



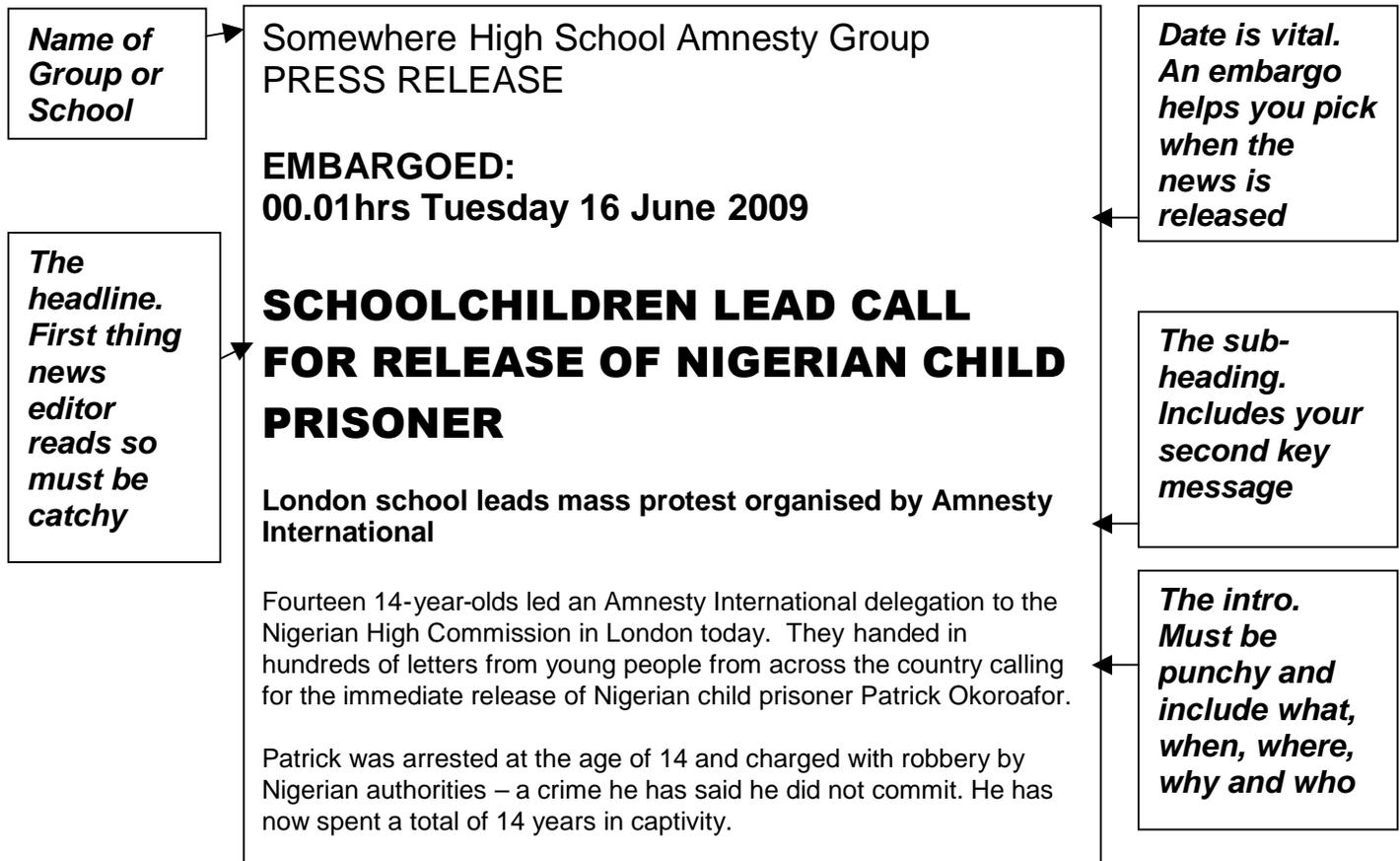
How to Write Press Releases

A great way of spreading the human rights message is by getting news coverage. Why not issue a press release to your local paper, radio or TV station? Press releases can be about the launch of a new group, events, the release of a prisoner – in fact, pretty much anything you want!

Schools and colleges have a major advantage when doing press work, as the media are usually keen to cover events concerning young people.

Here's how to do it:

- Step 1: Get permission from your school or college. If you are going to take a photo to send with you press release, get permission from all parents.**
- Step 2: Write your press release. See below for an example.**
- Step 3: Find out who to send it to.**
- Step 4: Send it off, by email or post. Make sure you get the timing right.**
- Step 5: Make a follow-up 'phone call.**



Include a quote. The media love a personal angle.

Try and put a great soundbite – a snappy comment – in the quote

Include a short explanation of what Amnesty does, where relevant

Schoolchildren from Somewhere High School in London took part in the demonstration and carried a giant 3D number 14 decorated by images from their counterparts across the UK.

14-year old **Danny Smith** was one of the teenagers who led the delegation. He said:

“Patrick was my age when he was arrested. What happened to him was terrible – he was tortured by the police and given an unfair trial. I can’t imagine going to jail at such a young age, and having all your hopes and dreams shattered. Patrick should be released immediately, and given the chance to live his life.”

In May 2009, the State Governor changed Patrick Okoroafor’s sentence from an indefinite sentence to 10 years’ imprisonment starting immediately. If Patrick completes his sentence he will have spent a total of 24 years in prison.

Notes to editors:

- For more details on Patrick Okoroafor’s case visit: www.amnesty.org.uk/okoroafor
- A gallery of images can be viewed at: <http://www.protectthehuman.com/galleries/14-years-is-enough>
- Amnesty International is a movement of ordinary people from across the world standing up for humanity and human rights. Our purpose is to protect individuals wherever justice, fairness, freedom and truth are denied.

ENDS

For further information please contact:

Joe Bloggs (Teacher in charge of the Somewhere High School Amnesty Group) on: 07671 731123 (mobile); 020 8638 4592 (home); email: jbloggs@googlemail.com

Contact details are essential as journalists need someone to get in touch with. Check with a teacher who you should put down as the contact.

TIPS

Always put the date on your press release. If the journalist can use the information immediately, then put “For immediate Release” at the top of it. If you do not want the information published before a certain date then put “Embargoed until ...”

Make sure that you start with a headline which is both informative and catchy. Often this is the only part of a press release which a journalist will read – they will use the headline to decide whether to read on.

An ideal press release covers one/one and half sides of A4. Do not write very long paragraphs or very long sentences.

Stick to the facts!

Always stress the local angle – make it clear to the journalists why your event is something that locals will be interested in.

If there is a “photo opportunity”, state this at the bottom of the press release, with dates, times, contact numbers and an email address. Remember to get parental permission for any under-18s in the photos!

Always spell check and double check for grammatical errors when you have finished.

Where to send it:

Always try to find out the name of the editor you will be sending the press release to, and their email address or postal address. A good source for all that information is www.mediauk.com

Local Paper

Send it to the News Editor. If you're organising an unusual event, you could also send it to the Features Editor for a feature story.

Local Radio/TV

Send it to the News Editor

When to send it:

Local Paper

Most local papers go to print on Monday or Tuesday. Make sure your press release reaches the journalist the previous Thursday or Friday. If you want a journalist to come to your event, give them a week's notice.

Local Radio/TV

Send the press release so it arrives two days before the event.

Follow-up 'phone call

Always follow up your press release with a phone call the day after the journalist receives it. When you enquire if they will be covering your event, remember to stress the local angle.

If you would like some advice about getting news coverage, please contact Niall Couper on niall.couper@amnesty.org.uk or 020 7033 6414.



The Amnesty group at Staindrop School often send press releases to their local paper. The Teesdale Mercury ran a piece about the local MP visiting the group, and also printed this photograph of the group campaigning.