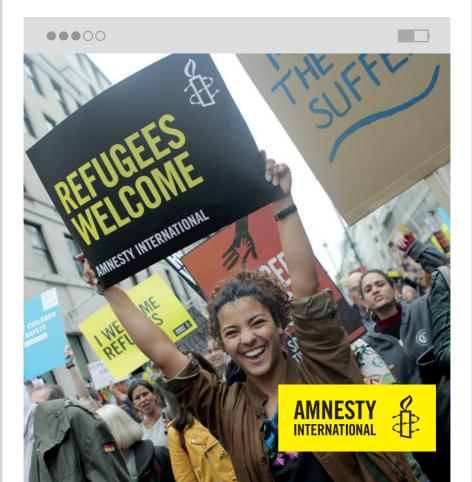
# MEDIA HANDBOOK







# **MEDIA HANDBOOK**

This booklet offers practical advice on good media relations, and can be used alongside other information, materials and training provided by Amnesty International UK. This new 2017 edition supersedes previous versions and will be updated again in the future.

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# **MAKING THE HEADLINES**



www.theargus.co.uk

# HOW TO **GET STARTED**

#### Media work is vital to Amnesty and human rights

By getting involved in media work you are following in the footsteps of many Amnesty activists, including Amnesty's founder, Peter Benenson. In 1961 he launched the organisation with an article in the Observer newspaper in response to a story he had read about two Portuguese students imprisoned for drinking a toast to liberty.

Through the media it is possible to reach large numbers of people, influence public and political figures, and ultimately bring about change. Local media work is particularly valuable. People often care most about what is close to home, and read local news as closely as national or international news. They often trust their local media sources more too.

A working knowledge of your local media is important and can be easily developed.

#### **GROUP MEDIA OFFICERS**

If you are a member of a group, offer to become its media officer. This role involves leading the group's media work and taking responsibility for getting to know the local press. Through this you will gain in confidence and build up some good contacts.

#### **TOOLS OF THE TRADE**

Today many people already have access to all they need for media work: wi-fi/ internet access; laptop, tablet or computer; printer/photocopier; smart phone; and a digital camera.

#### SUPPORT FROM AMNESTY UK

**Regional Media Officers** are on hand in most regions to help advise on press releases, PR events and stunts, who to contact and generally how to deal with the media.

**The Media Unit** can provide advice or arrange for you to regularly receive information and updates.

The Community Organising team can provide ideas for media work and additional background briefings on campaigns, including special packs for events such as general elections.

The Community Fundraising team can help you organise eye-catching events that will raise money for Amnesty and boost Amnesty's profile.

Amnesty UK offices in Scotland and Northern Ireland also undertake media work with local activists.

For contact details and further information, see page 19.

### MEDIA TIPS

If you can use humour, fun or music in your media work do so.

Sometimes all activists, even Amnesty ones, can come across as too earnest. Go have some fun!

David Nicholl, activist

# HOW TO GET INTO THE MEDIA

#### Get the media to cover your stories in the way you want

Media work can be one of the most enjoyable parts of campaigning. Use your imagination to come up with an interesting event, stunt or photo/film opportunity to generate media coverage for an Amnesty campaign or message.

It's often the quality of the creative idea that counts, so spend time coming up with an idea that makes journalists think: 'That's interesting – I want to find out more.'

First ask yourself a few basic questions.

#### **OBJECTIVE:** why are we doing this?

- Do you want people to take action? Is that action a letter, an online activity or a petition?
- Do you want them to come to a rally or event?
- Do you want them to put pressure on the local MP to raise something in parliament?

#### TARGETS: who do we want to reach?

Do you want your key message to reach the public or decision-makers? This will influence the type of media outlet you target and your message.

### MESSAGE: what one key point do we want to get across?

This needs to be clear and effective to the public or a press photographer. Amnesty UK usually provides a campaigning message, but if it's your own event, try to boil your message down to one pithy sentence or soundbite.

### LOCAL ANGLE: is there a link between the story and our local setting?

Does this issue or campaign impact on local people? Are local companies, universities or MPs relevant or involved? Our issues are often international, but the fact that the local Amnesty group is doing something can often be enough of a local angle.



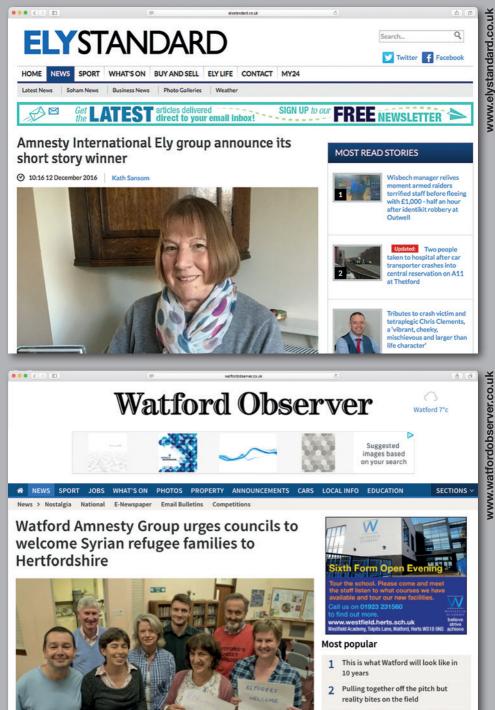
© Private

### **MEDIA TIPS**

The press contacts lists you supplied were great. I sent a last-minute email to the whole lot and BBC North West TV rang me back asking for photos of Nigel Kennedy's appearance at our vigil for Burma in Manchester. Thanks for all the encouragement!

Mike Reed, Manchester group

# **MAKING THE HEADLINES**



The court has got to the end of its.

# HOW TO **CREATE A SCENE**

A well-planned image or photo stunt can transform your campaign into an eye-catching, crowd-gathering occasion that helps you get media coverage and make a bigger impact

#### WHEN COMING UP WITH AN IMAGE

- Ask yourself: would it work as a photo in the paper?
- Make it relevant to your story
- Include people: 90 per cent of photos in local media outlets have local people in them. It's even better if they're children, but you must have their parents' permission first
- See what photos your local paper tends to publish, so you know what interests them
- Avoid a straight line-up
- Practice: take some shots and work out how you can improve them. A close-up of one person or an 'action shot' can be very effective
- For print media, your image must be high-resolution.

#### **EXAMPLES OF PHOTO-OP EVENTS**

 Demonstrations in chains, cages or behind bars
Birthday cakes for anniversaries
People wearing masks or any distinctive costumes
Gallows
'Die-ins'
Marches
Anything big, colourful, macabre or just unusual

### **MEDIA TIPS**

Talking to the local media about our Amnesty work here in Jersey holds no fear for me any more – once you've done it once or twice, you get to enjoy it. Collette Crill, Jersey group

#### **CELEBRITY POWER**

The support of a local celebrity – for example, an MP, mayor, actor, sports star or musician – helps to increase your story's potential and often their appearance will ensure coverage, so make sure you plug it. Also make sure they are briefed about Amnesty and the specific issue you're highlighting. If they're a big name, let the Media Unit know, as the story could go national (or even international).

#### **TIMING AND HOOKS**

Journalists are always looking for new or timely events. The right peg makes your story more newsworthy: for example, hold an event about executions in China to coincide with the Prime Minister or a local MP visiting China.

Alternatively, tie in an event or photo opportunity with appropriate dates. For example:

- January: Holocaust Memorial Day
- March: International Women's Day
- May: International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia
- June: World Refugee Day
- September: International Day of Peace
- October: World Day against Death Penalty
- December: Human Rights Day

RIGHT Amnesty activists stage a torture photo stunt outside the Mexican embassy in London © Reuben Steains

### **CLAUDIA MEDINA.** WRAPPED IN PLASTIC TO HIDE TORTURE

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#### TIPS FOR EVENTS

- Make sure an Amnesty spokesperson is available before and/or after the event to give quotes and interviews.
- Have your own photographer available at the event in case the local papers can't send their own.
- The best time for a media stunt is around 10-11am on a weekday; fewer journalist and photographers work on weekends or in the evenings. Weekly newspapers have a 'press day' by which stories and pictures must be submitted to be featured in the latest print publication. Virtually all newspapers

publish articles and photos on their websites and via social media accounts too.

- TV will want a sense of movement and theatre. Activists chained together outside the town hall might make a good picture for a newspaper, but a march through the city centre is more likely to attract TV cameras.
- Your regional Media Support Officer and the Media Unit would be happy to discuss any ideas or answer any questions you have. See page 19 for contacts.

# HOW TO WRITE A PRESS RELEASE

### Press releases can be about the launch of a new group, an event, the release of a prisoner – anything you want to announce

Regional media are usually keen to cover events concerning local people. But beware: the overworked journalist will give your press release a maximum of 30 seconds, so you've got to grab their attention quickly.

- Step 1: Write your press release. See right for an example.
- Step 2: Find out where and to whom you should send it.
- Step 3: Email it over, making sure you get the timing right.
- Step 4: If possible, make a follow-up phone call, or at least send a reminder email

#### SEND IT TO

All the newspapers, websites, radio stations and (if there is a strong visual element to the story or event) TV stations in your area.

#### WHERE TO SEND IT

Find out the name and email address of the journalist you will be sending the press release to. A good source for this is **www.media.info**, or the publication's own website. You can also try looking on Facebook or Twitter for contacts. Regional Media Support Officers and the Media Unit can also help.

- Local paper: Send it to the news and features editors
- Local TV/radio stations: Send it to the news editor

#### WHEN TO SEND IT

- Local paper: Many local papers go to print on Monday or Tuesday (and are published on a Thursday). Make sure your press release reaches the journalist the previous Thursday or Friday. If you want a journalist to come to your event, give them a week's notice
- Local radio/TV stations: Send the press release so that it arrives at least two days before the event

### TIPS

- Always date your press release. If the journalist can use the information immediately, use the phrase 'For immediate release'. If you do not want the information published before a certain date then use 'Embargoed until...'.
- Start with an informative and catchy headline. This should be two lines maximum. Journalists will use this to decide whether to read on.
- Avoid long paragraphs and sentences.
- Use clear and simple language.
- Stick to the facts.
- Stress the local angle. Make it clear why local people will be interested in your event. The more local the better.
- If there is a photo opportunity, state this clearly, with date, time and location.
- Include contact details.
- Always spell check and proofread.

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### XXX Amnesty Group

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EMBARGOED: 00.01 Monday 28 April 2015

#### HEALTH AND SAFETY GONE BAD: LOCAL ACTIVISTS HIGHLIGHT PLIGHT OF AFGHAN WOMEN WORKERS

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Local people wearing safety gear to take to the streets of LOCATION to urge the UK government to protect women's rights in Afghanistan

On **DATE** local Amnesty International activists dressed in hard <sup>-</sup> hats and high-visibility vests will ask people in **LOCATION** city centre to show their support for Afghan women.

Members of the public will be asked to pose for photos with 'danger' signs and placards commemorating victims of violence to urge the UK government to take action to protect Afghan women workers.

Afghanistan is one of the most dangerous places in the world to be a woman. You can be jailed for the 'crime' of fleeing your abusive husband, denied an education, and seen as inferior to your male relatives. Women teachers, doctors, lawyers and human rights activists are at particular risk. Death threats are common and many have been killed, simply for doing their jobs.

Local Amnesty activist **NAME** said: 'Teachers, doctors, lawyers, activists and politicians are important jobs but they shouldn't be dangerous ones. Brave Afghan women risk so much to educate, to care and to shape the future of their country. They are the hope for Afghanistan's future and the UK government must not abandon them now.'

#### ENDS

#### Notes to editors

The XXXX Amnesty Group was founded in XXXX and has campaigned on a range of human rights issues, including XXXX and XXXX. It meets every XXXX at XXXX.

For background information, see www.amnesty.org.uk/afghanistan

**Contact:** Joe Bloggs, on: 07671 731123 (mobile); 020 8638 4592 (home); jbloggs@gmail.com

#### NAME OF GROUP

#### DATE IS VITAL

An embargo helps you choose when the news is released

Find

#### THE HEADLINE

First thing the journalist reads, so it must be catchy

#### THE SUBHEAD

Includes your second key message

#### THE INTRO

Must be punchy and include what, when, where, why and who

#### **INCLUDE A QUOTE**

The media loves a personal angle. Include a great soundbite – a snappy comment – in the quote

#### ABOUT AMNESTY

Include a short paragraph about your group. Add details of your meetings to attract new supporters

#### CONTACT DETAILS

Essential as journalists need someone to get in touch with

# HOW TO WRITE A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

## The letters page is one of the most widely read sections of any newspaper

Every month local, youth and student groups have letters published in their local papers. In addition to thanking people for their support, letters can be a great way of highlighting a particular campaign or concern. Regional Media Support Officers and the Media Unit regularly provide template letters for groups to adapt and send.

Letters should be topical, for example referring to a major news story or using a date in the calendar.

They should be short and punchy – around 100 to 200 words, ideally. They are most likely to be published if there is a strong local link.



### **MEDIA TIPS**

I have always been a letter-writing crank and I felt quite comfortable about becoming the press officer for our group... Much of the work is routine, like scanning the local press and being goaded into writing a letter to the editor whenever a human rights theme arises. It's always best to have a local "hook" to inspire readers to support Amnesty locally. Don't be put off if they don't print every one. I also always try to get our events and actions in the "What's On" section.

Graham Jones, Sheffield group

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### **TEMPLATE LETTER**

#### **TWO MINUTES TO MAKE A TIMELESS DIFFERENCE**

Sir

As we prepare for the festive season, I would ask readers of [name of newspaper] to spare a minute or two to take part in Amnesty International's Write for Rights campaign.

It doesn't take long to write a card to someone whose human rights are being denied, but it can have a great impact.

For example, it could make a real difference to someone like Raif Badawi from Saudi Arabia, who was sentenced to ten years in prison and 1,000 lashes simply for blogging about free speech. Or to Yolanda Oqueli in Guatemala, who has suffered assassination attempts and harassment because she has protested about a mining development in her area.

Prison conditions have improved, threats and intimidation have ceased, and people have been released from prison after cards and letters were sent.

So amid the shopping frenzy of this time of year, please stop for two minutes to write a card for someone you don't know. Those two minutes could have an impact that will last a lifetime.

#### Visit www.amnesty.org.uk/write

Yours

[name]

[name of Amnesty group]

# HOW TO USE ONLINE TOOLS

### Websites, social media and online tools can help your group spread Amnesty's campaigns

#### **NEWS AND LOCAL WEBSITES**

Keep up-to-date with the news websites in your area – every local radio station and newspaper will have one. Get to know the most relevant journalists and look for opportunities to offer them Amnesty content. Many local news and community websites and blogs also have sections advertising events – another way to get your group noticed.

#### CONNECT WITH THE NEWS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

No self-respecting journalist ignores social media, particularly Twitter, in gathering local news and views on current affairs, so you shouldn't either.

Follow local journalists, news and community sites on Twitter and chat with them to build a relationship. If you follow them, they are likely to follow you back to get your Amnesty updates. Tweet them news, press releases, events or Amnesty reports – whatever matches what they write about. A good source of good practice and information on Twitter is your Regional Media Support Officer's account (details on page 19) and the Media Unit's account @newsfromamnesty. Follow both accounts and re-tweet them when appropriate.

#### PROMOTING YOUR OWN GROUP ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Try to promote everything your group (or Amnesty nationally) is doing on your group's Facebook page and Twitter account: forthcoming events, actions on amnesty.org.uk, blogs. If local journalists and community groups are following your accounts, you never know what else they might pick up.

The main Amnesty website has articles explaining new Amnesty reports, blogs from our campaigners, online actions, and more – all things you can use on Twitter and Facebook to show local media, and potential group members, that your group is active and relevant to them.

### **A WORD OF WARNING**

Some people have suffered embarrassment or worse from an ill-thought-out tweet or Facebook post. You'll be safe using updates from our official accounts or content from amnesty.org.uk, but please don't share things at odds with Amnesty's position. The best rule of thumb is: if you're not sure, don't post – your gut instinct is usually right.



#### WRITING FOR THE WEB

Writing for the web can be different from writing offline. Here are some tips to help you get your message out.

- Focus Keep the copy as focused as possible. It needs to be brief and to the point.
- **Top line** Put your key message in the top line of the page. If advertising an event, put the title, date and location so it is the first thing people see.
- Clear call to action Think about what you want the reader to do. Whether it's take action or attend a meeting, encourage them to get involved – and make it easy for them to do so.
- Simple language Don't assume knowledge and try to avoid acronyms. You can expect everyone to know some acronyms such as UN or BBC, but try to avoid, or explain, more Amnestyspecific ones like STAN.
- Break up text Use shorter paragraphs and more subheadings than you would in print. This helps break up the page and makes it quicker to read.

#### CREATING AND USING YOUR LOCAL GROUP WEBSITE

While social media is the perfect tool for getting your message out in short updates, it can be useful to couple it with your own website for longer pieces of writing and to advertise meetings. A website can also provide details of your group media officer and host any press releases you have issued.

We offer all local groups access to an Amnesty branded website free of charge. Email **activism@amnesty.org.uk** to get set up.



www.clickliverpool.co.uk

PHOTO An Amnesty activist takes part in a TV interview © Amnesty International

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### HOW TO HANDLE RADIO AND TV INTERVIEWS

# Two important components make a good broadcast interview: communicating key messages and facts; and presentation

- If you are asked to do an interview, find out: how long it will last:
- whether it is live or pre-recorded, in a radio or TV studio or elsewhere:
- the rough line of questioning and/or the first question.

Before being interviewed, check that day's news to avoid being wrong-footed.

#### FOR RADIO INTERVIEWS

#### Prepare in advance

Spend about 20 minutes before the interview going over notes. Think about likely questions – and answers. Rehearse the main points out loud. Get someone to fire questions at you.

#### Memorise key messages

Have one or two key messages or 'talking points' in front of you. Use stories or case studies to illustrate points – it 'humanises' the issues or campaign – and a clear slogan or shocking statistic for added emphasis.

#### Don't assume knowledge

Find out what kind of audience the show attracts – and tailor what you say accordingly. Speak clearly, avoid jargon and *do* state the obvious. It's easy to lose listeners if your discussion becomes too complex too quickly. Think of the interview like a conversation with a family or friend unfamiliar with the issues. This can also help with nerves, rather than imagining an audience of thousands.

#### Soundbites and repetition

Use slogans and repetition to emphasise a point – but don't overdo it.

#### Good presentation

Be friendly, alert and enthusiastic. Experts have found that content only makes up 7 per cent of the total impact, while presentation counts for 93 per cent. On radio it's all about your voice. On TV it's also about eye contact and body language.

#### Difficult questions

Avoid defensive answers and always tell the truth. If you don't know the answer, just say so. Don't make 'off the record' comments.

#### Action

Explain how people can get involved and remember to say 'Amnesty'.

#### FOR TV INTERVIEWS

#### Extra preparation

Notes are not a practical option in front of the camera so rehearsal is even more important. With lights shining on your face and a microphone thrust under your chin you need to really know your points.

#### Dress appropriately

Choose an outfit that is simple, comfortable and professional. Avoid distractions, eg large stripes or oversized earrings. You want people to focus on what you've got to say.

#### Where to look

Focus on the presenter or reporter, not the camera. Maintain eye contact.

#### Relax, be yourself and enjoy it

This is a great opportunity for you to speak about an issue you feel passionate about.

# HOW TO KNOW YOUR AMNESTY FACTS

Doing media work on behalf of Amnesty means answering questions about the organisation

#### **USEFUL FACTS AND FIGURES**

Use them as a reminder when preparing for an interview and include them in your media work documents.

- Amnesty International is a global movement of more than 7 million people who take injustice personally. We campaign for a world where human rights are enjoyed by all.
- Over 625,000 people in the UK support Amnesty. We have 231 local groups, 58 student groups and 440 youth groups.
- Amnesty UK receives most of its income from individual members and supporters. Here, and internationally, Amnesty does not seek or accept funds from governments for its campaigning work.

- Amnesty highlights and works to end abuses committed by governments and armed opposition groups. It is independent of any government, political ideology, economic interest or religion.
- Amnesty works by lobbying governments and officials, supporting individuals and their families, organising initiatives with other organisations, operating education programmes and through a wide range of campaigning activities.
- Amnesty campaigns on behalf of prisoners of conscience, women's rights, and to end torture, the death penalty and human rights abuses that keep people in poverty.
- In 1977 Amnesty was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for its campaign against torture.

### FIND THE LATEST FACTS AND FIGURES IN:

#### The Amnesty International Report

Our global annual report on the state of the world's human rights is launched every February. View online at **www.amnesty.org/en/** 

#### Amnesty International UK's Annual Report

This includes the impact of the UK section's campaigning and education work and a breakdown of money raised and how it's spent.

View online at www.amnesty.org.uk/annualreport

### HOW TO CONTACT AND TRAIN WITH AMNESTY

#### CONTACT

The Media Unit is available for advice, information and up-to-the-minute briefings on the latest Amnesty position. You can call any of the direct lines during office hours or, if it is urgent, the duty press officer on the out-of-hours number early in the morning or late in the evening and at weekends.

#### TRAINING

Workshops are available for groups to learn about current campaigns and human rights issues and help to

#### put ideas into action. Workshops on communicating your message, creating photo opportunities and answering tricky questions are also available. Regional Media Support Officers are available at regional conferences and most operate regular regional forums for group media officers.

To book a session, contact your local trainer **training@amnesty.org.uk** 020 7033 1591

More information: www.amnesty.org.uk

#### **MEDIA UNIT**

Niall Couper: 020 7033 1552 niall.couper@amnesty.org.uk

Neil Durkin: 020 7033 1547 neil.durkin@amnesty.org.uk

Naomi Westland: 020 7033 1548 naomi.westland@amnesty.org.uk

Laurie Hanna: 020 7033 1549 harriet.garland@amnesty.org.uk

On duty press officer: 07721 398 984

www.amnesty.org.uk/blogs Twitter: @newsfromamnesty

#### REGIONAL MEDIA SUPPORT OFFICERS

Full list available on www.amnesty.org.uk/rmsos rmsos@amnesty.org.uk

#### **NATIONS & REGIONS**

Northern Ireland Patrick Corrigan: 028 9064 3000 patrick.corrigan@amnesty.org.uk

Scotland Naomi McAuliffe: 0131 718 6684 naomi.mcauliffe@amnesty.org.uk

#### **COMMUNITY FUNDRAISING**

020 7033 1682 fundraise@amnesty.org.uk

#### COMMUNITY ORGANISING

020 7033 1591 activism@amnesty.org.uk Amnesty International is a movement of ordinary people from across the world standing up for humanity and human rights. Our purpose is to protect individuals wherever justice, fairness, freedom and truth are denied.

#### MannestyUK

Amnesty International UK The Human Rights Action Centre 17-25 New Inn Yard London EC2A 3EA Tel +44 (0) 20 7033 1777

www.amnesty.org.uk

If you require this document in an alternative format please contact: **Telephone 020 7033 1777 Textphone 020 7033 1664 Email sct@amnesty.org.uk** 



