

# INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES

## Involvement with the media

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**As a family member or friend of someone in prison overseas the media in any of its forms – radio, TV, national press or local press – may contact you wanting to hear your story. It could also be that you are keen to actively make links with the media to publicise your relative or friend’s case. This briefing sheet looks at how you can make contact with the media, and the pros and cons in doing this.**

### **1 Prisoners Abroad and the media**

Prisoners Abroad receives a significant number of enquiries from journalists. These can be about a number of issues – information about a specific arrest, wanting an interview regarding a particular issue or prison or wanting to contact a prisoner or family member about their situation.

The media is important to Prisoners Abroad for a number of reasons, namely raising awareness of the issues facing British prisoners overseas and it also enables us to demonstrate to the public the importance of our work giving us credibility and helping to attract much needed funding.

When a journalist wants to do a story about our work quite often they will want a ‘human interest angle’ and will want to talk to someone who has either been in prison or whose close relative is currently in prison. It is in these situations that we may contact certain families and ask them if they would like to get involved with media activity. We have a strict confidentiality policy and would never pass on names or details without permission.

### **2 The pros and cons of telling your story**

Before you agree to get involved with the media it is important to weigh up the consequences and benefits of talking to the media.

<b>PROS</b>	<b>CONS</b>
It may persuade influential people such as MPs to get involved	It will not get your relative out of prison – it may even attract negative attention in the country they are held
Helps us to highlight issues such as poor health in prisons	You will have much less control over who knows about your situation
Informs the public of the consequences of getting in trouble overseas	There may be difficult questions – remember you do not have to answer them
Media interest will show your relative that they are not forgotten	Sometimes the interview will not even be published / broadcast
You are not obliged to answer any question you do not want to	

### **3 How to get involved**

If you would like to get involved with the media, please contact your Caseworker who will go through any questions you may have.

When a journalist contacts the Communications Officer at Prisoners Abroad, they will speak to the Caseworkers to see if they know of anyone who may be willing to talk to the press. Your Caseworker may then contact you and put you in touch with the Communications Officer who will then be the liaison between you and the journalist.

You will only be contacted if your personal story is relevant to the journalist's request, we will not be bothering you on a weekly or even monthly basis.

If a journalist contacts you directly and you would like some advice regarding their request please feel free to call either your Caseworker or the Communications Officer.

Should you decide that you are interested in being involved in media activity, it is up to you to say yes or no to which ever articles or issues that you feel you would like to do. Remember, you are under no obligation and can change your mind at any time.

### **4 Some further tips**

If you do decide to enter into a contract with a print or broadcast publisher, you may find these guidelines helpful.

- In your dealings with any publication make sure you are accompanied or represented by a legal advisor.
- Keep a dated record of all conversations.
- There is no copyright in ideas - only in the written words or pictures. If you write the story yourself or with the help of a 'ghost-writer', make sure you keep copyright.
- Insist on selling 'first national rights' only. If a publication wants to purchase 'all rights' it will be to make money by selling your story to others. Your fee should reflect the value of the material to the publisher if it is to be re-published in any form — including film & TV or electronically via databases.
- If you are not able to write the story yourself, insist that a journalist is assigned to help you write it, on condition that the finished product requires your written approval before publication.
- Do not part with tapes, photographs or original documents until the terms of your contract are agreed. Ensure that the contract includes satisfactory arrangements for the return of all materials including personal photographs.
- Try to negotiate the right to approve the manner in which the material is published. If you are not happy about how it is to be presented you should be willing to forgo the fee rather than risk sensational or misleading coverage.
- Don't be bullied into terms that you are not comfortable with. It is YOUR story, and you will have to live with the consequences if it is handled badly.

## **5 Other organisations who can help**

You may also find it helpful to contact an organisation called The MediaWise Trust who provide assistance to those with complaints about inaccurate, intrusive or sensational coverage in UK newspapers, magazines and radio or television programmes:

### **MediaWise**

University of the West of England  
Canon Kitson  
Oldbury Court Road  
Bristol  
BS16 2JP  
Tel: 0117 939 9333  
Fax: 0117 902 9916  
E-mail: [info@mediawise.org.uk](mailto:info@mediawise.org.uk)  
Website: [www.presswise.org.uk](http://www.presswise.org.uk)

If you require this leaflet in a large print format, please contact us. Our details are below.

Tel: 0808 172 0098 (free from within the UK)  
+44 20 7561 6820 from outside the UK

Email: [info@PrisonersAbroad.org.uk](mailto:info@PrisonersAbroad.org.uk)

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