HOW MOBILE PHONE EXTRACTION CAN BE USED AT A PROTEST AND HOW YOU CAN MINIMISE RISKS TO YOUR DATA

What do mobile phone extraction tools do?

- Mobile phone extraction (MPE) tools are devices that allow the police to extract data from mobile phones, including:
  - contacts;
  - call data (i.e. who you call, when, and for how long);
  - text messages (including who you texted and when);
  - stored files (photos, videos, audio files, documents etc);
  - app data (including the data stored on these apps);
  - location information history;
  - wifi network connections (which can reveal the locations of any place where you've connected to wifi, such as your workplace or a café).
- Some MPE tools may also access data stored in the Cloud (so even if you're very careful about minimising data stored on your device, it can still be accessed if it is stored online), or data you don't even know exists, and even deleted data.

How might mobile phone extraction tools be used at a protest?

- The majority of UK police forces have purchased MPE tools and may use them in a range of circumstances, including at protests.
- In order to extract the data stored on it, the police would need to physically access your mobile phone. The police might take your phone if you have been detained, arrested or searched during a protest, but also if you have witnessed or are even the victim of a crime.



What to think about when going to a protest

- Keeping your phone's operating system (Android or iOS) up to date, which means it will have the latest security features, is likely the best way to prevent MPE.
- While the most effective way of protecting yourself against MPE is to not take your phone to a protest, this is unlikely to be a realistic solution. Indeed, not having your phone may leave you vulnerable in other ways.
- While you should keep your phone locked, some MPE tools are reportedly designed to access even locked phones. Their ability to bypass this security does, however, depend on the phone and its operating system.
- Before going to a protest, you may want to consider backing up your phone data to your computer, and then removing that data from your phone. But you should be aware that some MPE tools are able to recover deleted data. If you have saved the data onto a cloud service, some MPE tools can still access that data.