

section two

HOW WE ACHIEVE OUR GOALS



- Campaigning
Techniques
- Preparing Campaign
Materials
- Media and Publicity
Work
- Outreach
- Home Government
Lobbying
- Human Rights
Education
- Evaluation

CHAPTER 7

CAMPAIGNING TECHNIQUES

“Don’t stop writing... If you
give us moral support, we will
do the rest.”

Kim Dae Jung, former prisoner of
conscience

This chapter provides some suggestions on different campaigning techniques and actions that AI can use to protect and promote human rights. It is not a comprehensive list.

Campaigning is and should be dynamic, with new techniques and variations of existing techniques constantly emerging. The methods described in this chapter, such as letter-writing and speaking tours, should be integrated with the techniques dealt with in other chapters, such as media work, outreach and lobbying. Which ones are most appropriate will depend on your strategy. Pick the right tools for the job.

The following sections outline some of the advantages and limitations of the different techniques as well as practical advice on how to use them.

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CAMPAIGNING TECHNIQUES LETTER-WRITING AND PETITIONS

Members of the Japanese Section participating
in an organized letter writing session

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Letter-writing is the campaigning technique most associated with AI and it remains an important means of trying to effect change in a wide variety of situations. As with other techniques, its impact depends on many factors, including how it is integrated with other campaigning methods. For some campaigns the quantity of letters sent is the key. For others quality is the vital factor. This section looks at:

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Letter-writing: strengths and weaknesses

A large number of letters can be a good way of demonstrating the extent of awareness and concern in your society about human rights violations in another country. This level of concern may be important in influencing the policies of your own government or of the authorities in the target country.

Individually written letters can demonstrate a depth of knowledge and personal concern, while letters from eminent people can have a particularly great impact.

Letter-writing is such an old and established technique for AI that there are questions as to its continuing effectiveness, partly because some governments have become adept at countering letter-writing campaigns. Variety is one way to try and maintain effectiveness.

If letter-writing to one official seems to be having no effect, perhaps it is time to approach someone else or to get others to write to the official. If governments begin to send standard responses to letters, it may be time to make your letters more varied or to provide points for follow-up letters. The *AI Handbook* and the *Guide for Letter-writers* provide more detailed advice on the style and tone of letters.

Who receives AI letters?

The standard AI letter is addressed to a named government official in another country politely raising concerns and asking for specific action. The letters are usually outlined in materials included in the campaigning circulars provided by the International Secretariat (IS). However, letter-writing is such a flexible technique that it can be used in many different ways. Letters can be directed to:

- local officials, military commanders and others with direct responsibility for human rights violations as a way of directly applying pressure on them and exposing concern, and stimulating them to think and act on human rights;
- the editor of a newspaper in the target or home country for publication as a good way of generating, encouraging and responding to media coverage and generating debate. This should be done in consultation with the AI structure in the target country, if there is one (see Chapter 9);
- newspapers and other media as a way of campaigning to encourage them to increase their reporting on a particular country, foreign affairs or human rights generally;
- supporters as an effective way of raising money (see Chapter 5);
- embassies as a good way of getting

Why letter-writing may not be appropriate or effective

- Some targets are largely immune to international concern delivered through letters. For example, one government leader on hearing how many letters of concern had arrived from Germany reportedly said, "When was the last time people in Germany voted for me?"
- Mass mailings of letters may be counter-productive if there is a poor postal system in the target country.
- Letters are of very limited use in situations of chaos or crisis where government systems are breaking down.
- In some societies, low literacy levels or high postage costs make letter-writing inappropriate.

Advantages of letter-writing campaigns

The main advantages of letter-writing campaigns are that:

- they are simple to organize;
- they provide an easy way for people to take action and to feel involved;
- campaign messages can be targeted at different audiences in the home country as well as internationally;
- they take advantage of the way government bureaucracies often work;
- they are flexible;
- they are low cost in many societies;
- they are personal;
- they can boost the morale of victims and those working for them;
- they educate those writing the letters;
- they reinforce AI's image as a mass movement.



You may want a high-impact letter to be public, as it can be a good way of generating more publicity for the campaign. Before deciding to go public, you should judge whether the publicity for the 'open' letter will be more effective than sending a letter privately.

- the message to target governments;
- government officials as a way of providing them with evidence of AI's concern that they can then use to press for change internally;
- those in a position to influence the human rights situation, such as government or military officials, who may have concerns about a particular policy but feel alone and therefore unwilling to act (the letters provide them with moral support);
- home governments as a way of raising and demonstrating concerns on policies or calling for specific actions (see Chapter 11);
- human rights non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in target countries as a way of providing moral support and encouragement, which can help motivate them to continue their work;
- prisoners and their relatives as a way of boosting morale and offering them an opportunity to communicate with the outside world;
- particular sectors of society in a target country, such as doctors or lawyers, as a way of persuading them to take action in support of human rights (see Chapter 10).

"You continuously tried to help me during years of imprisonment."
Hua Huang, a former prisoner of conscience who spent 21 years in jail in Taiwan, was sent letters of support by AI members



Organizing a letter-writing action

The following questions may help you plan a letter-writing action:

❓ QUESTIONS

Q How many letters would you like each group to send and over what period of time?

Be clear about what you want: this enables the group to plan and decide their work priorities.

Q Is it more important to send lots of letters or fewer letters that are more individual?

If, for example, the most important thing is that letters are individual in character, then it is best not to provide a draft text for the letter. Provide a number of points that could be included in the letter (noting that letters need not include all points), or provide a number of interchangeable paragraphs that can be inserted in different parts of the letter. Suggest the type of personal information that could be included in the letter -- such as the writer's profession or trade, whether he or she has visited the country, or details about the writer's own community -- to demonstrate the personal nature of the concern.

Q Are letters likely to be more or less effective if people mention that they are AI members?

In societies where AI is seen unfavourably, mentioning AI membership may be counter-productive. Not mentioning AI membership can also help to convey the impression that the issue of concern is not part of a campaign but spontaneous. On the other hand, AI is an organization that is well respected and hard for governments to ignore, so mentioning AI can ensure that the content of the letter is taken seriously. Suggest to groups that if they are writing as members of AI they include information about AI in their own society to show the breadth of support it enjoys.

Q Will letters from particular sectors of the community have more impact?

If this is the case, you may need to provide groups with separate suggestions on what points these sectors should raise, the importance of using official titles or headed paper, and any special recipients that may be appropriate for these sectors. You may also need to provide them with advice and suggestions for outreach to these sectors (see Chapter 10).

Q How much do the letters to different officials need to vary?

If you want different letters to be sent to the minister of foreign affairs and the minister of prisons, then it may be best to provide separate advice or action sheets.

Q What materials are needed?

Groups need enough information to understand what is wanted from them and to carry this out. This will usually mean providing them with the following:

- ⇒ background material on the issue, country and the particular case and a summary of AI's strategy for addressing the issues;
- ⇒ points of concern that can be raised, possibly in the form of interchangeable paragraphs;
- ⇒ AI's recommendations;
- ⇒ addressees to write to, including titles and salutation;
- ⇒ advice on the number of letters which should be sent, which addresses are the most important, how long the letters should be, how many points to raise in each letter, etc.

The background, guidance and points to be raised for a single letter-writing action should not be more than one or two pages long. The specific things you need to include are likely to depend on whether it is part of a campaign pack.

If the group is provided with basic information on the target country and the strategy for addressing the issues, they will be in a good position to decide which issues to highlight and the best way to make their letters have an impact.

'Quality' letters

High-impact letters

A letter from a former president, a sports star, a famous singer, the head of a corporation, an academic, a judge or a general may have more influence on the addressee than a letter from an AI member or a member of the public. A joint letter from all or some of these may sometimes also be very effective.

When deciding who is likely to have the most influence, you need to take into account the issue that is being tackled, the society in the target country and any special links between the target country and your own (see Chapter 2).

It can be tempting to approach the same people for high-impact letters, or to ask people who have already made a public stand on human rights issues. But a letter can have a high impact partly because it comes from someone not usually associated with raising concerns about human rights -- illustrating in a symbolic way the extent of concern over a particular case or issue.

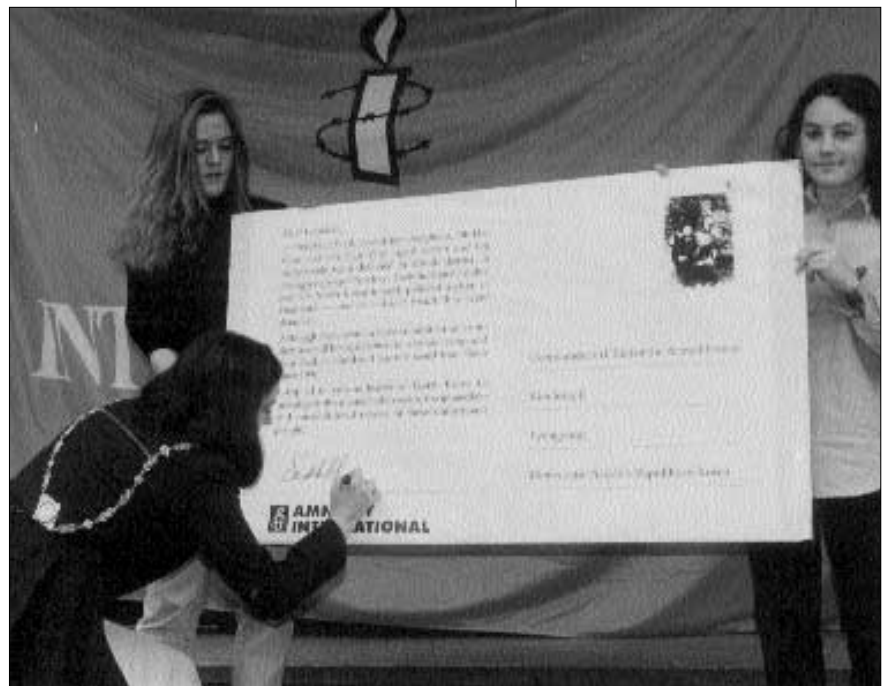
Organizing a high-impact letter is likely to be different in every case. There are, however, a few general tips that it is useful to bear in mind.



If you include a draft letter, members are likely to simply copy this and you will lose the advantages of generating individual letters.

Sadh O'Neill, Deputy Lord Major of Dublin, Ireland, signing a giant postcard at AI Open Day in Dublin in 1994, appealing for the release of three female prisoners of conscience in North Korea.

© AI



TIPS

- Make it as easy as you can for the person you are approaching to say “yes”.
- Think carefully about what you want and what they will be comfortable in agreeing to. It may be that the most important factor is the signature, in which case the content, providing it addresses the main issues, can be a fairly bland statement of concern.
- Be very clear about what you would like the person to write, why you would like them to write the letter and why you think they might want to. In many countries you may have to go through the celebrities' agents, one of whose jobs is to filter such requests. You may well have to argue your case a number of times, so it is best to have the arguments ready.
- Before making the approach think carefully about the objections the person may have, and how you could pre-empt or overcome them. For example, some people may think it is too political. Would it help to mention that other people whom they are likely to respect have already taken a stand? Would it help to mention the breadth of support AI enjoys in many societies? Getting those first few people to “take a stand for AI” is likely to be the most difficult part, but their support can then be used to gather further support.
- If there is any administrative work involved, offer to do it. Some high-profile people are quite likely to ask you to draft the letter for them to sign. In other cases, you should provide the key points and any relevant background information. This should be kept as short, clear and simple as possible.
- High-impact letters can be organized centrally at the national level, although other parts of AI can also be encouraged to participate. Would a local group’s approach to a national celebrity work better than an approach from the Section? Would a letter from a mayor or a member of the local business community or council

have a greater impact than one from a group member?

- Making these or similar approaches for the first time can be daunting. The materials provided by the Section to AI groups can make a big difference to whether or not the groups feel confident enough to make such approaches.
- If the person's consent is given and it is considered beneficial, it can be useful to make public a high-impact letter.

‘OPEN LETTERS’

- If it is an open letter, it can be copied to newspapers for printing on letters’ pages.
- Making it public can help build AI's image in your society as a respected organization and thereby increase its influence.
- It can help to attract support from others.
- It can be the focus of other publicity, particularly if the signatory is willing and able to speak to the media about the issues and AI.
- It may be possible to organize a “public signing” as the beginning of a more public event to which the media can be invited.
- It can be copied to the embassy of the country in question and your own ministry of foreign affairs.

Letters from sectors of the community

Letters from different sectors of your community may have a greater potential to influence situations than general letters from individuals. Lawyers, for example, are respected in many societies and therefore letters from them may be more influential. If concerns are being directed towards military figures it may be that they are more likely to listen to fellow military professionals (see Chapter 10).

Personal letters

An individually written letter, rather than a standard appeal, is often more likely to get the attention of

Prepared letters

A photocopied letter should be carefully proofread and include:

- the added name and address of the government official;
- the added salutation (for example, “Your Excellency”);
- the complete text of the letter with enough information for the sender to be confident of the facts;
 - a statement such as “Amnesty International, a worldwide human rights organization, considers (NAME) to be a prisoner of conscience”;
- the added closing (for example, “Yours respectfully”);
- space for a signature;
 - no date;
- margins on the top and bottom large enough for the letter to be photocopied onto headed paper.

government officials. It also makes it more difficult for governments to adopt a standard response.

The more informed individual and targeted the letters are, the better. AI members are the most reliable source for such letters.

Mass appeals

The prepared letter

One of the easiest ways of generating a large number of letters is to prepare them in advance. A simple standard text can be drafted, needing only the addition of a signature, return address, envelope and stamp (see margin, page 117). This sample can then be cheaply copied and distributed to AI members.

New word-processing and printing technology makes it possible to prepare a variety of letters for different government officials. These can then be copied and distributed in the same way as the standard text.

It is likely that the first of these pre-prepared letters to land on a government official's desk will have the most impact as the official will quickly realize that the subsequent letters say the same thing and are part of a campaign. Thereafter, the impact of the letters lies primarily in their quantity -- the total number illustrating the level of concern.

Distributing letters for signing and sending can also raise public awareness of the issues and offer a first step in getting people involved in defending human rights.

Some AI groups set up public stalls -- with prepared letters and envelopes addressed and stamped -- and ask people to sign the letter, add a return address

and make a donation to cover the postage. This has the advantage of guaranteeing that the letters will be sent.

Other groups distribute the letters more widely and freely hand them out at public meetings and workplaces, etc. This allows for a wider distribution, but it is unclear how many letters will be posted.

Postcards

The pre-printed campaign postcard can be another way of delivering AI's evidence of human rights concerns and of making sure AI's message stands out as it makes its way through postal systems.

Postcards can be sent to government officials. They can also be sent to human rights organizations as a gesture of solidarity, to encourage them in their work and boost their morale.

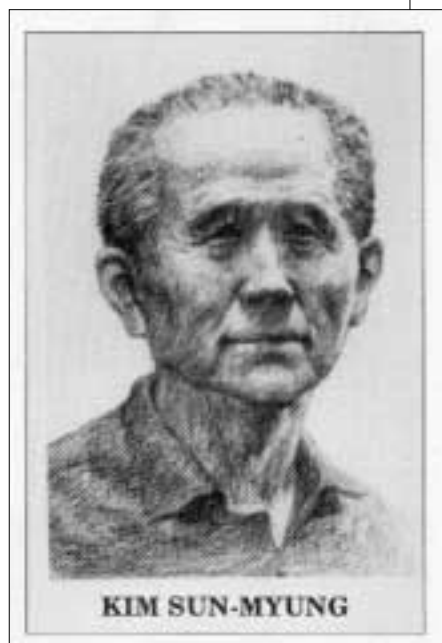
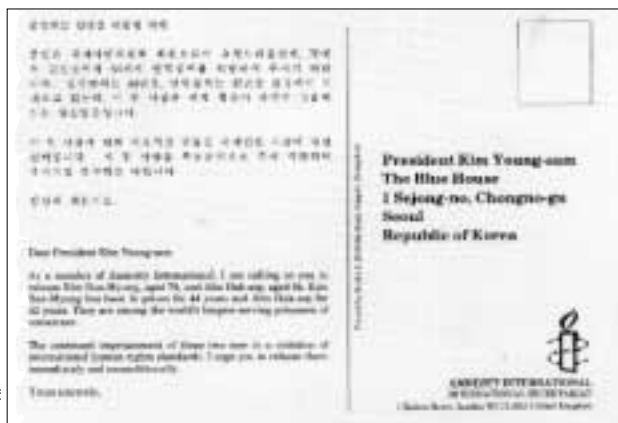
On one side postcards can have anything from a picture to a very direct campaign message. On the other, they can outline AI's concerns in relevant languages and be pre-addressed so that all they require is a signature and a stamp.

This is also an easy way of giving individual members something practical to do in support of a campaign. Sets of postcards can be inserted in newsletters or included in other correspondence to members. Postcards can be distributed to AI groups for sale or distribution on public stalls.

Postcard design

The front of AI campaign postcards have included:

- a quote from the UN Secretary-General linking human rights and peace, in regional languages, and a dove;
- a photograph of a prisoner of conscience;
- a photograph or drawing of items that belonged to the "disappeared";
- a photograph of AI membership action;
- a poem;
- the prisoner's name in different typefaces and languages.



This campaign postcard, addressed to the President of South Korea, calls for the release of prisoners of conscience Kim Sun-Myung and Ahn Hak-sop.

CHECKLIST

PRODUCING CAMPAIGN POSTCARDS

- Check with your post office the relevant regulations and restrictions concerning:
 - cost of postage;
 - front-cover colour or design;
 - thickness/weight of the card;
 - size of the card (length and width);
- Check with your newsletter editor:
 - the size of newsletter pages;
 - whether inserting cards will increase the postage costs;
 - whether there are plans to insert anything else in that issue of the newsletter;
- Check with your designer and/or printer:
 - the cost difference between colour and black and white printing on one and two sides;
 - how many cards can be printed on a sheet of card that will fit inside the newsletter and meet post office requirements for dimensions;
- Check the colours to make sure there are no sensitivities about certain colours in the target country for political, nationalist or religious reasons;

Some AI Sections have attracted new members and supporters by writing to people who have signed AI petitions.

Mother and child sign a street petition organized by the Mexican Section
© AI



- Check that the postcards include:
 - details of the case/issue;
 - what the concern is;
 - AI's recommendation for action;
 - the name and address of the official to whom the card will be sent;
 - the amount of postage necessary;
 - space for a signature.

Petitions

Petitions are frequently used in AI's campaigning. They have a tradition in public protest that goes back many centuries.

Although in some countries petitions have been used to such an extent that they may have lost some of their former impact, they can still be an effective campaigning tool. Among their benefits are:

- they can provide a good focus for group and public activities;
- they are a simple way of allowing people to express their support;
- they can illustrate the level of public/community concern on an issue;
- they are easy (and cheap) to organize.

The following questions may help you decide how best to prepare your petitions:

QUESTIONS

❓ What do you want the petition to say?

Make it as short and simple as possible. The more you write the more people will find that they disagree with the content.

❓ Does it conform to any laws on how the language of petitions should be formulated in order to be legally valid?

❓ Will you want to use the petition in media work?

If so, pay extra attention to make it concise.

Q To whom is it addressed?

Do they have the authority to meet the demands you are making? Should the focus be your government or the target government or particular ministers?

Q How will you deliver it?

Do you want local groups and individuals to send their completed petitions directly to the authorities or do you want to collect them at a central point so that you can count the total? Will you send off all the completed petitions? Will you ask for a personal meeting to hand in the completed forms? Would a handing in/sending off ceremony (involving a celebrity) be worthwhile?

Q Do you want to publicize it?

Do you want to organize "celebrity signings" to begin the campaign? Do you want to include petition forms in sympathetic publications? Do you want to announce the number of signatures aimed for or collected? You should be careful about stating a target you may not reach as this could make the action look a failure. Is the number you have collected impressive by other comparable standards?

Design

➔ The layout should be clear. Make sure there is enough space and separate columns for names, addresses and signatures.

➔ Include the date by which petitions need to be sent back.

➔ Include the address to which completed petitions should be sent back, and a telephone number to ask for more blank copies.

➔ Make sure you put AI's name and address on each sheet.

➔ Use the campaign slogan as a way of getting the overall message across.

➔ Include a column which people can mark if they want to receive further information on the campaign or on AI.



An enormous street petition unravelled in the streets of Brussels

© AI

In some cases, variation of design is effective. Make petitions out of large pieces of cloth. Put the name of their community on it and display it at stalls with some paint so people can include hand or footprints next to their name and a message in support of the campaign's aim. These can provide good photo opportunities for campaign dossiers and can be handed in at embassies, etc.

Make giant petitions. These too can be a good way for a local group to get publicity for the campaign. Write the petition neatly at the top of a large roll of paper. Either lay this along the ground leading up to a campaign stall or suspend it from the top of a wall.

CAMPAIGNING TECHNIQUES SPEAKING TOURS

IS staff member Hilary Fisher (*left*) with Munga Gathogo (*centre*) and Judy Muthoni Kamau (*right*), two members of the Kenyan Release Political Prisoners Group who spoke at the IS in October 1997.

© AI



A survivor of human rights violations telling their story in their own words is one of the most powerful ways of getting AI's message across. So too can the testimony of a human rights defender working on the frontline, or of a UN human rights official mandated to work without sufficient resources. Speaking tours can offer such people a platform and in many other way open up good campaigning opportunities. This section looks at:

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What a speaking tour can achieve

The first step in organizing a speaking tour is to make sure you are clear about the purpose of the tour and what concrete objectives you hope to achieve. A speaking tour can contribute to specific campaigning and organizational objectives in areas such as:

- ⇒ Media coverage
- ⇒ Lobbying
- ⇒ Motivating AI members
- ⇒ Fundraising
- ⇒ Outreach
- ⇒ Building AI

Choosing a speaker

Speaking tours can involve anyone, but this section concentrates on speakers who are international guests and assumes that you will be responsible for deciding, organizing and coordinating their program.

Being clear about the purpose and priorities for the proposed tour will help you decide who you should invite. You can consult researchers and campaigners at the IS for their recommendations about possible speakers and ask country specialists in your Section and other NGOs for their suggestions.

A survivor of human rights violations, or a relative of a victim, may be most effective in attracting media attention or getting public support. However, they may have little expertise in the policy areas important to your lobbying or experience of in-depth media interviews. Being aware of these issues can help to make sure that you get the right person for the job you wish to do.

Sections have organized speaking tours with:

- ➔ survivors of human rights violations;
- ➔ relatives of victims of human rights violations;
- ➔ human rights defenders;
- ➔ other activists in the broader human rights movement;
- ➔ leading figures in AI;

- ➔ experts in a relevant field, e.g. international law.

If the main purpose of the tour is to obtain media coverage, then you would probably need to:

- ➔ pay particular attention to any language issues, for example some media organizations can be very reluctant to use interpreters;
- ➔ target parts of the news media that will be particularly interested in the issue or speaker;
- ➔ decide what audience you are trying to reach.

If lobbying is the most important aspect of the visit then language is less likely to be important (providing interpreters can be arranged).

However, you will want to be confident that your speaker will contribute to your lobbying goals by making persuasive supporting arguments or statements, and carries some weight with those you want to influence, either through their personal reputation or their status in an organization.

Organizing a speaking tour

The invitation

Your letter of invitation should include the following:

- ⇒ the purpose of the visit;
- ⇒ an outline of the proposed program – how long you want the speaker to stay, who they will meet, whether any media interviews are planned, etc;
- ⇒ what you are proposing to pay for – for example, travel, daily expenses, accommodation.



“I wish to voice the demand for the release of political prisoners in both Indonesia and East Timor.”

Former prisoner of conscience Tri Argus Susanto Siswihardjo. He visited the IS and AIUK in September 1997 after serving two thirds of a two-year sentence. His speech at AIUK indicated his intention to continue campaigning against human rights violations in Indonesia.

Becky Hess, AIUK's UA coordinator, holds a copy of the UA issued on Tri's behalf.

© AI



Make sure that the media briefing pack does not break the embargo on news you may want to use to attract media coverage during the tour.

Confirming the tour

Once a potential speaker has accepted your invitation, you should send a follow-up letter thanking them and giving more information. This should include:

- details of the proposed program including, if appropriate, profiles of the people they will meet; for how long they will be expected to speak on different occasions; what you hope the tour will achieve; details of any media coverage or interviews that have been arranged; and useful background information on the country, political system, etc;
- practical information -- for example, what the weather is likely to be like; who will meet the speaker at the airport or station; and contingency telephone numbers (you should also ask whether the speaker has any special needs or people they want to meet while in your country);
- a request for a brief autobiography of the speaker, explaining the sort of information you would like (see box below), and a photograph. These details will be important when seeking appointments, for interesting the media, preparing publicity materials and arranging the program.

Briefing the speaker

If the schedule allows, it is a good idea to keep the first day of the visit free for the speaker to rest, settle in and become familiar with the issues you want them to address. The first day also offers an opportunity for showing the speaker



“As someone who has had first hand experience as a prisoner, I see that Amnesty International has a fundamental position in the defence of human rights”.
 Diolinda Alves de Souza, a former prisoner of conscience.
 She was jailed in 1996 for her connection with land reform activities in Brazil. She campaigned in Europe in August 1997 against the conviction of her husband; her campaign took the form of a speaking tour. She holds the Urgent Action issued on behalf of her husband.

© AI

around if they have not visited your country or city before, answering any questions they may have about the program, making them feel welcome and establishing a working relationship with them.

You can also use this time to get a sense of how to provide the speaker with the information they need. Is it best to provide a basic overview and then more detailed briefings on a daily basis? Will written or verbal briefings be more useful to them?

The speaker should also be confident that they can raise any problems or concerns about the program or the meetings with you.

Briefings during the visit are a matter of judgment. Sometimes a taxi-ride or car journey to the next interview or meeting can be a good opportunity to discuss with the speaker about how the last event went; to suggest a "sound-bite" or concise phrase that might make a point easier to convey; or to provide a bit more information on the main person who will also speak at the next meeting.

It can also be useful to have a debriefing session at the end of each day to go over any problems that have arisen, talk about how the day went and to provide an opportunity to unwind.

Media training

At the beginning of the visit it is often useful to organize some media training for your speaker so that the major themes and key points can be conveyed in "media-friendly" terms. Time can also be spent discussing and preparing for difficult questions that may arise.

You should check whether the speaker has any experience of dealing with the media so that you can take this into account in the training. Ideally this training would involve a sympathetic professional journalist, but it can also be done through a simple role-playing exercise (see Chapter 9).

The program

In devising a program for any speaking tour it should be remembered that public speaking can be exhausting. Speaking to a wide range of audiences,

being involved in meetings and doing media interviews over a short period of time is particularly tiring. The speaker may also be worn down by their journey, the strange diet, adapting to being with strangers, or by language difficulties.

Therefore, it is best to avoid combining late night interviews with early morning engagements. If the visit

is scheduled to last for four days or longer, try and ensure that you build in one complete day for rest. Try to create gaps in the program to allow for a period of relaxation. If the program includes a public meeting or address, then make sure the speaker has enough clear time beforehand to think through what they want to say.

A media briefing pack for a speaking tour

A good media pack helps journalists by providing them with relevant information in an accessible form. Journalists frequently work to tight deadlines and therefore appreciate it if relevant information is brought to their attention and clearly presented. It also enables AI to focus the attention of journalists on the issues and messages it is most anxious to get across.

A media pack should be as short as possible - a series of single pages each covering a particular area - to allow easy copying and faxing. Each sheet of paper should provide at least one contact name and telephone number, and the offer of further information. The core components of a media pack for a speaking tour are:

➤ Biographical details about the speaker

Keep it down to the best bits. It should be no longer than a single page and give information such as:

- ⇒ when they were born;
- ⇒ their trade or profession;
- ⇒ their particular areas of expertise;
- ⇒ any organizations they are involved with;
- ⇒ their experience of human rights violations;
- ⇒ where they have spoken/travelled to before;
- ⇒ any other meetings they have taken part in;
- ⇒ any peace or human rights prizes they have been awarded;
- ⇒ any relevant quotes about them by eminent people or the press.

➤ The purpose and program of the visit

This is the opportunity to highlight the issues you would like the journalists to concentrate on. Why is the speaker visiting this country now? Who will they be meeting? What does the visit hope to achieve?

➤ Background to AI's campaigns

This is the opportunity to provide journalists with the background details that you hope will inform their coverage and provide the basis for their questions. It should include the key issues of AI's current campaigns, more background information on the human rights violations the speaker is addressing, what campaigning activities AI is undertaking, and what AI is calling for.

➤ A photograph

This should preferably be a portrait (head and shoulders) of good enough quality for printing. A good photograph can help to persuade television producers that your guest will interest their viewers.

It is also important to think about what the speaker is getting out of the tour. Part of AI's purpose might be to demonstrate solidarity and/or give the individual an international profile, which can help to protect them.

Sections should discuss with any speaker whether there are activities which might pose them an additional security risk when they return home. If the speaker is giving their time to AI, it is also important to establish whether you can introduce non-AI contacts who may be important to them, such as funding agencies.

Staying in contact

It can be easy to forget that during a busy program you (or someone from AI) will be with the visitor much of the time and away from your desk or telephone at a time when journalists may be wanting to fix or rearrange interviews, government ministers may be seeking a meeting, and friends and relatives of the visitor may be trying to get in touch.

It is important, therefore, that there is a link person available at your regular telephone number (or at the contact number given in your leaflets and publicity materials) who has a copy of your schedule and who is familiar enough with the program to answer basic queries. A mobile telephone can also go a long way to overcoming communication problems. Alternatively, a system of calling in to "base" to pick up messages and provide updates is advisable.

Hannah Koroma, a member of the Sierra Leonean Section, spoke vividly about how she suffered genital mutilation as a child to the AI conference on female genital mutilation held in Ghana in 1996

© AI.



Getting the most from a speaking tour

Media coverage

Draft a brief outline of your media strategy to explain to others in AI what you hope the visit will achieve in relation to the media. This strategy should include the main points or messages you wish to get across to the media, which media outlets you will be targeting, and the materials you may need to carry out your plan.

QUESTIONS

❏ **If you can only get one central message across, what is it in one sentence?**

❏ **What is the second most important message, again in one sentence?**

❏ **What is your most important audience? Is it politicians, other decision-makers, women, people with a particular interest in foreign affairs, the general public?**

In many societies the media is closely targeted to very defined audiences. There can also be considerable competition between media outlets, so you may have to choose some outlets that automatically rule out others. Size is not everything -- programs or newspapers with small audiences can be the most influential, or the most sympathetic.

❏ **Why should the media be interested in your visitor?**

The answer to this question is likely to be different for each visitor, for different parts of the media and for each country. One way of trying to answer the question is to try and make a list of up to 10 reasons why you think they should be interested -- remembering the key points that you want to get across during the visit. Then imagine you are a journalist or producer hearing these reasons and judging them by the factors that they have to weigh up



Salima Ghezali, editor of the Algerian newspaper *La Nation*, was guest speaker at AIUK's 1996 annual conference on women and human rights. Prior to her address at the conference, the Algerian authorities had seized an edition of *La Nation* which reported human rights abuses being perpetrated during the country's civil war.

© AI

in deciding what they will cover. These include value judgments on news worthiness, audience interest, competition for space, whether the person is a good communicator with media experience, etc. Finally, cut your list down to the five best reasons so that you can be confident of your case when approaching journalists.

Q What materials should you produce?

The answer to this will vary enormously, depending on who your visitor is (for example, how well known they are), how the media works in your country; and the nature of your relationship with the media. However, journalists normally need some biographical details and background information on the person in order to prepare questions and perhaps write the introduction to any piece on them.

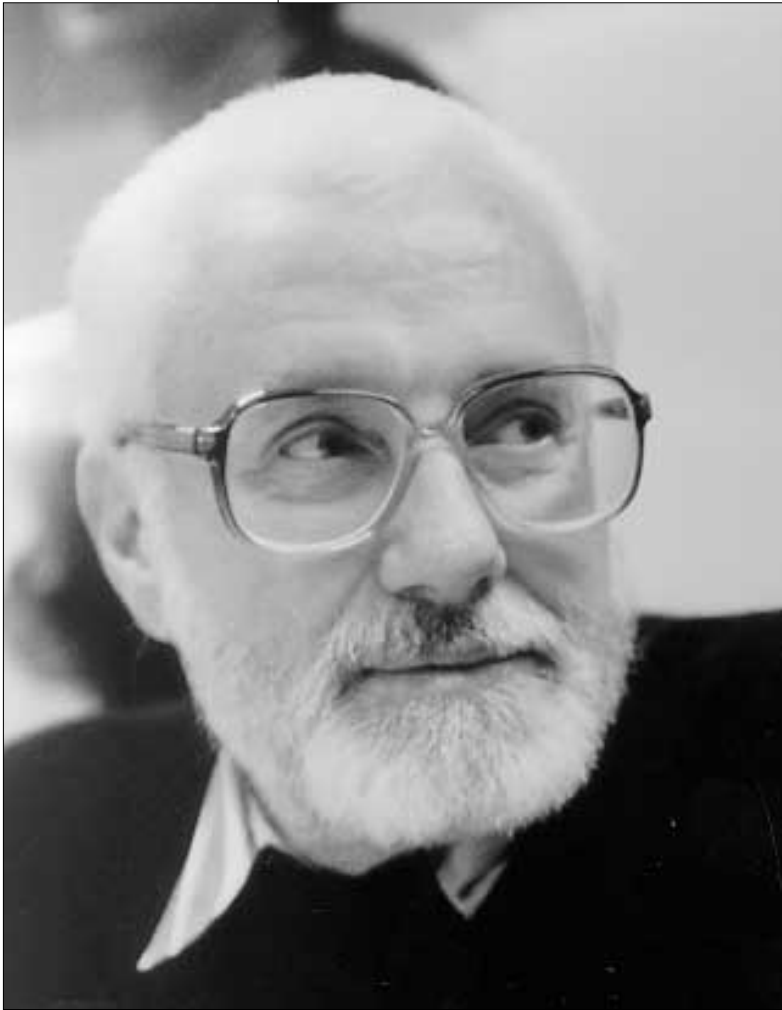
A short media briefing pack can help set the agenda. Sections of a media pack that work well are likely to be reproduced in journalists' articles and questions.

In addition to the media pack you may also need to prepare a series of news releases before and during the visit:

- ☛ one to notify the media that a visitor is coming, why they should be interested and whom they can contact to arrange interviews;
- ☛ one to notify the media of any particular events at which the visitor is speaking – media or other conferences, public meetings, etc;
- ☛ one to highlight newsworthy comments made by the visitor at a particular event;
- ☛ one to summarize the results of the visit, highlighting particular issues, etc.

Lobbying

Arranging for a visiting speaker to meet AI's key supporters in the government or other political parties can be an important way of acknowledging and consolidating support for AI. It is important to work out the lobbying objectives of any speaking tour well in advance.



© AI

“I believe Amnesty has made a fundamental contribution in placing human rights as a strategic concern of societies. Ideologies may come and go, but Amnesty has put concern for the fate of the individual at the centre of the political agenda.”
 Professor Luiz Rossi, the subject of AI's first Urgent Action in 1960, speaking at the IS in January 1996.

? QUESTIONS

- Q Who would it be useful for the visitor to meet?**
- Q What would you like the meetings to achieve?**
- Q Can the visitor's status open doors for AI that would otherwise be closed and how can the doors be kept open after the visitor leaves?**
- Q What roles should the visitor and AI hosts take in the meeting?**
- Q Who is responsible for following up any action agreed at meetings?**

Motivating members

The possibility of meeting with or hearing the views of people on the frontline of the struggle for human rights can work as a powerful motivator for AI members and build their commitment to AI's work. Organizing a

social function or dinner, a members' forum or a lunch for staff and volunteers are some options.

However, visiting speakers can react very differently to these occasions. Some enjoy them greatly while others find them difficult and exhausting. People who have spent long periods in prison, for example, can find handling crowds very trying. It is important to be sensitive to the visitor's needs. If you do hold such a function, you should ensure that the visitor's attention and time are not dominated by one person, that they have time to eat or that they can leave early.

It is rarely possible for any visitor to meet with all the membership so an interview to be included in the members' newsletter can help fulfil the same function.

Fundraising

The costs of speaking tours can quickly mount up, so it is useful to exploit the income-generating possibilities they offer as well (see Chapter 5 for more details on fundraising).

☛ Fundraising dinners

If your visitor is likely to be of great interest to a particular audience you could issue invitations for a dinner at which she or he will be the guest speaker and charge a price that will leave you with enough profits after costs to make organizing the dinner worthwhile.

☛ Public meetings

Charge entry to public meetings which your visitor is addressing if you feel this will not deter too many people from attending. Hold a collection from the audience after an appeal from the chair of the meeting.

☛ Direct mail appeal letters

The visitor may be willing to put their name to an appeal to your supporters explaining how important it is that AI has the resources to continue its work. Or they may be willing to provide some quotes endorsing the importance of AI's work from their own personal experience.

🗣️ **Public appeals**

The visitor might have the opportunity to highlight forthcoming AI fundraising events, or to suggest giving money in media interviews, etc.

Outreach

A visitor may have a particular appeal or relevance to specific sectors of the community that offer opportunities for building AI's outreach work. It may be useful, for example, to invite a military official active in AI in another country to come and talk on the relevance of the military to human rights as one stage towards establishing or strengthening an outreach structure for this sector.

Different outreach sectors are quite often served by their own media and publicity channels which may be interested in covering the visit.

Building AI

Visits can absorb a lot of time and money, and their impact can be very short term. They can even be counter-productive if they leave organizers exhausted and possibly poorer. It makes sense to think carefully about how internal organizational objectives can be integrated into the strategy for any visit. Plan for the extra work that may be generated.

🗝️ **TIPS**

There are various ways in which you can try to maintain the momentum the visit has given to your campaign, or outreach, media or lobbying work.

- 🗝️ Take photographs, make videos, get quotes that can be used in subsequent communications.
- 🗝️ Keep a record of who helped with the visit -- for example by providing free accommodation -- and make sure they are thanked.
- 🗝️ Keep a record of who attended the different functions and events and invite them to join AI if they are not already members.

- 🗝️ Keep a record of useful contacts in the wider community who could be approached for support at another time -- for example, representatives of other NGOs and journalists.

- 🗝️ Make sure that commitments made in meetings for follow-up action are fulfilled.

- 🗝️ Keep in regular contact with the speaker afterwards.



CAMPAIGNING TECHNIQUES PUBLIC EVENTS AND PROTESTS

Members of the Dutch Section bring public attention to the plight of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi using striking masks and simple placards, July 1994. In 1995 she was released after having been detained for almost six years under house arrest.

© AI



Public activities aimed at informing, motivating and mobilizing the wider public have been vital elements in AI's campaigning throughout the organization's history. They offer an opportunity not only to inform many people but also to demonstrate concern and build commitment for change. The process of organizing and holding public activities also offers fresh opportunities for outreach, publicity and media work. This section looks at:

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 - Timing / 130
 - Venue / 130
 - Publicity / 131
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- Alternative summits / 134
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Public meetings

A good public meeting is one where people leave feeling uplifted, motivated and committed to your campaign. It normally involves a lot of work and, often, money. A bad public meeting can leave those who attended demoralized and downhearted, and may well have the same effect on you and the other organizers. So, before committing yourself to holding a public meeting, it is worth answering some key questions.

QUESTIONS

Q What do you want the public meeting to achieve?

Is the main aim to inform people about a particular campaign? Is it to show the authorities that there is a lot of public concern on a particular issue? Is it to recruit members to AI?

Q Who is your target audience?

How far will people travel to a public meeting? Do you want to attract an audience in a particular geographical area? Is there a lot of community interest in the issue to be addressed at the meeting?

Q Do you have speakers who will attract an audience?

This is particularly important if the meeting is not about a high-profile issue which will create public interest automatically.

Size matters

➔ Thirty people in a small room - this feels like a full and enthusiastic audience. A full meeting creates an atmosphere of excitement. It makes people feel they are part of a campaign with momentum.

➔ Thirty people in a hall that holds 500 - this looks tiny and miserable. The 30 who attend will feel that they are part of a minority and they may wonder whether it is worth carrying on. No matter how exciting the speech, it is hard to build an impression that an empty hall can change the world!

The only difference in these two events is the size of the venue.

Organizing a public meeting

To hold a successful public meeting it is important that you pay particular attention to key organizational issues such as:

- ⇒ timing
- ⇒ venue
- ⇒ publicity
- ⇒ speakers
- ⇒ chairing
- ⇒ follow-up action

Timing

Allow enough time to organize everything properly -- from booking the hall and speakers, to arranging the publicity.

Check that the date of the meeting does not clash with a competing event aimed at your target audience, such as sporting events, other meetings or holidays.

Pick the best time for your audience -- make it as easy as possible for them to attend.

Choose the best time in your campaign. Is there a stage when you will want a fresh focus for publicity and media work? Is it best to hold the meeting shortly before a debate is to occur or a decision is to be taken on the issues covered by the campaign?

Venue

Many questions need to be addressed before picking a venue:

QUESTIONS

Q Is the venue the right size for your expected audience?

Q Is the venue easily accessible to your target audience?

If the meeting is to be held in the evening, are the approaches well lit so that people feel safe arriving and leaving? Is there access for disabled people? Is it on a major transport route? Is there car parking space?

Would it be more effective to organize the meeting with a partner? Cooperation with another organization might dilute your purposes, but it might also be a way of reaching a broader audience (see also Chapter 10).

❏ **Does the venue have good acoustics?**

Will a microphone and loudspeakers be necessary? Are these available in the hall? Can the lighting be adjusted? Has all the necessary equipment been checked? Does someone know how to get things fixed quickly if they go wrong?

❏ **Does the venue have the facilities you need?**

Are there chairs and are they movable? Are refreshment facilities available? Are there facilities for meeting socially after the official meeting? Is there a room available so that organizers and speakers can meet beforehand?

Other factors about the venue are also important:

➤ **Venue's message**

Venues can send different messages. A public meeting in the parliament building may send a message about the level of support your campaign enjoys in the parliament and be the best way of targeting this audience too. Similarly, a public meeting in a community hall can be a good way of indicating the concern of the community.

➤ **Heating/cooling and ventilation**

People's surroundings can affect their attention span. Rooms that are too warm or lacking in fresh air can send people to sleep (or home). An audience getting cold will probably begin to think more about how to get warm than what the speaker is saying.

➤ **Decoration**

Check to see where you can hang banners. An attractive backdrop on the stage will complement the meeting – the message on banners will reinforce the message of the meeting. Think about where photographers and television news crews will take pictures from. Will your banners be in the shot? Put posters on the surrounding walls so that people can look at something as they wait for the meeting to get started.

Publicity

The success of a public meeting depends above all on the audience, and the audience you want to attract has to know about the meeting to attend it. Good advance publicity is essential. Target the publicity at the audience you are hoping to attract, using posters, leaflets, announcements in the local media, etc. Persuade sympathetic organizations to publicize the meeting.

Media reports after the meeting should not be forgotten. Can you get reports of it in any newspapers – perhaps with a picture of the main speaker? Can you arrange radio interviews? Public meetings in the evening are difficult for the daily news media to cover – they are generally too late for television news and newspaper deadlines, and by the next day they are old news.

Speakers' platform

The number and range of speakers are also important to the mood and feel of public meetings. Normally the main speaker should be the last to speak. This is so that the audience leaves on an emotional high and has good memories of the event. It also ensures that any call for action you make at the end of the meeting – such as requests for donations or invitations to join AI or to take part in campaign activities – gets the best response possible.

All audiences have a limited attention span – do not overstretch it by having too many speakers speaking for too long. Make sure each speaker knows what issues they should address and how long they should speak for.

Be sensitive to the composition of the speakers' platform and how it will appear to your target audience. For example, it is generally better to have a mix of women and men on the platform.

The diversity of speakers on your platform (providing they are speaking in support of your campaign) can be a good way of showing the level of support you enjoy and a good way of building relationships with different

organizations. The names of the speakers will appear in the publicity about your meeting publicity and will become associated with the campaign.

Partly for this reason it is important that speakers' platforms do not appear politically biased and that they do not suggest that AI supports organizations that may compromise its independence and, therefore, its effectiveness. For example, some governments may seek to use the presence on an AI platform of an exile or solidarity organization from their country to attack AI's motives, undermine its credibility and deflect attention from AI's human rights concerns. A politically balanced speakers' platform can help protect AI from such criticism.

Chairing

A good chairperson is essential to a good meeting. They ensure that:

- ➔ speakers stick to their time;
- ➔ the audience knows the structure and format of the meeting and any practical details;
- ➔ the audience can participate in the meeting through questions;
- ➔ individual members of the audience are not able to dominate or disrupt the meeting;
- ➔ the meeting stays on track and achieves its purpose, for example by ending with a strong call for action.

Action

An action component is an important part of most meetings. AI does not just want to inform people, it wants to persuade people to become involved in changing the world.

TIPS

- ➔ Put leaflets, petition and any other papers on people's chairs before the meeting. Leaflets should include simple activities that people can do.
- ➔ Ask for donations to cover the cost of the meeting and contribute to campaign costs on the way in, and pass collection buckets around during the meeting or as people are leaving.

- ➔ Have a stall in the meeting room with information about the campaign and AI, membership forms, petitions, letters to sign and send off, AI merchandise, etc.

- ➔ Get the different speakers, and in particular the last speaker and the chair, to emphasize how important the audience is to the campaign and to effect the change AI is seeking. Have a list of things for people to do. Ask them to join AI now.

Vigils, demonstrations and protests

Street protests, such as vigils and demonstrations, are an important campaigning technique at both national and group level. Sometimes they are spontaneous reactions to world events. More often they are planned parts of a campaign. When planning any form of public protest it is important to be clear about what you are trying to achieve so that you can make the protest as effective as possible.

QUESTIONS

❓ What is the main message of the vigil?

Do you want to put pressure on your government or on the authorities in the target country? Is it primarily a public act of solidarity or of remembrance?

❓ Is the location of the vigil important for getting the message across?

If you want to reach as many people as possible, then a busy street or town centre is the best choice. You may want to choose a location which has a symbolic importance, such as an embassy or tourist office.

❓ Is timing a significant factor?

A good time for media coverage may be a bad time for getting people to attend as they will be at work. You may want to choose a prisoner's birthday or a country's national day to increase the impact of the protest.

The law

In many societies all or some public events and protests are subject to legal requirements and restrictions. Some may relate to health and safety issues (for example, fire regulations), others may concern the amount of notice you need to give to the authorities, or obtaining police permission, etc. It is generally worth finding out as much as possible about any legal requirements before deciding what you will do. Places to find this information will vary but check with other organizations, lawyers, and government and local authorities.

Q Do you want other organizations or individuals to attend?


This might increase the size and impact of the protest, but could also mean that AI will become associated in the public mind with these organizations. It is important to weigh up the effect this may have on AI's effectiveness.


Organizing a public protest


The checklist below may help you organize a successful public protest:

CHECKLIST

ORGANIZING A PUBLIC PROTEST


 Distribute leaflets, posters, etc. to get as many people there as possible. Remember to include the time, date and location of the protest.

 Contact the media and ask them to put an announcement in a relevant part of the newspaper or issue a news release and offer to provide a spokesperson to explain why the protest is being held.


 Delegate responsible AI members to look out for potential problems. If appropriate you can give them armbands or badges so that their role is clear to both the participants and the authorities. This is particularly important if you are worried about other organizations that may attend or about the reaction of the authorities, and if you do not want any publicity to focus on the arrest of people taking part.


TIPS


 Big banners are noticed. Ask a few people to hold them or tie them up where they can be seen. Public protests do not necessarily need a lot of people to make an impact, but the fewer the people the more important strong visual images become.


 A number of simple banners or placards can also be noticed. The more


people holding them, the more striking the image. Use a few themes or messages repeatedly as they work better than many different ones, which can look confusing. Keep the images simple and the text to a minimum.


 Symbolic representations of the issue being highlighted -- such as a cage to evoke repression and imprisonment -- can be a graphic way of highlighting AI's message and provide a good image for the media. Ask people, possibly somebody famous, to spend a little while inside the cage.


 Masks can make a striking image. Simple, featureless cardboard masks can be used to symbolize the fate of the "disappeared". A photocopied photograph of a person can be put onto masks to emphasize the individual case the vigil is highlighting.

 Candles held by protesters at night can create an evocative image and emphasize AI's symbol. Push the candles through small circles of cardboard to stop the hot wax dropping on people's hands or put them in glass jars to prevent them being blown out.

 Silhouettes can provide a striking way of highlighting the plight of the "disappeared" and their families. Life-size outlines of people can be drawn on stiff cardboard and then cut out and painted black. Details of a particular case can be written onto the body. You can stand the silhouettes against walls, ask individuals to hold them or lay them down on the pavement or street in front of your protest. Think about how they could make the most effective image for the camera.

 Set up a small photographic or poster exhibition to attract the interest of passers-by.

 Music and "noise" attract attention, keep up the spirits of those taking part in the protest and help get the message across. You can distribute song or slogan sheets to those taking part; use a megaphone; or get a single drummer, a band, an orchestra or a choir involved. Music can reach the heart and soul in ways that words alone cannot.

 Rather than have people simply standing still, get them moving around.



A mask worn during a protest outside the Chinese Embassy in Poland during AI's campaign on China



Be careful if you put an estimate on the number of people you think may take part in a protest. This can backfire and can make an otherwise successful event appear a failure.

Have some of the participants dress up as victims and perpetrators to represent the violations being highlighted.

Alternative summits

Alternative summits have been used to great effect by many organizations. One example was the Bangkok NGO forum which took place in the lead-up to the Vienna UN World Conference on Human Rights in 1993. At the forum NGOs were able to speak out for human rights and express the aspirations of ordinary people, countering the arguments of some governments at the UN Conference who were seeking to portray universal human rights values as alien to Asian cultures. The presence of the world media who had come for the UN Conference also meant that NGOs were able to get widespread coverage for their views. The human rights work of the participating NGOs was strengthened through the process of meeting and working together at the forum.

Increasingly, NGOs are organizing alternative forums at meetings of international organizations, or at intergovernmental meetings, to lobby the official meetings and to set out their human rights agenda.

This tactic may also be useful for

People's Forum

Bacre Waly Ndiaye, UN Special Rapporteur on summary or arbitrary extrajudicial executions, visited Australia as a guest of "A People's Forum", organized by the Australian Section. Representatives of different ethnic communities and the relatives of victims gave testimony of their experience of human rights violations. Although it had no formal status the event was well covered by the media and provided organizations and individuals with a much better knowledge of the UN human rights mechanisms and how they work in practice. It also raised public awareness of the scale of human rights violations worldwide.

making sure that human rights are on the agenda of other meetings and summits. If you know in advance that a government leader is scheduled to visit your country it may be possible to arrange for a visit by a leading human rights figure at the same time, or shortly before or after the official visit, as a way of emphasizing the need to prioritize human rights considerations.

Responding to current events

Public actions can be most successful when they are seen as a response to current events. One example is to stage an event to coincide with visits of heads of state or government ministers to the country.

Decide what you would like to achieve from the visit. Would a face-to-face meeting be possible or advisable? Do you want the media to focus primarily on a country's human rights record or on your government's failure to take up human rights issues? Or is it more important to bring pressure to bear on a particular case? You will need to judge whether more will be achieved quietly through lobbying or more visibly through public action.

Some visits take place in a fanfare of publicity, while others are more discreet. Holding a public protest outside the hotel where an official or government leader is staying can be effective in gaining media coverage -- particularly if they have declined to meet AI. Prepare a letter outlining AI's concerns that you can hand in -- if you are not allowed to hand over the letter, then this is likely to be seen as unjust.

Try and get a copy of the itinerary of the visit. Is it possible to make sure that there is a public AI presence on each occasion? Make AI's message simple: "AI wants to talk", "Free ... Now!", "Will ... condemn the torture of protesters in the country?".

At each place try and pass copies of AI's concerns to others attending -- or provide them with a letter asking them to raise a particular case or concern.

CAMPAIGNING TECHNIQUES CONTACT WITH EMBASSIES

Guards stand outside the Chinese Embassy in Warsaw, Poland, where candles and masks were left by protesters during AI's campaign against human rights violations in China. AI members held the protest during an official Chinese delegation's visit to Poland in order to highlight human rights violations by Chinese security forces in the Tibet Autonomous Region. Participants wore masks decorated to resemble traditional Tibetan masks.

© AI



Embassies are both the real and symbolic representatives of other governments in your country. As such, they provide AI with a range of campaigning opportunities. Meetings with embassy officials allow AI to convey its concerns directly to governments, to obtain information on the human rights situation in the country, and to establish a dialogue between AI and government representatives. Embassies can provide a focal point for symbolic actions and for demonstrating concern. This section looks at:

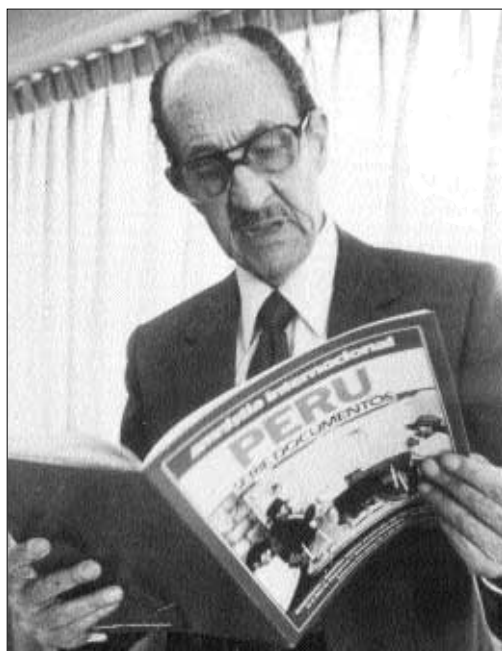
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Embassy visits

Embassies act as listening posts for what is happening in the host country in order to defend the interests of the home country. In general the ambassador will not be in a position to make decisions independently and will have to report back to their ministry of foreign affairs about meetings. Of course, an embassy can have considerable influence through the way it reports to its ministry of foreign affairs or the way it requests further instructions.

Most countries do not have an embassy in every country with which they have diplomatic relations. Often arrangements are made whereby a representative will be responsible for diplomatic relations with neighbouring countries. If there is an ambassador accredited to a country but based in another country, good communication between AI Sections in the two countries is important so that visits can be coordinated and information shared. Letters can be sent without prior consultation between the Sections, although if major initiatives are planned it would be advisable to consult.

Names and addresses of ambassadors may be found in telephone directories or in directories published annually by most foreign affairs ministries.



© AI

Preparing the visit

Preparation is the key to a successful embassy visit. If the visit is part of a campaign, the campaign material should provide the information needed for the visit. AI delegates need to be well informed about AI's concerns and clear about what the visit is intended to achieve. It is also useful to consider in advance suitable responses to the ambassador's possible reactions to the issues the delegation will raise.

Embassy visits should be coordinated, both within the Section and in relation to possible activities by the IS. In some Sections there will also be a need for coordination between adoption groups and professional groups or other groups with specialist functions. This coordination should be done by the Section office or a special coordinator for embassy visits, perhaps a board member.

If the embassy visit is not part of a campaign or suggested by the IS, it is a good idea to consult the IS before asking for a meeting. The IS should be able to give you up-to-date information on the country and perhaps suggest specific issues which it would be useful to raise during the visit.

Arranging the visit

The first step is to request a meeting with the ambassador. It is essential to follow diplomatic style in communications with an embassy. Letters should be courteously worded, well presented and include the appropriate forms of address (for example, the ambassador should be addressed as "Your Excellency"). Departures from this style may be counterproductive and the ambassador may feel offended. You should make your request in a letter:

- giving a brief presentation of AI and enclosing a copy of the *AI Statute*;
- summarizing the concerns you wish to raise with the ambassador;
- suggesting that a meeting be arranged and giving a proposed date for the meeting;
- listing the names of those who will

A Peruvian diplomat reads AI's 1995 report on Peru

be included in the AI delegation and any positions they have in the Section; ➔ explaining that someone from the Section office will call the embassy to confirm arrangements for the meeting.

As the ambassador is the most senior representative of his or her government, the request for the meeting should be signed by the most senior representative of the Section, for example, the chairperson or director.

If no reply is received within two weeks, the person responsible for making the appointment should call the embassy to ask if the letter has been received and if a meeting can be arranged. It is possible that the embassy has not replied because the ambassador is not prepared to attend a meeting, but it is important that the embassy is not given the impression that the Section has lost interest just because there has not been an immediate positive response. It may be necessary to call again every one or two weeks.

If there is still no response from the embassy, a second letter should be sent explaining the importance the Section attaches to the meeting. This letter could also request an explanation as to why the embassy is not prepared to arrange a meeting.

If the embassy will still not agree to a meeting, the information and concerns which were to be raised could be explained in a letter. The documents or memoranda prepared by the Section should be enclosed and specific questions asked relating to that information and AI's concerns. If the embassy visit was part of a campaign, the Section could consider the possibility of appearing at the embassy without prior appointment to present a petition or an AI report (see below).

An embassy may offer a meeting with a lower-level official. Some Sections accept such invitations but send along a lower-level AI official to press for a meeting between the AI Section director/chair and the ambassador so that they can discuss the substance of AI's concerns. Care should be taken not to fall into the trap of dealing only with officials whose function is public relations.

The AI delegation

The composition of the AI delegation which will visit the embassy should be decided before you ask for the meeting. The AI delegation should be made up of at least two, but usually no more than three, people.

Delegates should know about AI's mandate and policies and specific AI concerns in the country. They should also know about the general political situation in the country.

Some AI Sections offer training to prospective embassy delegates, but even a simple role-playing exercise can help to build confidence by anticipating possible questions.

In some cases it might be appropriate to include someone in the delegation who is not a member of AI, such as a member of parliament, scholar or writer known for his or her concern about human rights or who has a specific interest in the country. It is usually not a good idea to include a journalist in the delegation as this can affect the ambassador's attitude towards the delegation. The non-AI delegate should be someone who is seen as objective and impartial. It is also

It can be important to try to research the background of the ambassador and other embassy officials. Are they career diplomats or government appointments?

Do they have known interests? However, you should not, in general, raise their personal background.

Members of the Belgian Section (francophone) outside the US Embassy during AI's campaign against the death penalty in 1987

© AI



essential that he or she is familiar with AI's mandate.

The AI delegates should meet at least once before the meeting with the ambassador in order to:

- make themselves familiar with the issues to be raised;
- decide how the information will be presented and who should present each concern;
- appoint a "head of delegation" who will be responsible for introducing the delegation to the ambassador and introducing AI in general.

If time allows, groups working on cases from the country concerned can be informed about the visit in advance and encouraged to present short summaries of their cases together with questions which they would like raised with the ambassador. This information can then be compiled in a memorandum. If there is no time to consult groups, this information should be available in the Section office. In either case, it is essential to follow the instructions in the Action Files and only submit external information.

Information on other AI concerns could also be prepared in the form of a short document or memorandum. In most cases this information will be found in the campaign or action material circulated to Sections by the IS. Only external material should be used. Recommendations in UAs and other campaign materials should not be used. Material from *Amnesty International News* may be used.

If the meeting is scheduled to take place towards the end of a campaign you may want to assemble a dossier of all the media coverage of the campaign as a way of demonstrating the level of concern.

The meeting

A member of the delegation should take notes of the meeting. In some cases, an embassy staff member will also take notes. Tape recorders should not be used as this can be seen as impolite. If the ambassador tapes the conversation the delegation can ask for a copy of the tape, although you should still rely on your own notes.

➤ **Introducing yourselves and AI**

The head of the delegation should start by thanking the ambassador for offering the opportunity to present AI's concerns and introducing the members of the AI delegation.

Next, a short presentation of AI should be made. This should include a general explanation of what AI is -- its mandate and overall policies on impartiality, violence, acceptance of funds and independence -- and its working methods (see the *Amnesty International Handbook*). You might also want to include a very brief outline of the structure of the movement, for example, the number of members and groups in the Section and the relationship between the international movement and the Sections.

AI's consultative status or official relations with the UN (Economic and Social Council – ECOSOC, and the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization – UNESCO), the Council of Europe, the Organization of American States and the Organization of African Unity should be mentioned. If applicable it may also be useful to mention your Section's relationship with your own minister of foreign affairs or parliament.

A copy of the latest *Amnesty International Report*, the latest report on the ambassador's country or the latest issue of *Amnesty International News* should be presented. Offer to arrange for *Amnesty International News* to be sent on a complimentary basis. It may be useful to give examples of international publicity about the report or publicity within the Section's country.

➤ **Presenting the issues**

After these introductory remarks, the delegation should present the specific issues and concerns it wants to raise and hand over any documents which have been prepared. You should explain the function of the IS along the following lines:

"Our information has been prepared by the International Secretariat in London, which has an expert staff which collects and verifies

reports on human rights violations from all over the world. If you wish to comment on this information, we will be glad to relay your comments to the International Secretariat."

You should mention that although you are aware that the ambassador may not be able to make decisions or comments without consulting the authorities in the home country, you expect the ambassador to relay the concerns to the home government.

You should also indicate that AI is interested in a dialogue with the ambassador and that it hopes to get a response to the questions raised, especially information on individual cases and specific concerns. It is important therefore that you try to formulate specific questions and include them in the documents given to the ambassador. In most cases the ambassador will not have any information about the individual cases you are raising and he or she should not be expected to present instant information or verification.

The ambassador will probably say that the information will be requested and you should try to get explicit confirmation of this. It should also be borne in mind that although an ambassador has considerable means of getting information from the ministry of foreign affairs, how quickly the ambassador receives the information and how much information they get will depend on whether the ministry considers the concerns raised to be important and whether it is prepared to forward requests for information to other authorities in the home country. The mere fact that the request is made via an ambassador may, however, help in getting a response.

☛ **Dealing with difficult questions**

An ambassador may try to avoid dealing with a matter directly or may be under instructions to simply criticize AI. You should try and anticipate and be prepared for the ambassador's possible reactions (see the *Amnesty International Handbook* for more advice).

Below are some examples:

⇒ If the ambassador says AI's information is political propaganda, request a written confirmation from the ambassador's government saying that AI's information is without basis and giving specific instances of where it is inaccurate. Say that if AI's information is incorrect, it will be publicly corrected. Explain that one of the reasons for requesting the meeting is to ask for information from the ambassador's government.

⇒ If the ambassador says he or she can do nothing, reply that AI is not asking for action outside the ambassador's normal diplomatic function. In that capacity, however, he or she is asked to report back to the government and seek answers to questions raised by the delegation.

⇒ If the ambassador asks what right AI has to interfere with the internal affairs of another country, reply that the protection of human rights is an international responsibility, clearly stated in the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments. This was reaffirmed by the final declaration of governments at the UN World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in 1993. Cite any international treaties signed by the ambassador's country, particularly the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. (For a list of countries' ratifications see the most recent copy of *Amnesty International Report*.) Mention that by granting AI consultative status with ECOSOC, it was accepted that organizations like AI have a legitimate role to play in the protection of human rights.

⇒ If the ambassador asks why AI is only concerned with his or her country and not with another, explain AI's position of impartiality and emphasize that AI is working to promote and protect human rights in every country. People in the ambassador's country are surely no less deserving of concern for their human rights than anyone else.

Stress that, although AI finds it necessary to focus on individual

countries to make the international community aware of specific human rights violations, this does not imply that AI takes a position against any particular country. AI does not oppose any government – it opposes specific human rights violations wherever they occur. Refer to recent country reports and campaigns.

⇒ If the ambassador asks why AI is not concerned with a specific other country, refer to AI's concerns in that country and mention any recent reports published on the country (delegates should have been briefed on those countries regularly criticized by the ambassador's country). This should only be done in response to a question from the ambassador.

⇒ If the ambassador asks how AI can know about the situation in the country without having been there, mention any recent AI visits to the country or ask whether the ambassador is agreeing to a visit from AI. If the ambassador is actually agreeing this, the delegation should make it clear that the offer will be conveyed to the IS.

⇒ A subject that is frequently raised is AI's position on human rights abuses by armed opposition groups. You should make yourself familiar with AI's position on this and with any action AI has taken or statements it has made on abuses by armed political groups in the ambassador's country.

⇒ The delegation should be familiar with the present political situation in the ambassador's home country and its recent history. But be careful not to become involved in political debate about the country. AI makes no judgment as to the political causes of human rights violations.

⇒ The delegation should also be familiar with the relevant human rights instruments, such as the UDHR, the ICCPR and the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners. These should be referred to as necessary in the course of the meeting.

At the end of the meeting, the head of the delegation should give a brief summary of the meeting focusing on any requests or agreements made.

The delegation should inform the ambassador that it will report back to the IS. Thank the ambassador for the concern he or she has shown by giving time for the meeting, and express the hope that the ambassador will report back to his or her government on future representations by the Section or local groups.

Follow-up

You should send a letter to the ambassador immediately after the meeting thanking him or her for meeting the AI delegation, summarizing the main points of the meeting and confirming any requests or agreements made, including any further meetings which have been agreed. Enclose any publications which you promised to send.

If no reply has been received after a month or so, another letter could be sent recalling the meeting and requests or agreements made and expressing the hope that the ambassador will soon be able to present the information. The Section could send further reminders at regular intervals and if there are further developments in the human rights situation in the country, they could be summarized in these letters.

You should send a report to the IS researcher responsible for the country immediately after the visit. The report should include:

- the date and place of the meeting;
- the participants from the embassy and Section (names and functions);
- the reason for the meeting (part of campaign or action, requested by AI or embassy, follow-up to previous meetings, etc);
- any problems in arranging the meeting (reluctance of embassy);
- a summary of the meeting, including individual cases raised by the delegation (copies of papers prepared for the meeting should be enclosed), and the ambassador's response;
- any agreements made with the ambassador;
- any promises made by the ambassador;
- the follow-up planned by the Section;

➤ requests to the IS for ideas for follow-up.

You should send copies of any replies you receive from the ambassador to the IS researcher on the country.

Local groups working on cases from the country should be informed about the visit. This can be done by sending them a copy of the follow-up letter to the ambassador or a copy of the report to the IS. If the ambassador has promised to look into cases drawn to his or her attention, local groups should be encouraged to send copies of their letters to the authorities to the ambassador.

The Section board or other relevant coordinators should also be informed about the visit by copying them in on follow-up letters or the report to the IS. Copies of all letters and reports of the meeting should be filed at the Section office.

Publicity

It is no secret that AI seeks meetings with embassies to convey its concerns and to try to get information. It is, however, often useful to keep these meetings confidential and not to publicize them. This can help to create an atmosphere of mutual trust and confidence which will make the dialogue easier and encourage the ambassador to get the information AI is seeking.

If an embassy repeatedly refuses a meeting, the Section could consider publicizing this and expressing regret at the embassy's position. It is a good idea to consult the IS before doing this.

If the embassy publicizes a meeting with AI, the Section should also feel free to publicize the visit in the Section newsletter or in a press release. If the embassy's publicity contains misleading or inaccurate information, this should be corrected by the Section. The embassy should be informed, for example by sending a press release, press cuttings or the Section newsletter.

If ambassadors refuse to meet AI, the following techniques may help to persuade them to agree to a meeting.

➤ ask others, such as members of parliament, to act as intermediaries or

to raise the issue with the ambassador;

➤ raise the refusal in approaches to your own government;

➤ find out the ambassador's itinerary and either arrange for the refusal to be raised at meetings or functions by someone who will be there, or organize AI members to be outside the meeting and raise the question of refusal as the ambassador is arriving or leaving;

➤ establish who the ambassador meets on a more regular basis and ask them to take up the issue;

➤ use publicity and the media -- if asked by a journalist what the government's position is, you can explain that it is difficult to know as the ambassador has so far refused to meet AI and discuss its concerns;

➤ find out what organizations exist to promote relations between your country and the target society and ask for their support.

Day-to-day relations with embassies

Visits cannot be frequent events -- most Sections do not have the resources for this and embassies are not likely to encourage frequent visits. However, Sections should try to make regular contact with the embassy part of its routine work. If you are not able to arrange meetings, try other ways of conveying AI's concerns to the ambassador.

Remember to send a copy of all AI reports concerning the country to the embassy to arrive on the day of the release or on the embargo date. The government will have received a copy before then, and it is good practice for the embassy to be informed. You can send an accompanying letter explaining that AI is publishing the report and raising the specific concerns highlighted in the report. It will enable journalists and others to approach the embassy for comment.

Local groups and coordination groups can use embassies as channels for questions relating to their cases. Groups can send copies of their letters to the authorities to the embassy -- this can prompt the ambassador to report back to

his or her government about receiving the letters. Members can also send individual letters to the ambassador, asking specific questions on specific cases and asking him or her to forward those questions to the authorities in his or her country.

Sections can send copies of *Amnesty International News* or the *Amnesty International Report* to the embassy; these are published in Arabic, English, French and Spanish.

Sometimes an ambassador or embassy official may write to the national press about an AI report or statement. If such letters present inaccurate information about AI or its concerns in the country, the Section should try to respond by sending a letter to the newspaper explaining what AI is and what its concerns in the country are.

Embassies sometimes invite AI representatives to attend official receptions or other functions. Sections should consider carefully whether there are any advantages or disadvantages in attending.

When immediate action is particularly important, for example on UAs, you may consider asking a friendly journalist to make inquiries about the case in a professional capacity rather than on behalf of AI. Ambassadors are likely to be particularly sensitive to the publicity their country receives and may make particular efforts to get an answer or to inform their government that the media is interested in the case.

Some embassies have diplomatic staff or offices with a specific human rights brief. Meetings and regular contacts with these offices can be useful. Individuals may be willing to provide helpful advice to AI on an informal basis or to facilitate getting information. However, governments and embassies are becoming increasingly sophisticated in dealing with criticisms of their human rights record and these offices are often more concerned with public relations than with protecting human rights. Avoid being drawn into long and distracting discussions that do not address AI's main concerns and are designed to prevent AI from speaking out publicly.

Organizing contacts with embassies

It is useful to have one person or group coordinating embassy contacts. It can be confusing for embassies to receive requests from various levels of the same Section and can lead to them refusing them all. It is also important that the Section is always aware of all the approaches being made to embassies and any outcome to assist in the planning of future visits. Groups should be asked to inform the Section office of all correspondence or contacts with embassies. Notes should be made of all contacts and these could be filed together with reports of previous meetings and copies of correspondence.

The fact that contacts with embassies are coordinated should not discourage local groups or co-groups from conveying AI's concerns or asking for information. The coordination should be used to make the contacts more effective and efficient. Local groups and co-groups should be aware of arrangements within the Section for coordinating embassy contacts, including the names of those responsible and the procedures the Section has decided to follow when arranging meetings.

Embassy protests

Embassies can be an important focus for protests and vigils. It is easy for a wider public and the media to see the relevance of protests that take place outside the embassy of the country concerned.

You can arrange for a delegation to deliver the *Amnesty International Report* to the embassy or to a series of embassies. Ask a celebrity to be in the delegation to help guarantee publicity (make sure they are well briefed if you want them to be interviewed).

If human rights violations in a particular country are in the headlines, organize a protest outside the embassy to make the most of the potential publicity.

CAMPAIGNING TECHNIQUES CELEBRITY SUPPORT

"Activism is often my muse."
Alice Walker, *Anything We Love Can Be
Saved, A Writer's Activism*, Womens Press

Alice Walker lent her support to AI's first
human awareness conference on female
genital mutilation in 1996 in northern
Ghana. Here she meets AI delegates from
Togo, Benin and Nigeria.

© AI



Getting celebrities to support AI can be useful both as part of specific campaigns and of more general campaigning and membership development. Celebrities can help influence public opinion on specific issues and also enhance AI's image as an impartial organization which is supported by people from all walks of life and with a wide spectrum of political views. This section looks at:

- How celebrity support can help AI / 144
- How to make the most of celebrity support / 145

How celebrity support can help AI

Public awareness campaigns in many societies have used celebrities identified as "role models" among their target audience. For example, in a number of countries, campaigns against racism have featured sports stars and musicians making strong statements to increase awareness of and support for anti-racism among the young people who identify with them.

Public support from celebrities can also help to define the image of organizations and campaigns. If AI is seen as a politically aligned organization in your country then the public support of celebrities identified with a wide spectrum of political opinions can help to counter this image.

Similarly if a campaign is tackling issues which are particularly controversial in a society and there is concern that the campaign may not attract the wide support it needs to be successful, then the endorsement of celebrities can help to overcome barriers and make the issues being raised more acceptable.

Celebrity support can be used more directly to attract public support.

AI Sections have enlisted the help of celebrities in a variety of ways:

- getting celebrities to sign (and write) direct-mail appeal letters to existing and potential supporters asking for donations;
- asking them to appear in promotional activities and campaigning appeals for television and radio;
- asking them to use their network of contacts to get support for AI.

The participation of celebrities in campaigning activities and media conferences can create media interest in events which might otherwise attract less publicity. AI Sections have used famous writers, well-known judges and politicians to launch reports. They have involved pop stars, politicians, actors and artists in photo opportunities such as candle-lit vigils.

In many societies fame brings with it financial rewards and gives added value to anything associated with the person, from their socks to their signature! AI Sections have received:

- direct gifts of works of art from painters;
- the performances of musicians donated for fundraising concerts etc;
- items belonging to celebrities donated for "celebrity auctions" or sale;
- direct gifts of money.



AI's Secretary General, Pierre Sané, and Archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa, at the launch in South Africa of AI's campaign on Nigeria, November 1996

© AI



Some celebrities may want to use AI's name or resources to further their career, or they may demand a level of support that will not be reflected in income or support for AI. Remember that you are responsible for deciding what sort of assistance AI would like - not the celebrity. How any event or action will further AI's work must remain paramount.

How to make the most of celebrity support

Below are some ideas that might prove useful:

TIPS

- ☛ If you are launching a report be careful that your choice of celebrity will not trivialize the issue or undermine the message.
- ☛ If you want to get coverage on a particular television network, winning the support of a celebrity from that network might be helpful.
- ☛ Ideally the celebrity should have some connection to the issue so that they can have a good answer for the first question a journalist will ask -- "Why are you involved in this campaign?"
- ☛ Where possible make direct contact with the celebrity concerned. Many celebrities have agents who filter requests for support. This can be an extra hurdle that is difficult to overcome.

Celebrities receive many requests for support from organizations. The clearer you are about what you want

from them, the more likely you are to receive a positive response. Providing the right level of information and organizational support from the outset will help ensure a positive result and encourage the celebrity to build up a relationship with AI and to work with you in future.

TIPS

- ☛ Be clear about what you want done, when and why.
- ☛ Be clear about what support you are able to provide.
- ☛ Be clear whether or not a fee or expenses will be paid -- for many pop concerts the expenses bill can be high.
- ☛ Supply as much background information as necessary.
- ☛ Make sure that the celebrity's contribution will be worthwhile and will be seen by them to be worthwhile.
- ☛ Make sure someone from AI is available to provide detailed knowledge on AI, campaign issues, policy, etc.
- ☛ Make sure you acknowledge the celebrity's contribution appropriately, for example, with a thank-you letter from the chairperson or director of the Section.



Viv Richards, captain of the West Indian cricket team, with members of the Ghanaian Section during AI week, March 1990

Unfortunately due to copyright reasons we are unable to show this image. Please contact your nearest Amnesty International office to obtain a hardcopy of this publication.

“The scale of human rights violations is monumental and we should be addressing it.”

Noam Chomsky, linguist at the Massachusetts Technological Institute, USA, gave a keynote address at an AI conference on the protection of human rights defenders in Latin America. The conference was held in Colombia, May 1996.

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