries are also required to carry proof of legal residence (which also applies to people with long-term or permanent residence).

The gathering has been registered, but if an extraordinary situation arises in which a member of the Czech Police (PČR) approaches you, it is good to know that they are required to behave politely and address you formally—insist on this (and address them formally as well). A police officer must be identified—those in uniform have a badge number, and those without must identify themselves with a badge; they must not cover their badge number. If you are filming an interaction with the police, try to clearly capture the badge number. The police must tell you why they are taking action against you, what they will do to you, and what your rights and obligations are, but they are not required to do so if circumstances prevent it—you won’t be able to chat with them while they’re taking you away, but you might be able to before or after, by the car. The police must tolerate being filmed, and (if they’re on duty) you can film them at any time. If they tell you otherwise, that’s all the more reason to keep filming, draw the attention of other people, and capture their badge number on video. Even in this case, the demand “stop filming me” is a lawful order that you are obligated to obey. However, a subsequent lawsuit will exempt you from penalties.

If a police officer wants you to do something or stop doing something, they will issue a command. Failure to obey a police command is a misdemeanor. You must be able to hear the command, which is why they often use loudspeakers. You are obligated to obey even a command that is unlawful. If you hear an order that seems unreasonable to you, record the situation if possible. If that’s not possible, assertively ask the police officer what they want you to do and why.

Don’t be afraid to communicate politely and proactively with the police, but at the same time, be careful about what information you share.

If you decide not to comply with the order, you are committing the offense of disobeying an official’s order. This carries a maximum fine of 15,000 CZK. In cases where this offense occurs during demonstrations, the fine is typically between 2,000 and 3,000 CZK.

Again, the gathering is registered; however, if the police intervene—meaning a restriction of personal freedom—the police may detain you near a police car or take you to a police station. These are definitely not situations where it makes sense to discuss what anyone did! Assume that nothing you hear is a private conversation and that the people around you have not revealed their identities—do not use their names.

You can be detained for a maximum of 24 hours (for foreign nationals, the limit is 48 hours). This period will likely be significantly shorter. The Czech Police must release you as soon as the grounds for your detention no longer apply. If you are at the police station to verify your identity, the police have the right to verify your identity by taking your fingerprints, recording video and taking photographs (you can make any face you want), and collecting biological samples (a mouth swab).

If you provide your information to the police officer at the station, the reason for your detention ceases to exist, and the police should subsequently release you. Insist on this, but expect that it won't happen immediately.

If you are at the police station for other reasons, two basic rules apply. You do not have to sign anything. Even if you do not sign the documents (report on the seizure and return of items, statement of explanation), you have the right to a copy—take it. You do not have to say anything. Simply state that you are exercising your right to remain silent. You do not need to know the exact wording or the relevant section of the law.

If you are in a temporary detention cell at the police station, don't forget to talk to others, ask them about their needs, and keep the mood light, but you definitely shouldn't talk in private, so don't describe what you did and don't ask anyone about it. If you need to request something from the police, tell the staff at the detention center first so they know what's going on and can help you communicate.

Misdemeanors are less serious offenses for which you are usually fined; they are not recorded in the criminal record. There is a misdemeanor registry, which is internal and serves to allow for stricter punishment of repeat offenses. However, you cannot request an extract from this registry, for example, when starting a new job, etc. Misdemeanors are not handled by a court but by the municipal district or municipality where the offense occurred. The relevant authority receives the case file from the Police of the Czech Republic and decides on the matter. In the vast majority of cases, it will decide to send you a payment order, meaning it will find you guilty and order you to pay the fine.

In such a case, you can file an objection, but you must do so within eight days of receiving the payment order. The authority will then ask you to provide an explanation and review the case. If you lose, an administrative fee will be added to the fine. If you win, you do not pay it (and if your fine is reduced, say, by a third, you pay only two-thirds of the fee).

If you are under 18 and are detained, the police must contact your legal guardian. They will either come to pick you up, or the police will take you home (at your expense).

If you are under 15, OSPOD (social services) will be contacted—think carefully about whether you want to be detained.

***Death to fascism, many thanks to collective Alerta for informations and materials,***

***P.S.: And be on time — May 1st at 12:00 PM at Střelecký island***

