CHAPTER 9
MEDIA AND PUBLICITY

"When Amnesty International adopted me as a prisoner of conscience, the newspapers started talking about me, I got better treatment in prison, and I was given a proper hearing in the courts. There had been a complete blackout on my name and case. That was blasted when Amnesty International took up my case."
Mukhtar Rana, a teacher and former prisoner of conscience from Pakistan

The media has been central to AI's campaigning from the day the organization was launched through a newspaper article in 1961. Television, radio and print journalism has the power to inform, build awareness, set agendas and bring pressure for change. A good understanding of the media and how it can help AI's work is important for successful campaigning. This chapter concentrates on the practicalities of getting the best out of the media.

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The role of the media

Most governments care about their public image, at home and abroad. They care because their image may influence whether they are re-elected, whether they can attract foreign investment, including tourism, and whether they attract domestic or international criticism. The media, the maker and shaper of images, is therefore important to AI in its campaigning efforts to change the behaviour of governments.

The media can:

- play a key role in building awareness and shaping public opinion on human rights and related issues;
- shape the framework and nature of debates over important issues affecting human rights, not least the death penalty or human rights in foreign policy;
- generate action from its audience;
- influence government policy, both directly and through its power to influence and mobilize opinion;
- shape public perceptions of AI as a campaigning organization and raise AI's public profile;
- put direct pressure on a government by placing it in the spotlight;
- help build the morale and influence of human rights activists and organizations all over the world;
- protect and enhance AI's reputation;
- investigate and expose human rights issues.

AI's campaigning media work has the chance to influence the image and actions of many governments. Target governments which are violating human rights may care sufficiently about their international image to stop the violations. Domestic governments may be so responsive to media or public opinion that they stop the military, security and police (MSP) transfers that AI is concerned about, or initiate a human rights strategy for the target country.

The media in most countries is diverse and targeted to many specialized audiences. Some government policies on human rights may be influenced by the mass media, other policies may be more susceptible to specialist media. Similarly, different sections of public opinion are affected by particular newspapers, magazines, radio and television.

It is argued that governments seek to insulate their policies from the ups and downs of public opinion, or that pressure groups resort to media and publicity work when they are losing the argument. Media coverage of an issue can make sure organizations get into the policy-making room to put forward more detailed arguments. These postions can reflect the tensions that arise between AI's quiet and public campaigning, and can only be resolved on a case by case basis.

As the media is often the best or only way to communicate AI's message to different audiences, it is important to make sure that clear media objectives are fully integrated into campaigning and development strategies. Determining the specific role of the media in achieving campaigning and development objectives is the first building block in the construction of media strategies.

Constructing a media strategy

Different campaigns demand different media strategies. However, a Section is likely to benefit from a longer-term media strategy. Building good working relationships with the media that allow AI to get its message across when it needs to is likely to be part of such a strategy. Individual campaign strategies should benefit from, and aim to strengthen such relationships.

Two general points can help shape media strategies:

- It is important to identify target audiences and find the specific media that reaches them. For example, AI medical actions may target doctors and medical journals may be the best media to reach them.

"The objective is perhaps not so much to create public opinion, as to create an opinion about public opinion."
W.J.M. MacKenzie

"For many organizations there is a very small group, even just one person, who will make the final decision on the issue that you are interested in. But in order to reach that person, you may need to go through other people and get them to exert pressure on that ultimate target."
Sue Ward, *Getting the Message Across: Public Relations, Publicity and Working with the Media*, Journeyman Press, 1992

➲ Media strategies should be specific about what action is needed.

As with strategies in campaigning the following steps should be taken:

- research and analysis;
- specify objectives (desired change);
- specify target audience and media;
- implement action;
- monitor and evaluate.

Research and analysis

A useful starting point for developing a media strategy is to analyse the current situation of AI and the media in your society. The following questions, not all of which need to be addressed, might help you determine the information that might be useful for such an analysis.

QUESTIONS

Which newspapers, magazines, radio and television programs most influence public opinion on issues of concern to AI?

What are the circulation or audience figures for different newspapers and magazines, and radio and television news and current affairs programs?

Which newspapers, magazines, radio and television news and current affairs shows are most read, listened to or watched by or likely to influence decision-makers, politicians, government officials, etc.

Which media is most likely to shape the debates or determine the agenda on issues of importance to AI?

On what issues of concern to AI is government most likely to be influenced by the media?

How important is regional/local media to shaping community attitudes or influencing locally based politicians and decision-makers?

Which journalists in print, radio or television particularly influence public opinion or government?

Are there specialist publications on foreign affairs? What is the foreign news coverage of the different media? Is it increasing or decreasing?

Do the different news organizations have their own foreign correspondents? Who are they and in what countries? Which international wire services do they subscribe to?

Who are the editorial and feature writers on foreign affairs or issues related to AI's campaigning action?

What is the specialist media in your society? Religious, women's, ethnic, legal, etc?

What national news agencies exist and which national media subscribe to them?

Are there organizations that distribute media releases to subscribing media organizations?

Are human rights issues and AI's concerns regularly covered in the media that AI targets?

Are human rights seen as hard or soft (human interest) news? Are they seen as mainly foreign or domestic news?

Is there an up-to-date list of media contacts? Does AI have an easy way of contacting the necessary media, such as a fax broadcast facility or computer fax?

Does AI have good relationships with individual journalists and editors?

Does AI have a positive or negative image in the media? Is it seen as a reliable source of information? Is it seen as representing community opinion? Is it seen as a campaigning organization?

Many governments monitor particular news and media outlets to see what issues are attracting public concern. News clips and transcripts will be circulated to the relevant ministers and departmental officials. Many embassies also monitor the news to keep in touch with host public opinion and attitudes to the country they represent. This coverage may be mentioned in their reports back to their government and may influence the human rights situation. Copying campaign materials to an embassy can ensure they hear the human rights message.

Do print and broadcast media normally refer to AI as a London-based organization, the worldwide human rights organization, or AI as an organization in your country?

Do foreign correspondents or journalists seek briefings from AI on human rights before travelling?

Do journalists seek AI's material as background when doing country features or before the visits of foreign heads of state?

Do local AI groups feel confident in doing media work? Do they need training or support?

Do you have specialist AI spokespeople trained to do media work on particular countries or issues?

What will be the important issues for AI over the coming year?

Are there important dates in the human rights calendar that could be pegs on which to hang a human rights story?

Do current media or public perceptions of the human rights situation in your country act as a barrier to human rights action on the target country?

Is the government/military of the target country sensitive to media coverage and public opinion in your country? Are they particularly sensitive about some media? If so, which?

Which parts of the media are influential in reaching outreach groups most important to your campaign?

Do any media organizations in your country have correspondents based in the target country? Are they reporting on human rights concerns?

Is your government's policy towards the target country likely to be influenced by media coverage?

What do you want to achieve?

Establishing the media's role in relation to your society and AI's existing relationships with the media (where you are now) should make it possible to decide on what specific changes should be the objectives (where you would like to be) for AI's media strategy

These objectives could be:

- establishing AI as an authoritative commentator on government foreign policy or international affairs;
- developing positive working relationships with a small number of news and current affairs journalists;
- building AI's public image as an effective, credible campaigning organization that offers everyone the opportunity to act for human rights.

It is important to be as specific as possible about these objectives as this will determine what action you need to take and allow monitoring and evaluation.

Target audience and media

You must decide which media will best reach an audience or a number of different audiences. All media organizations seek to develop an awareness of the audience they are trying to reach. If their audience is declining, they try to reach a wider audience through better marketing, improving their product or changing it to appeal to a different audience. Some publications aim to reach only a small, specialized audience. They include business magazines and serious television current affairs programs.

Media audiences are highly segmented. You may want to reach all segments, but it is likely that some segments are more important for you than others (depending on your campaign objectives). This needs to be reflected in which media techniques you choose and how you use them. For example, you may choose a leading business figure to launch a report because it will guarantee coverage in the business press, even though this may not bring wider media coverage.

The right story for the right audience

Local journalists are searching for a local angle, such as what the local group is doing or saying. National journalists are searching for a national angle, such as what role the country can play in the international political context. What you say to a reporter from Alagoas State in Brazil may be different from what you tell the national television station, *TV Globo*. So an in-depth discussion of specific AI recommendations about military court systems in Brazil, based on cases of human rights violations in that state, will satisfy the local reporter, while a review of the state of human rights in Brazil and the leading role Brazil should play in promoting human rights in the region is more important to viewers across the country.

* Based on an example cited in the *Campaigning Handbook*, by Mark Lattimer, Directory of Social Change, 1994

Finding the right angle*

AI reports form the basis of much of AI's media coverage. From the perspective of the media, the reports often seem to say much the same thing – the human rights situation is bad and AI is calling for action. The example below illustrates how the same story can be presented in a number of ways that will affect whether and how it is reported.

A report on Indonesia finds evidence of numerous specific human rights violations, although the situation was at its worst two years before. Below are five ways of headlining the story:

- *"The Human Rights Paradox": AI issues new report on Indonesia*
This is unlikely to interest a busy news desk and will be quickly filed in the bin.

- *"Indonesia – killings in Aceh down on previous years"*
This is likely to be of more interest, but is not really the story AI wants to convey.

- *"Aceh – Fresh evidence of Indonesian terror"*
This is more likely to be of interest, but news editors may not have heard of Aceh or may think it is like other stories on Indonesia.

- *"AI questions Australian Government over training of Indonesian Special Forces implicated in Aceh killings."*
This report has identified a particular army unit with the violations and there have recently been reports in the Australian media about its contacts with the Australian Government. An AI Section that can put the two together is likely to get substantial coverage. It transforms an international story into a strong domestic story. Local journalists will find it easy to follow up.

- *"Yati's fear for missing mother back home"*
AI asks a refugee from Aceh to help publicize its concerns. This has an human interest angle – so-called soft news – and will be of particular interest to the local media where she lives. The refugee's concerns provide an introduction to the wider story and can help AI to reach a different audience.

Working with the media

AI's relations with the media need to be centralized and coordinated.

The media need to know who to contact within the organization. They need to know that the person represents the views and position of AI – rather than an individual opinion. AI needs to decide what it wants to communicate to the media and to convey that information clearly and consistently.

If different parts of AI are saying different things to different journalists at the same time, it is likely that AI's message will be confused and the organization will lose credibility and effectiveness.

There can be a number of spokespersons but there should be a central point of contact, available to respond to media inquiries during the day and outside regular working hours.

This person should:

- be available on the telephone night and day – journalists often need to telephone to check facts or ask for comments;
- feel comfortable discussing issues over the telephone;
- be able to type and have access to a typewriter or computer and printer to prepare media releases;
- have access to a photocopier and preferably a fax machine to produce and distribute media releases;
- have access to the AI e-mail network to receive the IS news service or have easy access to the weekly mailing;
- feel confident and have the confidence of the organization;
- be familiar with AI's mandate, policies and current concerns;

have the time to develop an awareness of the media, including tight deadlines and constraints on space.

One of the key tasks of a person responsible for media or communications is developing good working relationships with journalists. There are a number of standard techniques (outlined below) for seeking media coverage. All of them will work better if AI members have established good relationships with journalists.

The following are general principles in working with the media:

- **Be reliable.** If you say you will call back in half an hour, then do so. If you promise an interview with the chairperson, then keep the promise. A reputation for unreliability is a barrier to getting coverage. You must be trusted.
- **Be accurate**. Know your facts and do not exaggerate. You want to build and reinforce AI's image as an organization of integrity and accuracy.
- **Provide service.** Provide useful information and good, clear stories. Always provide materials in the working language of the media.
- **Do not beg or lecture**. Neither tactic works, and both work against a sound long-term relationship based on respect. There is always another story.

Production considerations

It is worth finding out as much as you can about the production process of the different media as this can determine whether your stories win coverage. You have to know their deadlines if you are to meet them.

Friendly journalists can explain their working day to you. They can tell you what day or time of day decisions are made to cover particular stories, who makes those decisions and who can influence them.

The following points are a rough general guide to production schedules:

- Print journalists on daily papers work to tight deadlines. Stories normally have to be finished by late afternoon or early evening. The best contact time is usually late morning – soon after they have started for the day and before they are too busy (late afternoon). If they want an AI response, they will need it within a few hours if it is to be used.
- The stories to be covered in evening television news programs will be decided early in the morning. Decisions will then be made on which news conferences to send television crews to. This can change as stories develop through the day.
- Production time for radio is generally shorter – they may need a comment from AI within the hour – but the closer it gets to "on-air" time the less likely it is that they will want to speak to you unless it is something they agree is urgent.
- The deadlines for weekly magazines or papers may be anything from a few days to six weeks before publication. Sunday magazines and Sunday editions of daily papers start preparing features by the Wednesday with a Friday deadline.
- Deadlines for glossy monthly magazines are likely to be three months before publication. Magazine writers may need more in-depth material, perhaps on several topics or countries.

The people you deal with and the roles they play vary from country to country. The following categories will apply in many places and may be useful.

- **Print media**

The managing editor (print) is responsible for the paper or program and its content – editors cut stories.

The chief of staff, news editor or assignment editor generally receives media releases and allocates stories to journalists.

The journalist conducts interviews, prepares and writes the story.

The specialist editor or journalist is in charge of or is responsible for a particular section of the paper or program such as politics, foreign affairs, ethnic affairs or education.

Photographers work with journalists. Photographers from different publications will be looking for unique images.

Sub-editors review stories, clean-up copy and write headlines (AI does not generally contact sub-editors).

Do not try to make a journalist feel guilty with appeals to idealism. You are likely to damage rather than enhance your relationships with the media. The journalist may not themselves be in control of the process and rather than coming across as passionate and committed you risk being seen as self-righteous and smug. This will only reinforce the damaging perceptions that some cynical people have of AI activists.

Despite technological advances and the power of electronic media, newspapers have retained their reputation and influence as the media of record. They are clipped and filed, and it is to them that academics, researchers and journalists subsequently refer for information. They also continue in many cases to set the news and current affairs agenda of the day for radio and television.

Get to know your media

Spend time listening to the style and format of radio programs. It will help you know how to fit an AI story in so you can talk with the producer in a more knowledgeable way. This familiarity will help you do interviews since you will know the level of detail required, the type of questions and whether listeners can call in. Read newspapers – what sort of stories are printed in which parts of the newspaper? Are there particular journalists covering AI related stories, or who always seem to have their stories in the newspaper?

If a story does not make it to print or television screen it is usually worth asking why, especially if a journalist has written the story, done an interview or attended your media conference. It is a good opportunity to build relationships with journalists – if they have made an effort they are also likely to be disappointed the story did not appear. You might find out that there was something you could have done differently, or learn that a problem with covering AI's stories exists somewhere else in the news organization, or simply that there were bigger stories on the day.

➲ **TV and radio**

The executive producer decides on overall themes, interviews, balance of a story and of the program, and with the producer allocates reporters to stories.

The producer has the "big picture" in mind. He or she helps to organize logistics, such as locations and additional footage for television. In radio, the producer works with the presenter on the flow, content and direction of the program.

Reporters provide the "on-air" presence. They will often work out how they want to cover and construct their story (with the producer), who they want to interview, etc. Reporters will often have a specialized area or brief for reporting.

The researcher (television) assists the producer and reporter, obtains background information and contributes story ideas to programs.

Producers, reporters and researchers are normally the most important contacts for AI.

The newscaster (television and radio) reads/presents the news. In some countries they also provide editorial comment.

The presenter (radio) is the voice of radio. She or he conducts the interviews and works closely with the producer.

Winning coverage

Every AI story needs to win a competition before the public sees, hears or reads it. It has to compete against:

➪ other stories provided by companies and press departments – many newsrooms receive hundreds of news releases every day;

➪ a stream of stories from the international and national news agencies – particularly in the case of foreign news;

➪ all the other news that happens that day;

➪ the attitudes of journalists and editors, some of whom believe that human rights stories are not real news.

One of the main jobs of the media officer is to give the story every possible competitive advantage.

Journalists, editors and chiefs of staff will decide whether or not to cover stories on the basis of their own feelings, views and workload, and on their assessment of its news value and interest to their audience. They therefore need to be convinced of the story's news value and audience interest.

Good media relationships and campaigning aims to influence journalists' understanding of both news value and audience interest. The following techniques are the most established for communicating with the media:

- the media release
- the media conference
- the media briefing and information pack
- interviews and comment
- the "photo opportunity"
- the letters and comment pages
- the telephone

What technique you use will depend partly on the strength of your story, the resources you have available and logistical issues.

Whatever the technique, you always need to be very clear about what the story is, why it is news, why it will be of interest to the audience you want to reach, and what different angles the story has that can make it attractive. First and foremost, these need to be made clear and accessible to journalists.

The media release

The media release is the standard way of distributing stories to the media. It can fulfil the following functions:

- give advance notice of an event you are planning;
- announce the launch of a campaign;
- outline the organization's response to events;
- draw attention to a human rights situation;
- provide background information;
- draw attention to and give details on a new AI report;
- make it easier for journalists to file the story and get the facts right.

The embargo

The embargo time placed on a release makes clear the date and time at which the information can be made public or used. It is a standard and well-established part of relations with the media. It allows AI to coordinate its publicity, manage the flow of its information and be fair in its dealings with the media. It allows journalists to have advance notice of a news event and to plan their coverage knowing that other news organizations will not be first with the news.

Embargo times have particular importance to AI as an organization that relies for its credibility on the sensitive handling of information. Embargo times allow different parts of AI to plan media and publicity strategies. An embargo break on a report by a journalist in one country can wreck the media plans for the release of the report in another.

Respect for embargoes depends largely on trust. If AI breaks this trust in one country it can have an effect on AI's media relations elsewhere. No journalist who has been waiting to release a story wants to see it appear elsewhere first. It is bad practice for any journalist to break an embargo – it destroys the trust on which the embargo system and good media relations are based.

Embargo times are about controlling the flow of information and can have a big effect on the coverage that can be achieved. An embargo time of midnight allows the story to be printed in the morning papers – an embargo time of 10am does not and the story will probably be dead the following day. A morning or afternoon embargo time is fine for radio and television.

The embargo time on a release should be placed at the top and marked clearly. It should be precise about date and time.

Media attitudes to embargoes differ from country to country. It is important to find out whether they are usually respected or broken in your country. If embargos are not usually respected, send journalists the information at or just before the embargo time.

AI's policy on embargoes is set out in *Policy on release of Amnesty International information to the media* (AI Index: ACT 81/01/96).

Journalists are generally taught to use the inverted pyramid style. The most important parts of the story are at the top and they cut from the bottom up.

TIPS

- Always put a media release on headed paper. It makes it look official and professional, and immediately shows journalists who it is from.
- Always put at least one contact name with day and evening contact numbers on the release. Make sure the contact person will be available on these numbers at the specified times.
- Always type – never handwrite. Use double line spacing to allow journalists to more easily mark and make changes to the copy.
- Keep it short and simple. Ideally, media releases should be on one side of paper and no more than two.
- Always put a date on your news release. Make it clear to whom it is addressed (for example, news editor) and when the embargo time is. If it is not embargoed, put "for immediate release".
- Make the heading interesting and put it in capitals or bold.
- Keep paragraphs and sentences short.
- Put the main facts – and the "5Ws" (see margin) – in the first paragraph if possible.
- Make the first sentence interesting. If you do not hook the journalist's attention immediately s/he will not read on.
- Try and include a good quote from an AI spokesperson in the release. Always check this quote with the person concerned before issuing the release.

It is always important to **follow up**

The "5Ws"

Who is doing it?

What is happening?

Where is it happening?

When is it happening?

Why is it happening?

Pages 1 and 2 of a press release on the failure of the international refugee protection system

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL
AMNISTÍA INTERNACIONAL
AMNISTIE INTERNATIONALE
МЕЖДУНАРОДНАЯ АМНИСТИЯ
منظمة العفو الدولية
國際特赦組織

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EMBARGOED UNTIL 1000 HRS GMT 8 OCTOBER 1997

EXCOM: Put human rights back into refugee protection

GENEVA -- The often brutal killing or "disappearance" of hundreds of Great Lakes refugees who were forced back home against their will stands as a shocking condemnation of the failure of the international refugee protection system, Amnesty International said today in advance of a major United Nation's (UN) meeting on refugees.

"Over the past year, the world has witnessed some of the most severe and sustained attacks on the rights of refugees as governments increasingly put more energy into clearing refugee camps than protecting the human rights of those at risk," Amnesty International said.

At the culmination of a global campaign on refugees, Amnesty International refugee experts from close to a dozen countries will be observers at a crucial meeting of the Executive Committee of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (EXCOM), which is focusing on the issue of "Repatriation Challenges".

"The rights of refugees in repatriation programs is one of the most important issues being debated by the EXCOM this year given the demise of a protection focus in recent repatriation programs," Amnesty International said.

"The time has come for the governments at this meeting to explain publicly why the refugee protection system has failed so miserably in the past year -- and to make a commitment to put the human rights of refugees front and centre in future."

One of the central planks in that system is that governments should not expel or return refugees to a country where their life or liberty is threatened -- known as *non-refoulement* -- and those governments which do so are clearly breaching their legal obligations under the 1951 Refugee Convention.

"Refugees should only be returned after assessing the human rights situation in the country of return -- and determining that it is safe -- yet all too often mass repatriation takes place with scant scrutiny of human rights or blatant disregard for information on the public record," Amnesty International said.

This past weekend's expulsion of some 4,000 Rwandese refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) back to Rwanda is only the most recent example of such forced returns. The UNHCR and other agencies working for refugees in Goma were also ordered to leave. Last month, DRC soldiers expelled several hundred Rwandese and Burundian refugees, including many children, to Rwanda, where their lives are seriously at risk. In the northwest of Rwanda, thousands of civilians have been killed or "disappeared" in recent months.

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Taking opportunities

Good media work is partly a matter of taking opportunities when they arise – for example, by injecting a human rights angle into existing news stories. During state visits, for instance, there will be substantial media attention. Produce a media pack outlining the human rights issues or telephone key journalists to discuss the human rights story. Ask if they have an interview lined up with the visitor. If they have, suggest a couple of questions they might be able to ask, such as whether human rights are being discussed officially or whether particular laws are to be repealed. Offer to send background material, or video footage if you have it.

media releases. Whether you post or fax the release you do not know whether it has reached its destination unless you check. There is only one way to make sure, and to find out whether the journalist is interested, and that is to talk to the person. Most of the time this means a telephone call to follow up the release.

Be prepared when you make the call. You may have to sum up your release in a couple of sentences and this is your chance to be persuasive. What is the angle, why is it news, why will audiences be interested?

Note these down in a few short points. A busy assignment editor in a newsroom will have only a few minutes to talk to you and in those minutes she or he will make a snap decision, so be ready!

The media conference

The media conference is an established way of generating coverage. They can be held virtually anywhere, but they generally involve the media making more of an effort as they will have to allocate reporters or television crews to attend. They will want a good reason for making this effort. This means a good story or a story that is enhanced by being presented at a conference, or a story they fear they may regret missing if they do not attend. Their first consideration is likely to be whether they will get anything from the media conference that they could not get from a media release and telephone interview.

Releasing photographs at a media conference can be the "honey" to attract "busy-bee" journalists (but they should be good enough not to disappoint).

A media conference can be a good way to create an atmosphere of a news "event", and to get AI's basic story across to all the media at one time. A celebrity launching a report can give life to a story and bring extra coverage.

Normally a media conference is only justified if one or both of the following criteria are satisfied:

- a genuine or major news story is to be announced;
- you have a good celebrity – someone the media are interested in.

A media conference usually consists of someone delivering a short address and then answering questions and being available for follow-up interviews.

TIPS

- A joint press conference can be held with other organizations if you are working on an action together. Other organizations often have broader concerns than AI so you need to make clear to the journalists that each group at the press conference has a different focus.
- Keep the panel small and the speeches short. Journalists will be most interested in questions which enable them to develop their own angle. Two speakers or a maximum of three, given no more than five minutes each if there is more than one, is a general rule.
- Different media have differing needs. Radio and television will want their own interviews and rarely use footage/sound from the main conference.

The media conference should be used sparingly and carefully. This will help to build up the impression that an AI news conference is likely to be a newsworthy event.

The publications list

One way of maintaining contact with and providing a service to the media is to produce and distribute a monthly one-page list of new AI publications which can be obtained from the IS office. The Dutch Section uses this technique to good effect. You could, alternatively, use the monthly document list produced by the IS.

Advertising

Paying for advertising space guarantees coverage. Because of its cost many organizations and AI Sections use advertising only where it is free or has proven to be a worthwhile fundraising investment (as in the UK and Ireland). AI's campaigning messages are probably more effective when written by independent journalists which carry the authority of objective "news".

CHECKLIST

PREPARING A MEDIA CONFERENCE

Provide sufficient notice
Give a week's notice if you can, but never less than two days, so the event can be entered into diaries. Send out a media advisory providing details of when it is, where it is, who will be speaking, what the subject or theme is, and who they can contact for further information. Follow up with a telephone call: this makes sure they have received the advisory, is an opportunity to persuade them to attend and provides a rough indication of the expected attendance.

Timing
In many countries the best times for media conferences seem to be late morning (10.00 to 11.00) or early afternoon (14.30 to 15.00). Start media conferences on time.

Venue
It must be accessible. Will journalists be driving? Will they need parking? Is it easy to find? Use banners or signs outside to make it easier to find. Check the venue for capacity and lighting, power points (for television crews), for sound (is it shut off from outside noise such as traffic or telephones, will a microphone be needed?), layout (where do you want people to sit, where can you put a backdrop, is there space to have an exhibition, is there a separate room available to do individual media interviews after the media conference?).

Keep presentations short
Speeches or presentations should last no more than 10 minutes. Long speeches can be distributed to the media as hard copy. Only read out the key parts that you want the media to use directly as quotes. Journalists are busy, easily bored and can be keen to develop their own angle on the story through individual interviews after the conference.

Distribute a copy of the keynote statement at the start of the conference
This makes it easier for journalists to follow what is being said and makes it more likely that AI's statement will be reported accurately. Put "check against delivery" on the statement as they are never delivered exactly as prepared.

Avoid having too many speakers
The more speakers, the more messages there are and the less control you have over the message that journalists will take away from the conference.

Have a chairperson
The chairperson will introduce the speaker, explain arrangements and proceedings (for example, whether there is a possibility for individual interviews afterwards and who to see about it), manage the flow of questions, perhaps answer AI specific questions and bring the conference to a close.

Welcome people
Have refreshments available. Keep a list of all those attending and ensure that they are provided with the available information (a copy of the report, a media or campaign pack with background information, the speech to be delivered). Someone with an AI badge should welcome visitors, take their names, give directions, and generally create a good impression.

Follow-up media release
Have this ready in advance, featuring the best and most newsworthy quotes from the speech. This should be distributed to the media who did not attend the conference.

Cover your own conference
Have a photographer and tape the proceedings. Offer photographs to the media and write up the story for your own publications.

The media pack

Media or briefing packs are usually intended to provide background material to the media in an accessible and useful form. This makes the journalist's job easier and provides AI with an opportunity to focus attention on particular issues. The content of such packs is entirely flexible.

Most of the time journalists covering AI's stories will not be expert on the country or the issue on which you are campaigning. Your campaign may be their first introduction to the subject. They have a short amount of time to put their story together. They are likely to have questions but not necessarily know where they can go to get answers. Unless they are specialists they are unlikely to read the whole AI report.

The more useful information you can give journalists in a ready-to-use format, the more influence you are likely to have on what finally appears in the media.

A MEDIA PACK FOR A MAJOR CAMPAIGN

At the launch of a major campaign it can be useful to provide a media pack that breaks down the information in a major AI report into different issues.

Separate sheets, each of which should include the AI logo and a contact name and telephone number, might:

- Summarize the major findings or issues of the report.
- Outline some of the individual cases featured in the report.
- Explain who the victims are and who is responsible for the human rights violations.
- Provide sample quotes from the report or a simple chronology of the major events.
- List AI's major recommendations to the government concerned or the home government.
- Explain what the campaign hopes to achieve and what will be happening during the campaign.
- Produce the speech issued at the campaign launch.
- Give anticipated questions and AI's answers in relation to the campaign (these should not include AI's internal information).
- Give background on AI.

A MEDIA PACK ABOUT AI

An information pack for the media on AI in your country might include several sheets covering the following:

- AI's mission mandate, impartiality and independence, and history.
- When AI was formed in your country, its membership, local groups, etc.
- Quotes from people in your society praising AI's work – ordinary people, celebrities, etc.
- Names, profiles (and photographs) of key staff and members.
- AI's current campaigns, including details of cases where there has been a successful outcome.

A MEDIA PACK FOR A STATE VISIT

An information pack prepared and distributed to the media before your head of government/state goes on a foreign visit can help put human rights on the agenda. It might include:

- One or more sheets on the human rights situation in the country being visited – who are the victims, who is responsible, what laws are of particular concern, what the government has or has not done.
- AI's recommendations to that government and to the home government on raising particular human rights issues.
- Human rights organizations or activists in that country that the media could approach (check first with the IS researcher).
- Key questions to put to both governments on human rights.
- Where to find further information.

A kit with similar contents can help to raise the profile of human rights for any visit to your country by an overseas government official.

Media briefings

In-depth background briefings for a small number of journalists can help to develop the media's knowledge and understanding of key issues or events and therefore ensure that they are aware of the human rights dimensions. Small forums with a maximum of five or

Shaping coverage

In 1992 a committee of the Australian Parliament handed down its first report reviewing the government's record on human rights and foreign policy. The Australian Section contacted key journalists, explained the significance of the report, identified key issues, distributed a short background paper to journalists and explained that a staff member would be on hand to provide a public response. The result was that the media focused on the issues highlighted by AI and AI was seen on national television and in newspapers as the body providing the major response on the issue.

six journalists, perhaps with a guest speaker, encourage in-depth discussion. Lunches with individual journalists or more formal meetings are also helpful. These may or may not result in specific media coverage, or in references to AI, but they will help define the way issues are presented and build AI's credibility and presence. They also help to build relationships with the media.

Interviews

Interviews and providing a quotable comment are perhaps the most usual way for AI to appear in the media – particularly radio and television in which the spoken voice and the picture are so important. The interview is often the desired result of media releases, media conferences and special events. The key to doing good interviews is knowing your subject and good preparation.

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

- **Set the time and place**. With a formal interview, agree on the place and the length of time it will take. Avoid open-ended interviews that give a journalist hours of time to wear you down until you say things you do not want to say. But be prepared for the interview to run over time.
- **Agree the subject, define the issues.** Be specific about the topics to be covered. Make sure you know what is to be covered so you can be ready with the statistics, names of example cases and facts, especially for print journalists. All journalists want their stories to be full and complete and may rely on you for basic facts and figures. They may know little about the subject or not be sure how they want to cover it. A pre-interview chat is your opportunity to define the issues, highlight the points on which you want to concentrate, minimize the importance of others and suggest other people whom it would be useful for the journalist to meet. The earlier in the process you do this the better. Most stories can be told in many different ways. You want it told in the way that is most likely to have a positive human rights result and this is your chance. Be wary if the journalist is hesitant about outlining the interview subject. It is better to be direct with a vague reporter by saying: "I want to know what you're interested in so I can provide you with all the information/statistics."
- **Make a list.** Prepare the information you want to get across. Before the interview, list the three or four most important points you want to make. The list should be of short key words, not the entire statement written out. No one wants to listen to you read out something, because you will sound wooden and rehearsed.
- **Determine the journalist's audience**. Remember, reporters are searching for what appeals to their respective audiences.
- **Determine the nature of the media outlet**. Is it live or pre-recorded? If radio, you will need sound-bites. Is it a discussion?
- **Respect deadlines**. If you have agreed to call a journalist back in 30 minutes, you must do so. Sometimes they work outside office hours, so if you can fit in a telephone interview in the evening you should do so. And if you offer additional information, make sure you provide it
- **Anticipate the questions and practise answers**. You are speaking on behalf of AI. A discussion with colleagues or other members can help you clarify the position AI should be taking, and how an interview can best push forward campaigning objectives. A mock or practice interview with a colleague can help to build confidence. Prepare some sound-bite answers in advance.
- **Concentrate on important points first.** You may have limited time, so focus on speaking about the key issues first.
- **Check that you have the latest information.** Look through the day's newspapers to see if there is any relevant information that may come up. Has the government issued a statement in response to the report? Has any other information about the country been reported?
- **Relax.** Journalists want good quotes and a clear direct message – exactly what you want.

The questions most often asked of AI

- What does AI's report say?
- Who is committing violations?
- What are they doing?
- Who are they doing it to?
- How long has this been happening and how serious is it?
- Is the situation deteriorating?
- What are AI's recommendations?
- Why is the report being released today?
- Can you give an example case of the abuses AI is talking about?
- Where does your information come from?
- Do you think anything will happen as a result of AI's report?
- Is the situation worse than in other countries in the region?

DURING THE INTERVIEW

Be the expert, stay cool. You know a great deal more about AI's concerns in the human rights field than the journalist, while s/he needs your information to get a story. Therefore, if you are prepared and keep your thoughts clear, you will be in control of the interview. Take the initiative and lead the interview into positive areas. Keep your cool as sometimes journalists may try to surprise or unnerve you. Do not get angry. It is their job. Your job is to answer as best you can.

Keep your answers concise and short. Remember, the best sound-bite is only eight seconds or 25 words. Out of a 20-minute interview, a journalist may use only 30 seconds. So use simple language and avoid AI jargon. Say "political killings" not "extrajudicial executions", and never use the acronym "EJEs". State important facts first, and remember to stop yourself after you have answered the question. Do not go on and on, trying to clarify what you have already said.

Speak in complete sentences for broadcast media. Although a radio or television interview can seem to be a conversation, try to remember that the journalist is searching for complete sentences that encapsulate your key messages. So when asked, "What are the human rights concerns in Kenya?" do not respond in a fragment, such as, "Torture, committed with impunity, across the country." A better response would be: "Amnesty International is concerned that torture is used routinely by police across the country, without the perpetrators being brought to book." Also note that it is better to speak as AI than as a person. Avoid "I think that...". As an AI representative, you are talking for AI, so you should say so.

Do not get side-tracked. Steer the conversation back to your key points. If the question is off the topic, you can respond: "That's a very important point, but what is really crucial to understanding the situation is that ..." Remember, you can glance down at your key word list to make sure you have made the three main points you wanted to make.

Do not let a journalist put words in your mouth. If the journalist asks, "So you mean to say that..." you should counter with, "What I said was ..." Never begin the answer to such a question with "yes..." You should decide what you say publicly, not the reporter. Avoid those speculative or hypothetical questions. Journalists often ask "what if?" questions when they want something controversial to be said. You should answer that AI does not speculate about the future.

To buy time, repeat the question back to the journalist. This can give you a little more time to think about your answer. So, when asked, "What does Amnesty think of an oil embargo on Nigeria?" you can say, "You want to know about the proposed embargo – Amnesty International has no position on embargoes but we do say that world pressure should..."

Journalists will sometimes seek to persuade you to go beyond what AI is willing to say — either by suggesting that the discussion will be "off the record", or by asking for your personal opinion. Nothing is ever "off the record" and you are not talking to them in a personal capacity whatever they may say.

Stay in touch with the researchers and journalists of current affairs shows. Find out what stories they are planning, especially in other countries. Offer to supply background material and try persuading them of the human rights angle.

Using comment

Issuing a media release can be time consuming and may not be the best way of getting AI into the news. A quick telephone call to a journalist to suggest a story angle, or to provide a comment or quote from AI on something in the news can work just as well or better. This is one of the benefits of establishing good relationships with journalists. You will know who to call and when, and they will know when they can contact you for the AI angle.

- **Be composed.** If you are nervous, try to keep your hands in your lap rather than let them flutter around in nervous tics. If you are attacked by a hostile question, you should not get upset, just answer back firmly: "You are mistaken about... but I am glad you raised that point." Or, "I'm sorry you feel that way but let me ask you to consider..."
- **Try to show the individual cases.** Painting a picture of one person who represents the pattern of human rights violations can be more effective than expressing yourself in abstract concepts. For example, instead of saying, "so and so was tortured", try to create an image of what happens when someone is tortured. You can say, "so-and-so had his toe-nail pulled out by a police interrogator using pliers".
- **Do not be afraid to show some emotion.** The journalist's unspoken, basic question is: "Why should we care?" Your answer should convey the unspoken message that people should be concerned, outraged and should take action. So you can express your outrage. Do not sound out of control, and do not speak in unreasonable terms. But expressing some of the anger that you feel when you speak about "gross human rights violations" makes a good sound-bite and often conveys the message better than a long-winded, dispassionate statement.

FOR TELEVISION

- Discuss the questions to be asked first, before the interview. At the very least, you are entitled to ask the interviewer what the first question will be. That is your basic right as an interviewee.
- Wear solid colours (to avoid distracting the viewer).
- Sit upright to appear organized, confident and neat, not slumped back in the chair or perched on the edge.
- In general, look at the interviewer, not the camera.
- Use simple language.
- Do not fidget. Cameras and microphones pick up the slightest movement.
- Ask for a chair that does not swivel, so you do not nervously rock side-to-side while on camera.
- If outside, take off your sunglasses. Otherwise, you will look like you have something to hide.
- Do not react with facial grimaces to questions. Remember: the camera is on you at all times.

FOR RADIO

- Again, ask to be told the first question in advance.
- Do not shuffle around: the noise may be picked up.
- Do not wear noisy jewellery.
- Do not interrupt or speak at the same times as others.

Feature articles

News stories are only one outlet for AI's information. Given competition for space, news items on AI reports and campaigns are often very brief. Other options are provided by different sections of newspapers and different programs on radio and television.

Print

For a major report, negotiate with one or more newspapers to carry a feature article to back up news coverage. It is important to get the report to newspapers in advance of the launch (remembering embargoes) so they have a chance to read and digest its information for a longer feature piece. The news angle might be the launch of AI's campaign on political killings, while the feature article looks in more detail at the problem and how it is emerging as one of the challenges facing the human rights movement. When a country report is released the news may focus on the facts contained in the report while a feature could look at the implications for government policy, relations with the country or an aspect of the campaign.

Feature articles must be negotiated in advance with the editor or the editor of the features page. It is also possible to negotiate with a freelance journalist who will write the story and then negotiate to get it

published. Weekend newspapers will often be more willing to agree to feature pieces than dailies which have less space. Offering one newspaper an exclusive feature story can make the suggestion more attractive.

Many newspapers have different sections in an attempt to attract and keep readers with particular interests. These can be good places to try placing stories with different angles.

Newspapers often have an op-ed (opinion editorial) page to allow substantial space for opinion pieces. Writers of these are often a mixture of staff writers and members of the community who have a reputation of expertise or who are seen to represent an important body of opinion – such as AI. There is normally an editor for this page.

Broadcast media

The broadcast space for AI reports is becoming squeezed. In most countries there is less and less coverage foreign news. It is therefore worth looking at how stories can be made attractive to different parts of the media. Can the story be made domestic news by focusing on the implications for government policy? Can it be made domestic news because of campaign activities and strong visual images? Are there specialist programs? Would celebrity involvement in a campaign bring added media? Look through the schedules for radio and television programs for possibilities. Think of story ideas with human rights angles and suggest them to the media.

Video News Releases

One of the hurdles in getting television coverage is that broadcasters need images to tell a story. Without pictures, they very often will not cover an issue. To help you provide images to television stations, video footage is provided to Sections for major campaigns and actions.

The three main types of video package are: video news release (VNR), news access tape (NAT) and mini-documentaries. These are either "cut pieces" which look like television news stories or simply an edited collection of the best footage AI has on human rights in a country. These video productions usually have footage of human rights violations, interviews with victims or activists and sometimes an interview with an AI spokesperson.

If you want a television station to use the footage, you should usually tell them up to a week in advance that footage is available. Broadcasters will need copies of the footage in broadcast standard, known as BETA SP. Often they will also want a copy of the footage in VHS – the standard for home video machines – so that they can watch the footage beforehand.

The IS always provides a transcript and running sheet describing the content of the VNR, any copyright restrictions, and the format of the video. All this information is important to producers and journalists.

Where a VNR is available, it is worth stating this at the bottom of a news release and mentioning it when you call television producers. Alternatively, you can send out a separate media advisory, telling journalists about the VNR.

It is also worth filing all your VNRs, as they can often be used later (subject to copyright restrictions) to provide to journalists for use in other stories they may be doing.

Almost...

The Campaign to Free Tim Anderson in Australia hired an aeroplane to fly a long banner carrying the campaign message "Tim is Innocent" over the Sydney Harbour Bridge on a key date. The media were informed and at least one television network sent a helicopter up to get good footage of it. Unfortunately, the pilot had failed to get clearance to fly over the bridge at that time and flew over later – long after the media had left. A good attempt that did not quite work.

Dedication ceremony

In December 1995 the Irish Section achieved major coverage for the dedication ceremony of a human rights sculpture in the centre of Dublin.

Using the small ads pages

Many newspapers have pages of classified advertisements offering services, or goods, "lost and found" notices, etc. The cost per word is normally quite low and some local AI groups have placed WANTED or MISSING ads asking for information on a prisoner or "disappearance" as a way of publicizing the case they are working on. They also provide a contact name for their local group.

A letter printed in a newspaper is normally taken as an indication of a much more widespread feeling. They will be monitored by many embassies and the home government.

Letters pages

The letters pages of newspapers provide an excellent forum for encouraging discussion of issues and demonstrating public interest and concern. Some AI groups have been known to initiate community debates through one member writing in a controversial letter and then arranging for a response from another group member – other "genuine" members of the community have then joined in.

TIPS

- Mark the letter "for publication".
- Keep it short – ideally under 200 words but no more than 400.
- Make it a response to something that has been in the newspaper or the news.
- Have it signed by someone representing an organization, or by someone respected in society.
- Provide a contact number so that facts can be checked.

Symbolic success

The Danish Section took 43 cows into the centre of the capital, Copenhagen, as a symbolic action during the campaign on Colombia. Forty-three people from a village in Colombia had been made to "disappear" in reprisal for the theft of 43 cows. This stunt won wide coverage on television and in newspapers.

Phone-ins and talkbacks

Some radio stations have programs that invite audience participation. These can provide AI with a good opportunity to demonstrate concern or express interest about an issue. It is normally best for members not to identify themselves as such but rather to speak as a member of the public. Producers and hosts do not like to think they are being influenced. For debates on the death penalty it can be very important to have as many members get through as possible. If you have advance warning of such a discussion, recruit volunteers to call the station and if necessary provide them with a sheet of paper mentioning a series of concise and powerful arguments – each person is likely to be asked only one point.

Pictures

A good picture can guarantee a spot in the newspaper. Television stations are always looking for strong visuals.

TIPS

- Make the picture attactive to the media. A celebrity (providing they have not been doing something similar for other organizations) can be enough.
- Use strong imagery – the candle remains a favourite with photographers, as do cages and bars.
- An eye-catching public event, such as releasing balloons, tree-planting, a dedication ceremony of a building or street, is often popular, as are birthday cakes for a prisoner or to mark an anniversary.
- Make sure there is a backdrop of an AI banner or poster behind a speaker or campaign action so that it appears in the photograph.
- Give the media plenty of notice. Be clear about the location and timing. Send out a media release giving these details and headed "photo opportunity".
- Be flexible if possible. Offer to rehearse or restage events to fit in with schedules. Make sure you take your own photographs and offer to supply them to newspapers that did not show up (check whether they use colour or black and white prints), along with captions.
- Captions should simply explain the photograph, who is doing what, why, where, and when.
- Be creative!

Australian soaps

A number of popular television "soap operas" in Australia have featured AI story lines. One showed AI fundraising events, another featured refugees and the human rights violations from which they had escaped.

Trouble-shooting

AI campaigners, members and media officers often have concerns or objections about the tone, style or nature of the reporting on AI, human rights and related issues. These can only be resolved by establishing good relationships that either prevent them occurring or allow for positive and constructive informal discussion when they do occur.

There can also be occasions when errors are made in reporting AI's concerns or position. These should only be taken up for really serious errors or misrepresentations. Your

response should fall into one of the following categories:

➲ **Seek a retraction or apology**

If there is a blatantly biased attack on AI or a serious error, contact the editor by letter or telephone, explain the newspaper's mistake and ask for a retraction or apology to be inserted in the next issue. Do not demand a retraction or apology if you simply did not like the tone, style or content of the article.

➲ **Write a letter**

Write to the editor, explaining the incorrect information, and ask them to print your letter on the letters page. This can be important as making no response can leave the impression that AI is unable to defend its position. However, it is worth considering whether having an apology printed will, by repeating the original error, reinforce rather than ameliorate the damage. If the mistake was yours, then a letter can provide evidence of your integrity.

It is good policy to reply to every attack on AI even if there is little chance it will be printed. The editors will get the message.

➲ **A positive comeback**

An article critical of AI can provide an opportunity to open a dialogue in the media. An approach to a newspaper which printed a very critical article about AI would be along the lines of:

➪ The article about AI's views was very misleading and we feel the writer did not fully understand our position. We would like the opportunity to explain our views and the work we have been doing. Would you accept a short article from us?

➪ The piece in the newspaper raised interesting questions and opened up the possibility of an informative debate about the issue. Could AI provide a response?

➲ **Ignore it**

Do nothing. Some people take the view that people will forget a news item within a week, so it is better not to remind people of a mistake or hostile article. Small errors or an offensive tone should be ignored in terms of official response, particularly in "opinion" or "feature" pieces. Members of the public may of course want to take issue with the views expressed. An uncorrected misrepresentation of AI's position, however, risks staying on the record as the actual position.

Not getting coverage?

It is unrealistic to expect that AI will always get the coverage that its stories deserve or that you would like. However, if AI is consistently failing to receive media coverage and this is inhibiting development and campaigning, it is worth trying to find out why.

© AI

1997, a press conference at the IS on the arrest of alleged Bosnian war criminals. *From left to right:* Lotte Liecht, Human Rights Watch; Nick Howen, IS Legal and International Organizations Program (LIOP); Martin Bell, war correspondent and member of the UK Parliament; Colonel Bob Stewart DSO, former British Army Commander in Bosnia.

Amnesty International UK Press Awards

The annual AIUK Press Awards, first made in 1992, were originally seen as a way of developing closer links with the media and of encouraging different media constituencies to cover human rights issues. As such they have proved spectacularly successful, with competition for them becoming increasingly intense among journalists with each passing year.

The event has also become AIUK's main annual public relations event and provides an opportunity for excellent contact-building with journalists.

The awards recognize excellence in human rights journalism that has made a significant contribution to the British public's awareness and understanding of human rights issues – focusing on human rights work covered by AI's mandate.

The awards ceremony, which in recent years has been held at London's prestigious Park Lane Hotel, is attended by senior journalists, commissioning editors and foreign news editors, and is hosted by a prominent broadcaster or figure in the media.

Each year's entries are judged by a specially selected panel, which usually includes AIUK's Director of Communications and others chosen for their expertise on the media and human rights, such as high-profile journalists and lawyers. Membership of the panel itself is both a form of recognition and an opportunity to develop closer working relationships with important media figures.

There are six categories of award: television documentary; television news; radio; national print; periodicals (including weekend national print magazines and supplements); and photojournalism. A further award is made to the overall winner.

The event itself now generates substantial media coverage. In 1994 and 1995 the winners were announced on prime-time national news, and the presentation by AI Secretary General Pierre Sané of the overall winner award in 1995 was broadcast on BBC television news.

Photographs

Providing photographs for smaller regional or local papers can almost ensure a story, because smaller publications can be starved of interesting photos which are used to fill space and break up text. Make sure the photographs you provide are good quality and interesting. Those supplied by a local group or Section should:

- be black and white, not colour
- large – not standard holiday snap size
- show activities – signing letters, lighting candles, etc

Black and white photographs of people featured in AI's campaigns are often available for campaign launches from the IS and can be offered to groups to help in their media work.

TIPS

Is AI's current image a problem? Is it seen as a radical or marginal organization? Is AI seen as an international rather than national organization?
Try to meet the editors to give them a better understanding of AI.

Are the media unaware of the information that AI can supply?
Supply media with a publications list. Offer a human rights briefing service to journalists going abroad.

Are human rights not seen as hard news?
Relate your information more to its implications for the home government's position or policy or to trading, historical and cultural links, etc. Relate it more directly to the stories seen as hard news.

Journalists do not know who to contact.
Send out a media advisory pack to journalists providing names and contact numbers, background on AI and current campaigns, and who does what in the organization.

Do editors believe that your spokespersons do not have expertise?
Build up media expertise of country coordinators through training (or recruit and train country coordinators) so that you have specialist spokespeople available for interview. Train existing spokespeople (seek professional advice on this).

There has been a problem in media relations in the past which is still causing problems.
Seek meetings with editors to clarify and resolve problems.

Stories on particular countries do not receive coverage, perhaps because journalists do not think there is public interest.
Look for other angles. Persuade AI members or members of sympathetic organizations to write letters (as members or simply as readers) to the media asking for more coverage of foreign affairs, or human rights issues, or on particular countries as a way of demonstrating community interest.

Media servicing from the IS

Virtually all AI's relations with the media are driven by information from the IS and in particular its Media & Audiovisual Program. They are responsible for drafting international releases, setting embargo times and issuing AI's public response to human rights developments worldwide. As a minimum the IS will distribute most of these releases to the international wire services, who then edit and distribute them worldwide.

These releases generally provide a much greater volume of information than any AI Section can handle. It is therefore important to be selective. Where possible, this selectivity should be based on:

- whether or not publicity in your country can influence the human rights situation in the country concerned;
- whether AI needs to build its media profile locally, and be seen to be reacting and campaigning to particular events;
- the resources available locally;
- whether the Section has decided to prioritize work on particular countries;
- whether AI is saying anything new or newsworthy.

Sending out lots of news releases that do not contain new information or do not point to a new angle is more likely to undermine rather than build credibility with the media.

IS news releases should be edited and adapted by AI structures to make them more appealing to your local media and to help establish AI as a relevant campaigning organization in your country.

TIPS

ADAPTING NEWS RELEASES FROM THE IS

- **Cut them.** IS media releases are frequently more than a page. Try and cut them. If you need to include more information, then prepare a separate sheet of background information.
- **Quote a local AI spokesperson.** Either use the same quotes as in the international release or write your own that may be more relevant to your situation.
- **Give it a domestic focus.** What is AI locally doing? For example, has it asked for government action (if your release says that AI has asked for such action, make sure it has!)
- **Keep it consistent with AI's message**. Make sure your changes do not alter the main message. Check with Section staff or others if you are not sure.

Preparing for a public response

One objective of media work is to generate interest and action from the community. If you are campaigning on a particular issue, or are expecting substantial publicity, then remember to prepare for the response.

People answering the telephones in AI offices should be prepared to answer questions on a particular subject. They should try and get a name and address so that these people can be sent follow-up and membership information.

Prepare simple action sheets that can be sent to anyone who calls to ask what they can do. These can be simple letter-writing guides, including:

- background information;
- points to make in a letter;
- names, addresses of people to send letters to.

Sometimes producers and editors are willing to put AI's address and telephone number at the end of programs or articles related to AI's work. It is always worth asking!

Present the evidence

At the end of each campaign compile a dossier or file of all the publicity that has been achieved at the national and local level and send a copy with a covering letter to the ambassador and the most appropriate government official. It may help to persuade an embassy to meet you if it has not before, and it provides solid evidence of public concern. A similar dossier might usefully be provided to your own minister of foreign affairs.

Other information from the IS

Apart from the individual media releases, country and theme reports, the following sources are useful in campaigning media work.

- **AI's facts and figures.** The IS regularly produces a document called "Facts and Figures", which is a useful source of information on AI. It details AI's history, how many members there are worldwide, the costs of some of its work, how many cases were worked on in the previous year, how many cases have been closed, etc.

- **The annual report.** The *Amnesty International Report* is a useful and authoritative reference book. It includes which countries have signed what human rights treaties, short individual country entries that can quickly give a journalist an overview of AI's concerns in any country, recent details of AI's campaigning, the worldwide incidence of violations within the mandate such as torture, etc.

- **Urgent Actions.** UAs can contain AI's most recent information on a country and provide a compelling picture of real individuals at risk of human rights violations. They are very easy to fax to journalists. An annual report entry and a UA can be a good combination of materials to supply to interested journalists. UAs can also be used in a similar way to media releases. A journalist who is interested in that particular country will have little problem in converting a UA into a news story. Ask a sympathetic journalist to seek comment from the government concerned or from its embassy in your country. Concern from the media can substantially add to the pressure being mounted on a particular case.

- **IS researchers/campaigners.** Some media will want to speak to the "expert". Offering an interview with the researcher/campaigner at the IS can help to get coverage, particularly after a mission or if they are on the spot. If your Section has a speaker-phone facility, a mini-briefing over the telephone with the IS researcher could be arranged for a few journalists. You can also ask researchers/campaigners for details of people in the country concerned who would be useful for journalists to interview – particularly if they are going to the country to do a story.

Coordinating the media work of others

In many societies, locally based media is the most read, watched and listened to. It is the most important in shaping community attitudes. It is also central to building AI's reputation as a membership-based organization, offering everybody the opportunity to become involved in human rights campaigning. Encouraging local AI groups to do media work, and providing them with the skills and resources to do so is therefore an important issue for campaign coordinators, among others.

Monitoring the media

Ask AI members to listen to or watch certain programs and read particular newspapers and magazines. This kind of media monitoring is particularly useful when issuing news releases or holding media conferences.

On a more regular basis you could ask them to look for (and cut out or record) mentions of AI, mentions of human rights or of particular countries, or of political developments in you own country which may be of importance, such as new government appointments. Their time is important, however, and therefore you need to explain why the information is useful and how you will use it. A good filing system is also important.

TIPS

- Provide a group manual which includes a section on media work. AIUK has produced an excellent guide to local group press work which may be suitable or could be adapted for use in your country. Sample copies are available from AIUK Press Office.
- Provide training sessions in media work. Friendly professional journalists are often pleased to contribute to AI's work in this way. Training could include the following:
  - getting to know your media, what exists locally and how journalists work;
  - writing media releases – deciding the right angle, including all the important information first;
  - practise interviews – television and radio.
- Include media suggestions and materials in group campaign kits.
- Provide groups with a draft media release to publicize campaign events or launch.
- Provide suggestions on stories different local media might be interested in.

Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation of media work can be problematic. It is possible, depending on levels of resources available, to know how much media coverage you have achieved. It is much more difficult to know whether this is having the impact you hoped for.

Media monitoring may be available as a commercial service (local journalists should know if this is the case). Such services can be asked to monitor any part of the media and to supply transcripts and clippings on a range of subjects, such as reports on human rights or AI. Alternatively, AI members can be asked to undertake monitoring.

Some level of media monitoring is necessary for evaluation. One way of judging the value of the media work is to put a price on the coverage you have achieved by estimating the cost of buying equivalent advertising space. Another indicator may be whether journalists, politicians or non-governmental organizations subsequently refer publicly to the issues raised, or use the phrases and terms introduced by AI.

Other indicators may be a noticeable shift in government policy and practice, or in levels of public response, such as a rise in the number of membership inquiries received by the AI office or letters to the press.

For specific events, such as media conferences or major news releases, it is worth setting specific targets. Explicitly state the target amount or type of media coverage you hope to achieve and what media coverage it is realistic to expect. This might be the number of news channels, chat shows or opinion pieces that feature AI or human rights concerns. It may be the number of media organizations you expect to attend your media conference. Being explicit makes it possible to understand why things did or did not work.

Reasons for success may be that the news release arrived on the desk of someone at exactly the right time, or that you were able to persuade a senior enough journalist to cover the story, or that it was a quiet news day, or simply that it was a good story.

A campaigner or media officer can rarely if ever control what stories will be used or not used by the media. There are normally too many factors at play – many of which are outside a campaigner's control. But the more s/he understands these factors the more s/he will be able to influence the extent and nature of coverage.

The person doing the monitoring could call up journalists and – in pleasant way – ask why the event was or was not covered.

For more on evaluation, see Chapter 13.

In many cases a significant proportion of a newspaper's income is made from selling advertising space. On days which are big for advertising (this may be set days of the week, weekends, national holidays) the newspaper has more pages, more space for copy and therefore may be more likely to run AI's story.