



GLOBAL DAYS FOR DARFUR PRESS TIP SHEET

This tip sheet is to serve as a guide as you organize and publicize your local Global Days for Darfur event. Getting media attention is a helpful way to raise awareness of the issue in general and is a crucial tool to creating a successful event. Remember, though, that media advocacy is merely another tool in the activist's belt and not an end in itself.

- **Press Release**
 - This document, on the other hand, is typically distributed the day of the event and is often included in a press kit at the event. It is typically written in the past tense and reads like a news article. Make sure to put the piece of news in both the headline and the first sentence. Include quotes from the speakers at the event or the event's organizers.
 - HINT: On occasion, some smaller outlets have been known to take the release and print it with only making a few minor changes. While you can't guarantee this will happen, it is best to make the press release as close to "printable" as possible. This means to keep the text seeming impartial, with the opinions and emotion inserted in the quotes from the speakers. (See the template provided by the Coalition).
- **Press Kit**
 - Sometimes all you need is the press release, but on many occasions it's helpful to include other information for journalists who cover the event – a speakers list (in order, with titles and correct spelling of the names), speakers' bios, a background document on the crisis in Darfur, a fact sheet on Global Days for Darfur. (See the materials provided by the Coalition).
- **Letters to the Editor**
 - Encourage supporters to write short letters to the editor about the situation in Darfur, plugging the event. These are usually about 200 words, max., but you should check on each individual publication. Give the writers everything they need – talking points, the email address and rules of submitting the letters, etc. Use the message themes to build from.
 - HINT: Write many letters yourself and ask your supporters to sign them and send them in. This allows you to control the messages going out and is also much easier for the person you're asking to be the sender.
- **Opinion-Editorials**
 - Get your event speakers or organizers to write a longer piece, using the messages of the Global Days and calling attention to the crisis. It is often helpful just to call a newspaper and ask if they'd be interested in an op-ed written by your author about Darfur and your event coming up. Op-eds should not be too essay-like. Rather, jump right in and get to the point. (See post-event media relations below).

How to Reach Out to the Press

- **Send, then call.** Fax or email the advisory and follow up on it that day (within a few hours, if possible). Journalists get a ton of these things, so draw their attention to it by calling to make sure they saw it. Leave a message and follow up on it after a day or two; don't be offended if a journalist doesn't call you back.
- **Be brief.** News stories require concise, succinct messages that can be made into short quotes or sound bites. But most of all, respect the reporter's or editor's time. Journalists are often on deadline and need you to keep it short and sweet.
- **Have a plan.** Know what you're going to say before you get on the phone. It is often effective.
 - Confirm that he or she has received the document. (If not, make sure you have the right email address and resend it.) "I'm just calling to make sure you saw a media advisory I sent a little earlier today."
 - Confirm that he or she is the right person to be speaking with. You will often be looking for the assignment or photo desks depending on what your goal is.
 - Briefly describe the event. This is your pitch, your chance to make the case of why this event is newsworthy. Since our event is a great photo opportunity, make sure you describe what the die-in will look like. Make this event attractive to the reporter. For example saying "thousands will attend" will certainly catch a reporter's attention.
 - Gauge his or her interest. Sometimes, they'll say if they're interested, but most times it's easiest just to ask "Do you think this sounds like something you'd be interested in covering?"
- **Know the outlet and tailor your pitch accordingly.** If it's a local community paper, pump up the local angle. If it's a television station or photo desk, tell them about the visuals.
- **Make it personal.** Journalists often look to humanize their articles and reports with real-life stories. Consider telling the story of your event through the people who are organizing it or participating in it. Are there local Darfurians or Sudanese people in attendance? Find the compelling stories and use them in your pitches, especially to the journalists who are interested or on the fence about covering it. Find out ahead of time if it might be possible to offer a personal interview with an interesting or prominent figure, if so, offer this option to the media outlet (generally television or radio).