STROOM VERSNELLERS

How do I write a press release?

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1. What is a press release?

A press release is a message you use to formally inform the media about your newsworthy action or announcement. The goal of a press release is to ensure that:

- The media reports on **your action or event;**
- And/or adopts **your framing of the story;**
- And knows how to reach you. The key objective is **to establish contact.**

Sometimes, smaller media outlets publish press releases in full. This usually happens with short, factual announcements. For example, when a director of a major organization steps down or starts in their role, or when a public figure makes a statement. The more neutral, businesslike, and professional your press release is, the more likely it is to be used as-is. In other cases, a press release helps journalists to quickly get a clear picture of the key information around your action or event, and gives them what they need to pitch the story to their editor.

2. How to write an engaging press release

The chance that a journalist will pick up your press release increases when you make their job easier! There's an overwhelming amount of news competing for attention, so the easier it is for a journalist to work with your press release, the less likely it is to get overlooked. Make sure your press release:

- **Clearly shows** why your action or event is **newsworthy**;
- Is **concise and focused** on your main news story, avoid adding too many side details;
- Is **complete** : a journalist should be able to see all the key information at once in the first paragraph of your press release;
- Is **neutral:** your press release should not appear biased. Keep it factual and impartial.

- Includes **visuals** if possible. Add your own photos, especially if few journalists or photographers will be taking pictures at your event.
- **Publish online**: Post your press release on your website, Indymedia, and possibly social media. This can help your press release to be taken more seriously. On social media, consider tagging relevant journalists.

Send your press release by email. In the subject line, write: PRESS RELEASE: [Your headline] – for immediate release / under embargo. "Under embargo" means that the information in your release is confidential and may not be published until a specific time. Clearly state this deadline (e.g. under embargo until [day, date, time]) at the top of your press release.

⚠️ Important: Always put journalists' email addresses in BCC!

3. Template

PRESS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – [**INSERT A TITLE THAT CONTAINS NEWS AND GRABS ATTENTION]**

Place, date – The first sentence should immediately convey the news and include the *who, what, where, and when* of the upcoming event. For example:
"At noon today, a group of around two hundred students and staff set up camp at Roeterseiland to call on the University of Amsterdam to cut ties with Israel."
In the rest of the paragraph, you can expand slightly on the who/what/where/when details. However, everything in this paragraph should contain new information.
'Spokesperson [fictional or real name]: *"Statements that could be interpreted as non-neutral can be placed in the mouth of a spokesperson. This allows for more emotion, and the quote doesn't have to be strictly factual or news-based."*'

The second paragraph provides **further elaboration**. Everything in the first paragraph must be immediately **newsworthy**. This second paragraph can provide context but preferably context that helps explain why the action is newsworthy.

So not broad statements like "a genocide is taking place," but more specific examples such as:

- "Mayor Halsema raised the Israeli flag in October,"
- "The organization Control Alt Delete has repeatedly spoken out against police violence,"
- "After a careful review process, the VU decided to cut ties with the fossil fuel industry because of the climate crisis. As an academic community, we find it reasonable that universities take similar action in light of the genocide,"
- "Several Palestinian students say they feel powerless in the face of the university board's unwillingness to act."

This paragraph should contextualize the news from the first paragraph within the narrow frame in which the event takes place. You can again include a quote from a spokesperson for any more controversial points.

The third paragraph can **zoom out further and provide broader context,** for example, about Palestine/Israel, genocide, scholasticide, police violence, student activism, etc. Connect it to one of your **core messages** that aligns with your **broader strategy for change**, the **audience** you want to reach, and the **pillars of power** you aim to challenge.

Remember: journalists are just as overworked as everyone else, so make their job as easy as possible. They see it as their task to report objectively and want to appear as though they have done thorough research.

Placing controversial statements in the mouth of a spokesperson allows them to include those quotes without taking personal responsibility for them (as they would if they copied the statement directly from your press release). It also makes it seem as if they did on-the-ground reporting, as though they actually spoke to people at the scene.

<u>Not for publication – Editor's note:</u>

Press contact: [fictional spokesperson name]

📞 06 [press phone number]

Social media (only if current and well maintained):

Links to Bluesky, Instagram, and website.

Other sources:

Links to allied voices providing 'the other side of the story', such as statements from staff members, the ASVA student union, or the CSR/COR. These sources work well because journalists often want to present both sides of a story. By providing your own "other side," it becomes easier for journalists to claim they have included multiple perspectives, for example, quoting the student union and your group, rather than only a Zionist organization, the police, and your group.

- Background on the BDS movement
- Background on Palestine–Israel
- History of student protests

We are Stroomversnellers

Stroomversnellers is a trainers' collective of experienced campaigners, organizers, facilitators, and trainers. We have all been active in environmental organizations, grassroots initiatives, labor unions, or anti-racism movements. Through trial and error, we've learned how to run effective campaigns, build organizations, and create social change.

We are constantly learning and love sharing our knowledge and experiences with others. The world doesn't move in the right direction on its own—far from it. Only with many well-prepared people can a different, more just society come closer. That's why we support a wide range of groups fighting for social and ecological justice, offering advice, strategy and brainstorming sessions, (action) trainings, and workshops. Together, we grow, strengthen our impact, and work toward a better world!

Toolbox for Movements
 This guide is part of the "Toolbox for Movements." The toolbox includes a collection of short digital guides covering the basics of strategy, movement building, activism, and organizing. It provides a solid foundation for beginning activists, while also offering fresh insights for experienced changemakers. Here you will find links to all other guides published so far.

We love learning too
 If you have ideas for improving this guide or adding your own experiences, we'd love to hear from you!

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