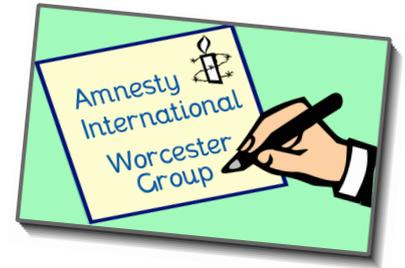




Amnesty International



A Quick Guide to Letter Writing

One of Amnesty International's primary tools is letter writing; to government officials, embassies, heads of state, prisoners' or other victims' relatives, prison governors and the prisoners themselves. Letters need not be beautifully composed or very long. They are there to express the writer's concerns and make a simple request.

A complete letter-writing guide is available from the Amnesty International website: www.amnesty.org.uk .

In the meantime here are a few hints and tips to bear in mind:

- 1 Letters should be brief, factual and always polite. Please take special care not to express yourself in a way which could be interpreted as aggressive or offensive.
- 2 Stay within Amnesty's mandate (that is to say, don't campaign on matters which are not covered by Amnesty International's work or interests).
- 3 Don't discuss ideology or politics. Remember that Amnesty International is a non-partisan organisation. It opposes human rights violations - not governments or political systems.
- 4 Give full details of the situation (name(s), date of arrest/killing etc., and where the arrest or human rights violation occurred) if the facts are known.
- 5 Identify yourself by profession and nationality to emphasise the fact that all kinds of people everywhere are concerned about human rights in that country.
- 6 Write your letters in English unless they can be written correctly in the language of the country involved.
- 7 Follow the directions given in the appeal. For example, Amnesty International asks for the release of the prisoner only if they are *Prisoners of Conscience*.
- 8 There is no common international practice for addressing authorities but you may safely use the following:-

President:

Dear Mr President

Prime Minister, or Minister:

Dear Prime Minister, Dear Minister

Ambassador:

Your Excellency

Local Officials

Dear Sir/Madam

Judges:

Your Honour

Military Officials:

Dear General, Dear Colonel etc.

.... and to end a letter use "Yours sincerely" or "Yours respectfully".

- 9 You may write as an Amnesty member or as a concerned individual, and letters may be typed or handwritten.
- 10 And finally... Do letters work? See the quotes in the panel below: one is from an Amnesty mission returning from Thailand, and the second is from an ex-prisoner in the former Yugoslavia.....

Of course they work!



"A very exciting thing about the visit was the number of times the impact of the current letter writing activities was emphasised. The fact that AI members have in recent weeks and months sent many letters to many people resulted in comments at most addresses to which we went... We were shown large bundles of letters: there were files on AI concerns..."

"This letter gave me much courage. I feel like a different person... the very fact that you have written to us means a great deal to me, and I will not forget it."

