



What follows is a how-to guide with regard both how to get reporters to cover an event, and how to tell a story that will make for good and interesting journalism. First, we suggest a timeline by which to engage news outlets. We then follow with tips as to the kind of documents and information to give news outlets prior to the event. Finally, we offer tips how to “frame” your event, and how best to create an atmosphere at the event that grabs the reporters’ attention. We hope this is helpful to you. As always, if you have any questions, please feel free to follow up with us at info@united4iran.org.

A. TIMELINE

2-3 weeks before our event (end of November)

Build a Relationship with the Press

- *Call your media list* and ask to speak with either a specific reporter you’ve identified, or with the news desk. Explain and describe the event, and say words to the effect that you want to make sure the event gets covered. Let the reporter or news desk know that 12/12 is a global event, that is, that events will be held in cities around the world. Also ask if they would be interested in doing an “advance” story on the event.
- *Write a media advisory* that answers the questions: who, what, when, where, and why? (don’t send it yet, except to weekly papers)
- *Have your supporters send “letters to the editor”* to your local papers about 12/12 generally, and then specifically your event.

4-7 days before your event (Dec 5-8)

- *Send out a media advisory* to the press
- *Write a press release*
- *Select spokespeople and help them practice their talking points.*

1-2 days before the event (Dec 10-11)

- Put together a fact sheet about our event.
- Follow up with a phone call to your target reporter.

The day of—December 12

- Send your press release to your press list, timed with the start of your event.
- Have people from your group call in to media outlets with “news tips” about the event that’s happening that day.
- Try to identify any reporters who show up at your event, introduce yourself, and distribute press materials to them.

After the event

- Call reporters to follow up about the event and thank them for coming.
- [Optional] Send out a follow-up press release that talks about the success of the event or other related stories in the news—as an example, write about the the December 7 demonstrations and any follow-up protests.

B. BUILDING THE STORY MOST LIKELY TO GET NEWS COVERAGE---WHAT IS NEWS?

1. **New**—To get the attention of the media, your story must be current, timely, and new. It helps to have a hook that is both interesting and if not new, to come up with a new angle. Make

sure to address the new ‘soft war’ campaign that the regime is leading—(as an example, reference the recent New York Times article reporting that the regime is establishing 6,000 Basiji centers at elementary schools to promote its ideals and also reported the increasing control of telecommunications by Revolutionary Guards).

2. **Local**— The story should tie into what is going on in local communities. Even though 12/12 is a global event, it’s very important to find a local angle when looking for local publicity/media coverage. Coming up with an angle is key--- as an example, in a community where there is a large Iranian population, you can discuss the dramatic effect of the civil rights movement in Iran on the Iranians in the community. If you live in a community with an historically oppressed group of people who have had their own civil rights struggle, tying the history of that struggle with the current Iranian civil rights movement makes for a good local angle.
3. **Human Interest Angle**—The story you pitch should have a human face. While of course it’s most important to talk about what is going on in Iran, it’s also very helpful to incorporate a local component. A good example is to discuss the effect of current events in Iran upon friends and family who live outside Iran.
4. **Conflict and Controversy**—A story with a hard-fought conflict makes news. Therefore, describe to reporters who are the good guys and the bad guys. Also, anything controversial is more likely to get news coverage. This works to our advantage with regard to garnering media attention because 12/12/ is, unfortunately, all about conflict and controversy.
5. **Strange Bedfellows**—It helps to get news coverage by emphasizing the “strange bedfellows” aspect of the issue, that is, people or coalitions working together that defy reporters’ assumptions about what groups are aligned. One idea is to emphasize the involvement of non-Iranians who have gotten involved as a result of being outraged by the egregious civil and human rights violations they first saw in the post-election aftermath.
6. **Powerful and Memorable Visuals, quotes and images.**
 - Use Dramatic Photographic images—As much as possible, use blown-up photos of arrested, jailed and/or beaten Iranians. Also, to the extent possible include photos of Iranians who died in prison. Photos of Neda will also resonate because her story and face are now widely known.
 - Wear Creative and iconic clothes and accessories—Some obvious examples are to wear the green Human Rights in Iran bracelets, and to wear green clothing and accessories in general. Another idea is to make shirts that event organizers/spokespeople can wear emblazoned with the faces of Iranians (men, women, children, students, clerics and even ayatollahs who are fighting for human rights.)
 - Incorporate event visuals—For example, coordinate dozens of people marching backwards to demonstrate a “backwards” policy.
7. **Timeliness**—Reporters like stories that can be linked to well-established events. 12/12 corresponds with International Human Rights Day and the six-month anniversary of the Iranian elections-so emphasize these facts.
8. **Superlatives**—The media loves superlatives! If we can say our event is the “first,” “biggest,” the “most” or “the first grass roots...” it will be more catchy for the media. Perhaps state that 12/12 marks the “first annual Arts United 4 Iran” day.
9. **New Media**—Don’t forget to use social networking sites including Facebook,

Twitter, Myspace, YouTube, Text messaging, etc.

C. HOW TO WRITE AN OP-ED

An op-ed is a newspaper article that expresses an opinion about an issue in the news.

1. Talking Points

The following are *recommended* talking points for media interviews:

- United4Iran is a global network of individuals and groups concerned with putting an end to human rights violations in Iran and in solidarity with the civil rights movement in that country.
- Six months after the disputed elections, the civil rights movement in Iran is active and will continue to manifest itself on upcoming occasions, such as Dec 7, the National Student Day, during the mourning rituals of Moharram, and anniversary of the revolution in February.
- The political situation in Iran remains unstable and the government does not enjoy legitimacy. Deep rifts within the political elite are manifest and the grand ayatollahs in Qom support neither the government nor the Supreme Leader's endorsement of it.
- United4Iran supports the demands of the civil rights movement, which seek freedom of assembly, expression and the press, release of all political prisoners and prisoners of conscience, an end to torture, rape, and killings, and accountability for those responsible for the commission of human rights crimes since the elections.
- The international community and governments negotiating with Iran should focus on the human rights crisis, recognize the civil rights movement and support the movement's demands. The nuclear crisis can be resolved peacefully if the international community supports the voices and demands of the civil rights movement.
- We oppose blanket economic sanctions and military attack or intervention. Pressure on Iran must target the government and the revolutionary Guards who are responsible for human rights crimes, not the Iranian people.
- Provide information about events in your city and planned programs on 12/12.

2. End with a Call to Action

Examples of calls to action are:

- "12/12 is an absolutely critical day to show solidarity with the Iranian people."
- "We need wide-ranging, diverse and vocal support from people all over the globe to put pressure on the regime."
- Ask for folks to get involved by joining the United4Iran (and the local group's) e-mail list, United 4 Iran's facebook page, and by donating to United4Iran and the local group so that the movement in support of the Iranian civil rights struggle can continue to grow.

3. How to Write and Submit an Op-Ed:

- Identify your target newspaper for an op-ed before beginning to write your piece, and consider their target audience.
- It's best to articulate the problem in the beginning, narrowing down to a very regional, granular point, and concluding with a clear call-to-action.
- When deciding who should 'sign' the piece — it might not always be the same person that wrote it. Consider regional figureheads that are supporters to your issue and determine if it might be more advantageous to sign the article.
- Once submitted, if you don't receive a response within 24-48 hours, it's usually best to contact the newspaper and speak to whoever oversees op-eds directly.

D. HOW TO GET MEDIA COVERAGE

1. Target Your Audience

The media is your target audience because you're working first to get their attention. More specifically, you want to target individual reporters from specific outlets and convince them to cover your event. Make a list of places you'd like to get coverage and then start a list of journalists from those media outlets who are writing or speaking about issues related to your event.

Spend your time on the media that makes sense for your community.

You can search for newspapers, magazines, radio and TV stations and news agencies by country at: <http://www.mondotimes.com/world>

2. Get a Hook

Reporters and readers love a narrative, that is, a story line that helps explain why something is new and different. Putting a person's face to an event makes all the difference. Also, defining the event in a way that makes our event sound unique—"biggest," "first of its kind," etc. is always a good hook.

3. Contacting the Media

- **Over-the-phone interviews and contacts** are usually brief and to the point. They can be especially helpful if a reporter is on a deadline and is only interested in a quick quote.
- **Face-to-face meetings** can be the most successful technique for getting good media coverage. Meet the reporters to establish a relationship.

4. Press Releases and Media Advisories

- A *press release or media release* is a written account of an event that provides details, commentary, quotes, and basic background about the event for the media. You send a press release to the media to encourage them to write about an event. *Press releases should go out the day of the event*, generally timed with the start of your event, and should be more comprehensive than an advisory. It should provide a summary of what will happen during the event.
- A *media advisory* goes out in advance of an event to urge the media to attend the event. The advisory should tell the media what the event is focused on, where and when the event is going to take place, who will be there, and why the event is being held. This is important so that the news agency has sufficient information to research the issue, and to send the appropriate reporter to the event. *An advisory should be sent approximately 4-7 days* in advance of your event (earlier if you're sending it to a weekly paper).

5. Interview Checklist

Open every interview with:

- Date, time and place of our event
- Our and your website www.united4Iran.org

Make these points in every interview. Remember to stay on these message points and don't change them!! We stand together for:

- Civil and Human Rights for Iran.
- Stopping the abuse of power in Iran—the imprisonment, torture and killing.
- Solidarity with Iranian artists, students and other opposition members.

Finally, tell your story. Mention why you got involved. What you are doing to organize for your local rally. Tell the reporter what is remarkable to you about being a part this effort.

For Immediate Release
December 9, 2009
Contact:



Name
Title
Org
Mobile number
Email

San Francisco Joins the International Community on the Global Day of Solidarity in Support of the People of Iran

- ***Despite Widespread Government Repression, Largest Protests In Iran Since Summer***
- ***In Support and Response, Global Day of Celebration of the Civil Rights Movement in Iran to Take Place on December 12***
- ***Calls On Iran to Respect Freedom of Assembly, Expression, and Press; Free all Prisoners of Conscience***

[city] - As Iran witnesses its largest protests since last June's contested elections, artists and activists outside Iran have organized a celebration of the civil rights movement. On Saturday, December 12th, people from around the Bay Area will be joined by thirty cities worldwide to support the students and activists on the street of Iran by taking part in *Arts United 4 Iran*.

Organized by [United4Iran](#) to take place on both the six-month anniversary of the disputed elections and the 61st anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, *Arts United 4 Iran* will join together artists, activists, and concerned citizens to attend performances and displays of visual and performing arts. The events are organized both to celebrate the civil rights movement and highlight the ongoing protests in Iran. Events will take place in Amsterdam, Orlando, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Berlin, Tokyo, New York, London, and Washington D.C., among other cities. [include your city]

Arts United 4 Iran was organized in support of civil rights movement inside Iran, which continues to spread across the country despite government-sponsored repression, including the arrest and imprisonment of hundreds of civil society activists. As Iranian students vow to continue protests, Iranian authorities are stoking the flames of civil strife by pitting pro-government Basiji militiamen against them. The students' demands for reform may be the spark that ignites a far broader conflict.

The event will also take place on the United4Iran website, www.united4iran.org, which will display videos and sound recordings of performing and visual artists engaged in poetry readings, displays of photos, paintings, and graphics all made or dedicated in honor of *Arts United 4 Iran*.

“The civil rights movement in Iran is very much alive,” says local organizer, “and we as global citizens and Iranians in the Diaspora need to support and highlight these courageous men and women who risk their lives. On December 12th, San Francisco stands in solidarity and let the people of Iran know that the world is watching and that we honor their civil rights movement.”

[Group name] has organized a night of live music, poetry, dance, and visual arts that will be held at xxxx from xxxpm to xxxpm and will feature music by xxxx, a dance performance by xxxx and a art exhibition by xxxxx. For more info please go to www.xxxx.

The UN General Assembly’s resolution on the situation of human rights in Iran, passed November 20, 2009, prompted members of the international community, including United4Iran, to call upon the Iranian government to:

- Respect Freedom of Assembly, Expression, and Press
- Free all Prisoners of Conscience
- End Rape and Torture in Prisons
- Hold Accountable Those Responsible for Committing Human Rights Crimes

Sponsors for ArtsUnited4Iran sponsors and supporters include [Reporters without Borders](#), [Human Rights Watch](#), the [Nobel Women’s Initiative](#), the [International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran](#), [ARTICLE 19](#), [Front Line](#), [PEN America](#), [PEN Kenya](#), [Voz Propria](#), and many others.

Many acclaimed artists, writers and journalists have expressed their support for *Arts United 4 Iran* by posting videos to the people of Iran and their work on the United4Iran website. These artists include: filmmaker **Narges Kalhor**, the daughter of Mehdi Kalhor, cultural advisor to Mahmoud Ahmadinejad; **the Makhmalbaf family**, prominent film-makers; **Roxana Saberi**, an Iranian-American journalist arrested in Iran in January 2009 and imprisoned in Evin prison until May 2009; **Bahman Ghobadi**, an Iranian film director of Kurdish descent; the preeminent Iranian poet **Ismail Khoei**; Iranian singers **Mohsen Namjoo and Arash Sobhani**; Tehran-born singer, composer, and dancer, **Sussan Deyhim**. U2 used Deyhim’s vocal piece based on the Rumi poem, *Beshno Az Ney*, in the opening of their performance of “Sunday Bloody Sunday” in Barcelona, which U2 then dedicated to the people of Iran.

United4Iran is a global network in support of civil and human rights in Iran and coordinated rallies in 110 cities on July 25th. For more details on December 12th global events, visit www.united4iran.org and click on [city]’s map point.

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