

Amnesty International film festivals



Planning Kit

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December 2004 / Revised November 2007

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Amnesty International **Mandate Statement**

Amnesty International is a worldwide movement of people dedicated to the protection and promotion of human rights. We are building a world in which every person enjoys the rights included in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights standards. Towards this end:

- Amnesty International takes action to stop grave abuses of the rights to physical and mental integrity, freedom of conscience and expression, and freedom from discrimination. We campaign, for example, to free prisoners of conscience, protect refugees, abolish the death penalty, and end political killings, “disappearances” and torture.
- Amnesty International seeks to expose human rights abuses accurately and quickly. We systematically and independently research the facts of individual cases and patterns of human rights abuses. These findings are publicized, and members, supporters and staff then mobilize persistent public pressure on governments, armed political groups, companies and others to prevent and stop these violations.
- Amnesty International promotes public awareness and understanding of the full range of human rights, and we work with a global community of organizations to ensure broad support and respect for all human rights.

Amnesty International is governed by its members; we are independent of all governments, political persuasions and religious creeds. We are funded by our members and donors, and no funds are sought or accepted from governments.

Introduction

According to Amnesty International USA, few artistic media have the power to reach across cultures, languages, and even time itself to influence millions of people in the language of our daily lives. Film has such power. Each year dozens of talented filmmakers work against long odds, short finances, and threatening politics to bring to the screen powerful stories of human struggle, sacrifice, and triumph. Some documentary filmmakers have risked their lives so that we may be moved by far-off stories that, once told, seem very much closer to home. It is in this spirit that we present Amnesty International Film Festivals. Through single-evening and multi-day film events we put before the public documentary and dramatic films that are informative, thought provoking, and showcase a wide range of human rights themes and issues.

The Amnesty International Film Festival in Canada began as an annual event first organized by members of Group 17 (Vancouver Eastside) in November 1996. In 2002 the festival was turned over to a new volunteer committee under the direction of AI Canada staff person Don Wright. That same year the festival films were offered to Amnesty groups outside the Lower Mainland, and festivals took place in Victoria, Nelson, Vernon, and Abbotsford. Currently more than 30 Amnesty groups across Canada host annual film events, and several hold monthly Amnesty film nights. Your interest in presenting an AI film event means that even more people will see these powerful films. In doing so, you join other Amnesty International groups and numerous international social justice organizations which present human rights film festivals around the world.

This planning kit

This planning kit is designed to help you successfully host an Amnesty International Film Festival, with information and ideas we trust you will find helpful. It begins with a suggested planning timeline, and includes a variety of planning tools – handy checklists, worksheets, and samples – that we hope will make the planning process an enjoyable one for everyone on the local film festival planning committee.

Adapt this kit and the worksheets and checklists so that they work for your group. This is really the most important advice of all. Be flexible and creative, and keep your planning process manageable and enjoyable. Lastly, please let us know how this kit has helped you, or how we could make it even more useful.

Guidelines

The following set of guidelines was approved by the AI Canada Executive Committee in 2006, and draws from the statement of principles produced by the Human Rights Film Network, excerpts also included below. The Amnesty International Canada Film Festival is a founding member of the Human Rights Film Network (HRFN), a partnership of human rights film festivals around the world. The Network promotes exchange, communication and collaboration regarding the representation of human rights issues in moving pictures. Good luck with your film festival!

AI Canada Guidelines to Assist Members Working on Film Festivals

1. All films shown at an Amnesty International film festival must be based on human rights tenets, as iterated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights standards.
2. All films shown at an Amnesty International film festival must be films that reflect, inform or provide an understanding of the actual state of past and present human rights violations, or the visions and aspirations concerning ways to redress those violations.
3. All films shown at an Amnesty International film festival should seek to inform the viewers on human rights issues and aspirations, and should not intentionally misrepresent the facts, the views or the words of those portrayed.
4. Films shown at an Amnesty International film festival should not be so biased as to invoke hatred and discrimination against groups and individuals, or solely serve political or commercial interests. Similarly, any films shown should be explorative of the issue rather than propagandistic, and should not reproduce stereotypes.
5. Amnesty International film festivals should promote films that allow silenced and marginalized voices to be heard.

Excerpt from HRFN Statement of Principles and Practices

Though the 'human rights film' may be a fairly recent concept, we believe such films have been made during the entire century of moving pictures history. World-renowned directors as well as local film makers have documented human rights abuses or portrayed human rights issues in feature films, and have striven to give a voice and a face to those who were not heard by the powers that be. They have, implicitly or explicitly, been based on human rights tenets even before the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was established in 1948.

Human rights films, in our view, are films that reflect, informs on and provide understanding of the actual state of past and present human rights violations, or the visions and aspirations concerning ways to redress those violations. Human rights films can be documentary, fiction, experimental or animation. They can be short, medium or feature length; have a 35mm, 16mm, video or other format; can be experimental through the use of 'new media' or any other artistic and technological visual means.

Human rights films may be harshly realistic, or highly utopian. They may offer gruesome pictures, or show the bliss of peaceful life. They may report, denounce or convey an emotional message. They may forcefully present the views of one group or individual only, or try to convey the opinions of as many of those involved as possible. They may be a highly accurate report of facts, or offer surreal provocation.

We believe that human rights films, whatever their format, contents or character, should be 'truthful'. That is, they should inform the viewers on human rights issues and aspirations, and should not intentionally misrepresent the facts or the views or words of those portrayed. They should not be so biased as to invoke hatred and discrimination against groups and individuals, or serve political or commercial interests only. They

should be explorative of the issue rather than propagandistic, and not reproduce stereotypes.

We strive to promote films that have good cinematographic quality in photography, narrative, rhythm, audio and other technical characteristics – films that are 'engaging' in the sense that they keep the attention of a large audience. However, due the difficult circumstances in which many human rights film are made, we recognize that also films that do not come up to standards of optimal cinematic quality can be forceful and convincing testimonies of human rights violations and ideals. The Network promotes films that allow silenced and marginalized voices to be heard, as a contribution to their empowerment.

Section I: Getting Started

Planning timeline

Twelve weeks prior to event	Film Festival planning committee: (members, partners) Set local objectives Determine audience (school and/or community) Set format – film night, multi-day film festival Determine film classification requirements Establish budget Set date and book venue (visit venue and use checklist) Book projection equipment and screen (if needed) Consult with provincial film classification department
Ten weeks	Film Festival planning committee tasks: Select films Identify local speakers Set admission – set ticket prices or by donation Apply to national office for insurance coverage Develop promotional plan Pacific Regional Office film centre (Vancouver) Confirm availability of films Post event on film festival website Provide media materials for selected films
Eight weeks	Film Festival planning committee tasks: Confirm speakers Issue first media release (general announcement) Issue event notice to monthly publication Order AI materials for information table Design and arrange printing of program (for use in promotion)
Six weeks	Film Festival planning committee tasks: Issue notices to AI members, other NGOs, etc. Design and arrange printing of poster and/or handbills
Four weeks	Film Festival planning committee tasks: Issue second media release, meet with local media Put up posters/distribute flyers as needed Issue event notice to weekly publications Confirm all arrangements (speakers, venue) Organize event volunteers
Two weeks	Film Festival planning committee task: Put up additional posters Issue event notice to weekly publications Issue reminder notices to AI members, other NGOs, etc. Prepare signage (if needed)

Prepare petitions and other action materials

Pacific Regional Office film centre (Vancouver)
Send films and banner/final materials

One week

Film Festival planning committee task
Final reminder to media and listservs
Final notice to e-mail listservs
Final reminder to speakers and other guests
Assemble all films and information/action materials

Planning a human rights film festival

PLANNING COMMITTEE

A critical factor in organizing a successful festival is an enthusiastic and dedicated planning committee. The planning committee selects films from those available, sets festival date(s), books a venue, and is responsible for all aspects of publicizing the festival and organizing on-site volunteers. The committee should meet at least once every two weeks (see the planning timeline for suggested tasks). Several sub-committees or teams may be created to accomplish some of the tasks. Invite Amnesty members as well as community members to be part of the planning committee, particularly film enthusiasts and social justice activists. See “Preparing and running successful meetings” and the “Event action planning chart” in Section III.

Co-presenter/supporter liaison

One or more committee members may have responsibility for seeking festival co-presenters and supporters. Co-presenters may include organizations that are compatible with Amnesty International such as other international social justice organizations and educational institutions (see the section on “working with others” in this kit), or the venue itself. Supporters may include individuals, businesses and organizations that donate cash, or goods or services to the event that you would otherwise have to pay for (advertising, refreshments, printing, etc.). For example, film festivals have been co-presented with college departments, student unions, and other non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Sponsors have included media outlets, restaurants, printing shops, and so on. If you are considering asking for sponsorship from local businesses, please consult the AI Canada policy on corporate sponsorship.

Outreach and publicity

The outreach and publicity team is responsible for putting up posters and delivering flyers and programs to appropriate locations in your community. The promotion team is also responsible for contacting media outlets, preparing event notices and news releases, being available for media interviews, and generally responding to public and media interest in the festival. Some previous media experience, and good written and oral communication skills are important. More information on outreach and publicity is included in Section II of this kit.

Volunteer coordination

This person or team is responsible for organizing on-site volunteers for the festival. They will determine how many volunteers are needed to ensure the festival runs smoothly, write volunteer job descriptions, put out a call for volunteers, train and schedule them. This individual or team is also responsible for volunteer well-being during the event (rest and refreshments), and deciding how volunteers will be recognized for their contribution (AI merchandise, post-festival party, etc.).

Shipping and receiving

This task can be done by one person willing to receive films by mail, and then package them for sending to the next event or returning them to Pacific Regional Office film centre (Vancouver).

SETTING A DATE

It is highly advisable that you give yourselves at least twelve weeks to properly organize and promote your film festival. Before setting the date, check with other organizations that host events in your community and work to avoid a conflict with events that are likely to attract a similar audience. Consult community events calendars and/or the local Chamber of Commerce. Setting the date also depends on availability of a venue on the day or days you have in mind.

SELECTING A VENUE

Two types of venues lend themselves to AI film festivals: cinemas and college/university/high school lecture theatres. In choosing a venue, cost will be a major consideration, and while most cinemas will charge a rental fee, working with a college department or student group will often result in access to a very suitable venue at no charge. The size of venue you book will depend on how large an audience you expect to attract. In most cases you will not want a venue that seats less than 50; seating for 75 to 100 is about right for most events. The Vancouver venue seats 200, and in 2006 the average audience size was 120 persons for each single film or double bill.

The other most important consideration is the type of projection equipment available – built-in data projection is best as the films are all VHS NTSC video or DVD, film prints are not circulated due to shipping and insurance costs except by special arrangement. Few documentaries are actually available in film anymore due to the high cost of production. Be aware that if video projection equipment must be rented, the expense can be quite high. Other considerations include wheelchair access, food services, sound quality and seating comfort, security issues, availability of technical support in case of venue or equipment problems, and whether you are planning a one night or a multi-day event. Be sure to visit the venue and use the venue checklist in Section III to access it if you are unsure.

SELECTING FILMS

The Pacific Regional Office film centre (Vancouver) maintains a list of films that are available for screening. The list includes the length, a short description, and

the cost or restrictions, if any. In selecting films for your festival, consider choosing films with themes and countries or regions that resonant with people in your community. For example, if you have a significant Latin American population you might choose some films on situations in Central or South America. If there are active women's rights groups in your community, this would be a good reason to feature films that focus on women's human rights, etc. These considerations will also help you identify groups that might be willing to co-present a film, or provide a guest speaker who can answer questions at the end of a film or evening of films. The other consideration is to select films which focus on AI campaign themes and/or current events. It is also recommended that programs include a mix of films that highlight human rights violations and celebrate individuals or groups.

Groups are not limited to the films available from the Pacific Regional Office film centre. If your group is aware of an appropriate film, especially one that was locally produced that you might be able to premiere, do consider including it. Keep in mind you must have the filmmakers permission or an agreement from the distributor, which may involve paying a license fee. If you are unsure about any aspect of this, contact the Pacific Regional Office film centre for assistance.

REGULATIONS

Regulation of public film events is a provincial responsibility. It is important to consult with the provincial film classification department to determine if films need to be classified for the event you are planning. Regulations vary from province to province. In British Columbia, film screenings at schools, colleges, and universities do not have to be rated. For off-campus screening, films must be rated if they are open to the general public. You may consult with your film branch if the B.C. rating is transferable or not.

If the venue you are using is not specifically licensed to hold public film screenings, you may need to check local or provincial regulations about this aspect as well. Finally, be aware of room capacity, usually set by the fire department based on the size of the room, whether the seating is portable or fixed, the number of exits, etc. It will generally be your responsibility to ensure that room capacity is not exceeded and that fire exits are clearly marked and clear of obstructions. Make sure the ushers know where the exits are and how to direct the audience in the event the venue must be evacuated.

PREPARING A BUDGET

Once you know the venue and film costs, and have researched publicity costs (poster and program printing), you should prepare a budget to make sure projected revenues will cover all costs. A budget worksheet is included in Section III. Calculating costs will assist in determining if admission by donation will cover expenses, or if it may be prudent to set the admission charge at, for example \$5 per film or double bill. Vancouver charges \$9 regular admission for single or double bills, \$6 for students, seniors, and matinee screenings. Many groups simply charge \$5 for each session (single or double bill), others operate on an admission by donation basis – and often report that the average donation is between \$3 and \$4 per person.

GUEST SPEAKERS

Guest speakers can greatly enhance and put a local face on the themes and issues developed through the films. Audience members greatly appreciate the opportunity to express opinions and pose questions. The guest speaker may be an Amnesty member, someone from another organization that works on the issue, or an individual with personal experience with the topic (perhaps as a volunteer with a development/aid organization). Sometimes film directors or others connected to the film may be available.

There are two ways of approaching the use of a guest speaker. The speaker could be asked to speak for 10 to 15 minutes prior to the start of a film, and then be available to answer questions afterwards for about another 10 to 15 minutes. Alternatively, the speaker could address the audience immediately following the film and answer questions at that time. Inviting a guest speaker to speak for less than 15 minutes is unfair to both the speaker and the audience, and not leaving time for a few questions may leave the audience unfulfilled.

DEVELOPING THE PROGRAM

In setting the program, generally allow a few minutes at the beginning of the film for the House Manager or a planning committee member to welcome the audience on behalf of Amnesty International and very briefly introduce the film. If there will be a guest speaker, introduce the guest speaker if they are speaking before the film begins, or mention that a guest speaker or panel discussion will follow the film and encourage people to remain in their seats. Also point out that AI information and actions are available in the lobby, and announce the date and place of the next local meeting or event. Lastly, allow 10 to 15 minutes to clear the theatre between films if admission is being charged for each film or double bill.

In terms of the order of films, although it is a good idea to group films according to theme or geographic region, be careful not to have two films in a row that highlight a seemingly hopeless situation. In Vancouver one year, we ran two films together, one on missing women in Mexico, and one on East European women forced into the sex trade. Neither film offered much hope that a solution was possible, let alone being sought – it was a very harsh afternoon double bill!

A good rough guide is that films over 75 minutes should stand alone, while films that are 30 to 75 minutes may be paired in a double bill with another at the other end of the spectrum (for example, a 30 minute film and a 60 minute film work well together). Try to avoid programming more than 90 minutes worth of films at a time unless there will be intermission.

PRINTED PROGRAM

Many host groups prepare simple programs for their event, prepared by a member with desktop publishing skills or with the help of a local graphic designer. If you are producing a printed program, consider preparing it well in advance and

using is as a promotional tool, leaving copies at coffee shops, bookstores, libraries, college campuses, etc. For ideas and sample copies contact the PRO film centre.

Programs should include start times, film titles and descriptions, the name of the director and length of the film. The program may also include film websites, information on Amnesty International, current campaigns, and local groups. Be sure to include the names of the venue and address, contact information and admission costs and ticket availability (if advance purchase is possible). Please use current AI logos available from Amnesty International.

OUTREACH

In addition to general outreach to the public-at-large, film festivals provide an opportunity for Amnesty groups to reach out to a variety of groups in the community. Targeted outreach may be based on program themes, such as refugees, violence against women, gay and lesbian issues, union organizing, conflict, etc. Outreach may also be directed at ethnic communities with films from or about specific foreign countries or regions. Another target audience will be college and university students in such disciplines as Latin American Studies, South Asian Studies, political science, history, etc. Thinking about who might want to see a particular film or group of films will help you identify community organizations, schools, committees, and agencies that should be directly contacted with specific festival information.

OPENING RECEPTION

Hosting an opening reception is optional, but certainly a fun way to kick off a film festival. It is an opportunity to bring together committee members, guest speakers, co-presenters, media, supporters, and filmmakers. Usually it is possible to solicit donations of finger food and refreshments from local suppliers. If you are considering serving any alcohol, be aware of provincial regulations around the serving of alcohol, permit requirements, security, etc. Also confirm that the AI insurance policy continues to cover events featuring alcohol. In Vancouver, we sometimes hold an opening night reception that starts about 90 minutes before the first film, with several volunteers dedicated to setting it up and then cleaning up after guests left for the first film.

ACTION IDEAS

People attending the film festival may be learning about horrific human rights violations, and it is important that in addition to guest speakers, information and action materials are made available. Designate an MC to introduce the films and at the end of the film, draw attention to how people can help. Be sure to have a table with AI materials, especially action materials that relate to the films – in the form of postcards, letters, and petitions. For actions, consult *The Activist*, the national website, and other AI section websites. Also have information on how to join the host Amnesty group.

One idea is to place an action on all seats before the audience enters. Another idea is to host a social action fair during the festival that includes local

organizations that work on the themes raised in the films. In Victoria, there is a wide hallway and lobby outside the auditorium, and up to 30 local and international NGOs set up information tables and displays every year.

ON-SITE VOLUNTEER POSITIONS

Members of the planning committee may sign up for volunteer shifts during the festival itself, but to be able to enjoy the festival after putting so much effort into organizing it, consider putting out a call for on-site volunteers. Bring them together a few days or a week prior to the festival for a brief orientation session that covers the basics about Amnesty International, the purpose of the film festival, ticket procedures, venue policies, and who to call if you can't make your shift or will be late.

It is important that volunteers are properly recognized for their contribution to the event. Most volunteers will be able to view most of the films that are shown while they are on duty, but the house manager and those who have responsibility for the box office may not see much while on duty. They should be entitled to view films on alternate nights if possible. Other ways of supporting volunteers include providing refreshments, giving them AI merchandise, and throwing a post-festival volunteer party.

Begin with the following positions and add more if you are also doing concession or merchandise sales.

House Manager (one on duty at all times)

The house manager works closely with venue staff and volunteers as necessary to ensure that the festival runs smoothly. The house manager supervises all on-site film festival volunteers and ensures that festival and venue rules are understood and followed. The house manager may also introduce films and guest speakers when other committee members are not available.

Box Office

If you have complete responsibility for on-site ticket sales, the box office should be staffed with at least two volunteers to make sure the line-up doesn't get too long. If the venue is responsible for ticket sales, one volunteer may be required to work with the venue box office staff/volunteer to ensure box office operations run smoothly and help with making change and issuing tickets. Box office volunteers report to the House Manager. Many Amnesty film events simply accept donations at the door, in which case make sure you set up an easy and obvious way for people to drop donations into a large jar or box, and actively encourage them to do so.

Usher/Ticket taker

Responsible for helping people find the exit at the end of each film, do a quick clean up of venue, keep the doors closed until House Manager signals the venue is ready, and then make sure people display a valid ticket on their way into the cinema. Ushers are also responsible for line-up control and keeping the lobby area clean and tidy. One usher to remain outside doors for at least the first ten minutes of each show to check the tickets of latecomers. Report to House Manager.

Information table

Throughout your event, it is important that at least one member is available to staff an information/action table. These members should be familiar with AI's mandate statement, be able to answer general questions about priority campaigns, and be able to direct the public to the AI Canada website for more detailed information. The table should feature a general AI membership brochure, current AI campaign materials, information on joining the local group(s), including a sign-up sheet, and petition, letter, or postcard actions relating to film themes (usually available through the Pacific Regional Office film centre).

Welcome speech

The house manager or a designated group member should make a short welcome speech to introduce each film (make sure the projectionist knows that you'll be doing a brief introduction and is ready to start the film at the close of your welcome speech). Something like:

"Good evening, and welcome to the Amnesty International Film Festival. I'm (your name) from AI group/action circle (group name and number). We are pleased to bring you tonight's film(s), and we thank you for coming out to learn about human rights. We hope that what you see tonight will inspire you to get more involved in defending and protecting human rights. Of course we hope that you will consider joining Amnesty International, the world's largest human rights organization. If you haven't already done so, please stop by our table on the way out for more information, and an opportunity to take immediate action on cases relating to film themes. You can also pick up information on joining Amnesty International and getting involved with our local group/action circle. Many thanks for being here tonight."

Two additional points to mention:

- if there are any co-presenters or sponsors, thank them now
- if the director or a guest speaker is scheduled to address the audience following the film, let people know and encourage them to remain in their seats

Working with other groups in your community

We've all been to events where – despite the important topic and the effort that went into planning – we're disappointed to see that it's only the same familiar faces that have shown up.

Film festivals provide an opportunity for Amnesty members to engage with a wider community. There are many topics and geographic areas represented by the films, and all offer possibilities to work with groups and organizations that share common concerns with Amnesty, whether or not they identify themselves as being primarily "human rights activists." Working with these groups may make it possible to reach new audiences.

For example:

- Refugee organizations, especially those monitoring refugee flows in areas of conflict, or who work on behalf of refugee claimants facing deportation from Canada.

- Organizations actively working to prevent the sale of weapons to those who abuse human rights, or making the link between diamonds and armed conflict.
- Organizations involved in promoting the importance of international human rights law or supporting such institutions as the International Criminal Court (ICC).

In deciding what organizations or communities to approach, consider the following:

- What themes are most central to the ongoing work of Amnesty members in your community? For example, do members in your community already do a lot of work around refugee issues, do you have action files related to film content?
- Which organizations are most active in your community? Which appear to have large constituencies of their own they can promote the event to? Which get regular media coverage?
- What organizations or communities would you like to build a relationship with in order to continue to work together in the future?

Finding common ground

Keep in mind that every organization that you approach will have its own agenda and its own way of talking about issues. If you intend to collaborate with other groups, it is important to keep an open mind and be prepared to make some compromises – provided the end result doesn't compromise the clarity and accuracy with which Amnesty's own concerns are presented.

For example, the organizations that you work with might have their own ideas about additional topics that should be covered in a joint event, what other speakers to invite, and how the event should be framed or promoted. All of this can be very positive. After all, organizations know how to attract and motivate their own constituencies. By working with them, Amnesty can reach new audiences.

In a jointly presented event, partner organizations may want to raise issues and concerns that Amnesty has no official position on. This is not a problem as long as it is clear that the groups are presenting their own opinion which is not necessarily Amnesty's position, and that Amnesty is seen as encouraging public debate rather than taking a specific position. It is also important that our specific concerns are not overshadowed by event partners.

As a general guideline, it's appropriate that a joint event include presentations about issues and concerns that Amnesty takes no position on provided that:

- They are not positions that Amnesty would likely oppose as contrary to human rights principles (eg., calling for the death penalty for crimes of war)
- The organization is not political in nature (for example, calling for the overthrow of a regime or for independence, or calling for boycotts or sanctions)

- They are expressing concerns around which we would support public debate and are presented by people with expertise or credible personal experience
- The positions that we do not take are not confused or compromised by association (for example, it is always problematic to share the stage with groups whose primary goal is the independence of a particular people or region or the overthrow of a particular government because our own objectivity will appear compromised).
- The partnership will benefit AI without damaging our impartiality and independence and we are comfortable in working with the other organization, in particular with regard to its credibility, reliability, and impartiality
- We are satisfied that AI's mandate and the limits of our action work are well understood by partner organization(s)

If you still have any questions about what is and isn't appropriate, don't hesitate to contact a local fieldworker or a member of the Amnesty International Grassroots Organizing team.

Post-event

Please return films promptly as they may be needed by others. Consider holding a post-event committee debrief to discuss and record how it went so you have a good place to start for subsequent events. Please also provide feedback to the Pacific Regional Office about how the event went – attendance, ticket sales or donations, costs, what worked well, what didn't work so well. If possible, include a copy of any posters or programs you produced, as well as any press clippings or photographs taken at the event (digital versions are fine).

If you incorporate a film event into your annual public awareness programming you will find that each year the media will respond more positively, your audience will steadily increase, and your committee will become more motivated and efficient. Through effective outreach, promotion, and presentation, the festival can develop an enthusiastic group of core supporters and become an event that is anticipated annually in your community.

Pacific Regional Office film centre

The Pacific Regional Office film centre is located at the Vancouver office of Amnesty International Canada. It features a video and DVD library with more than 300 films, and although not all are available for public screenings, most may be borrowed for Amnesty group meetings. The film centre can help with all aspects of planning and running your Amnesty film event. Due to the high volume of requests, we ask that you reserve films well in advance, using the booking form at the back of this planning kit, and available by e-mail as a Word document. We are also implementing a nominal \$10 charge per order to help offset postage costs. For further information contact Don Wright at dwright@amnesty.ca.

Section II: Promotion

Publicity strategy

There are three important reasons for publicity:

- It informs individuals of upcoming events and encourages them to attend, and it increases awareness of your group and its activities to a wider public,
- It contributes to public awareness of human rights issues,
- The more awareness the public has of Amnesty International and its work, the easier it will be to attract new members and supporters.

Word-of-mouth – this is perhaps the most important and effective form of publicity. One-on-one communication has much greater persuasive power when compared to mass media messages. Encourage members to talk to friends about the event. Contact community activists and associations, service groups, student groups, unions, and churches. Who else can you think of?

Postering – Place posters in high traffic locations throughout your community or school. Use large printing, and try not to put in too much information (of course, don't forget the essentials: date, time, location, directions, contact information, website, names of guest speakers, etc.).

Tabling – Info tables in high traffic locations can attract attention to your group and the event. Borrow a banner from Amnesty International or make one yourself on paper or cloth.

Listserves and websites – Send event information to activist listservs and websites that focus on social justice and human rights issues and events and include a line that invites recipients to forward the notice to others. Send to college and university department heads and faculty (for example, Latin American Studies, Women's Studies, etc. depending on film themes). And don't forget to post your event to the AI Canada calendar at www.amnesty.ca.

Public Service Announcements – Send event announcements to all media (newspapers, radio, television, and web-based media). PSAs, as they are called, are short and to the point, with just the basic information about the date, time, location and nature of the event. Include contact information.

News releases – Send these to all media, with an emphasis on print media. News releases should include the basic details plus additional information on key elements of the event: film titles, film descriptions, guest speakers, as well as information on Amnesty International. See the tips on preparing a news release on the next page and the sample news release that follows.

Outreach – Think about which communities will be specifically interested in the films you are screening. Target communities could include people from the countries or regions

featured in a film and others who may identify with film subjects or topics through ethnic media, friendship or solidarity groups, and advocacy organizations.

Tips on preparing a news release

News releases take many forms, some acceptable to editors, some not. The sample release on the following page is one way to format news releases that are readable.

1. Date the news release and indicate when it may be printed: immediately or at a future date (usually needed only if there is a very good reason for sending it out ahead of time, before you want the information released to the public).
2. Give the news release a catchy headline that tells the point of the story; editors need to be intrigued before they will read much further.
3. Double space the news release (single space is okay for e-mail versions), this simply makes it easier to read and edit (for the sake of space, the example that follows is single-spaced).
4. The lead paragraph is the most important. It's the essence of your story and could be the only thing printed if the editor is short on space. Include the essential details around who, what, where, and when. Each of these can be expanded as necessary in the body of the news release.
5. Indirect quotes add interest to the story. "According to" is a good way to lead into an indirect quote. Direct quotes are even more interesting, particular if the speaker is important, famous, or unusual.
6. Put – 30 – at the bottom of the story, just before the contact information. It indicates the end of what may be printed.
7. Always include contact information so the editor knows who to call or e-mail if more information is required, or there is interest in setting up an interview. It is okay to include more than one local contact.
8. Include an additional page that lists film titles and descriptions, screening times, film websites if available, and an offer to supply contact information for directors on request.

Amnesty International Film Festival

MEDIA RELEASE

October 25, 2002
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Amnesty International presents human rights film festival

Few artistic media have the power to reach across cultures, languages, and even time itself to influence millions of people in the language of our daily lives. Film has such power.

Each year dozens of talented filmmakers work against long odds, short finances, and threatening politics to bring to the screen powerful stories of human struggle, sacrifice, and triumph. Some documentary filmmakers have risked their very lives so that we may be moved by far-off stories that, once told, seem very much closer to home.

It is in this spirit that Amnesty International presents the Seventh Annual Amnesty International Film Festival. Through this three-day festival, we strive to bring audiences documentary and dramatic films that are informative and thought provoking, and showcase a wide range of human rights themes and issues.

This year the organization is pleased to present the world premiere of a new National Film Board of Canada film -- *Kosovo: Fragile Peace*, as well as the Vancouver premiere of more than a dozen short and feature-length films.

Other highlights include the Academy Award-winning *No Man's Land* -- a dramatic testimony to the absurdity of war; *The Pinochet Case*, and *Justice and the Generals* -- both of these films chronicle efforts to bring perpetrators of human rights violations to justice; and *Senorita Extraviada*, a chilling examination of the disappearances and deaths of more than 200 women in and around Ciudad Juarez, Mexico.

More compelling human rights stories are told through such films as *Haunted Land*, *The Two Towns of Jasper*, *Stand Together*, and *The Execution of Wanda Jean*.

Tickets are available at the door prior to each screening. Regular admission is \$8, while seniors and students pay \$6 each. Matinee screenings are also \$6 per person. A complete schedule with film descriptions is available by visiting www.amnesty.bc.ca or calling 604-313-4069.

Plan on attending the Amnesty International Film Festival and prepare to experience cinema with a social conscience -- cinema that speaks truth to power.

- 30 -

Media contact: Don Wright, Festival Director
604-313-4069 / dwright@amnesty.ca

Publicity checklist

- [] Review publicity for previous events (what worked, what didn't work).
- [] Develop a schedule for publicity (see planning timeline).
- [] Determine how event partners can help with publicity (group newsletters, listservs, other events, etc.).
- [] Decide whether or not to produce a brochure or flyer, research costs.
- [] Decide on admission price (set amount or by donation).
- [] Decide on contact information – phone, e-mail, website, etc.
- [] Research local and regional media – record contact information and deadlines.
- [] Research local and regional human rights and social justice listservs.
- [] Post event information to group or regional website, if available.
- [] Post event information to listserv, provide link to website.
- [] Distribute brochures or flyers through NGO offices, coffeehouses, schools, community service and recreation centres, etc.
- [] Put posters up around town.
- [] Prepare and issue the first media release – this should be a general event announcement with information on who is organizing the event, when, and where the event is taking place, and how people can get more information.
- [] Fax media release to other community organizations.
- [] Prepare and issue the second media release – this one could focus on guest speakers and/or links to current AI campaigns. Talk about who they are, what they have done, and what they are going to talk about. Repeat *the who, what, when, where* from the first media release.

Event documentation

Often overlooked in event planning is the need to document how the event was organized so that planners may learn from each event, and new members coming to the group can pick up the threads should key people not be involved in a subsequent event. Some of the elements of event planning that should be documented include:

- The purpose and objectives for the event
- Projected and final budget, bookkeeping records and signed contracts
- Timeline (original and one with actual completion dates filled in)
- Copies of all correspondence (memos, form letters, information sheets)
- Copies of minutes for all planning meetings
- Forms developed for the event
- Information on guest speakers, panelists, and facilitators
- Copies of all promotional materials (flyers, brochures, posters, etc.)
- Copies of media releases and public service announcements sent to media
- Copies of news clipping and video clips of television coverage
- Record of contact information for media, other NGOs, guest speakers, etc.
- Description of the venue used, contact information, and comments on how suitable it turned out to be
- Description of other concerns, issues, procedures relating to planning the event
- Completed evaluation forms from participants in the event (if collected)
- Anything else you feel helps to make planning the event understandable to your successors

Section III: Selected resources

Preparing and running successful meetings

Choose your meeting's purpose

Meetings have to compete for our scarce time. They have to be worth attending. Be clear on the purpose of the meeting. What do you hope to achieve? Attract new members? Plan activities and/or projects? A clear purpose helps set an agenda, focus publicity, and attract others.

Set an agenda

Your purpose is where you want to be at the end of the meeting. Your agenda contains the steps and direction you take, and the time you allow to get there. Design your agenda to serve your purpose. Decide how much time you'll need per item in relation to your total meeting time. Mix up the serious and the light-hearted. Prepare to share responsibilities during the meeting.

Choose dates and location early

Try to announce your next meeting date and location at least one meeting ahead.

Create a welcoming environment

Create a physical set-up in your meeting room that really makes people feel a part of the common whole. Avoid classroom-like arrangements – a circle works well for some groups. Consider using a round robin approach so that each person gets an opportunity to speak.

Start on time

This means that people responsible for preparing the meeting site need to arrive early. The message "we're organized" is important to people.

Friendly openers

Arrange a social time at the beginning of your meeting. Possibly use name tags: first name in BIG letters. Pair up participants, take five minutes to introduce yourselves to one another, and then introduce each other to the whole group. Keep it casual. Remember that individuals react differently to attention.

Agenda review

Review and agree on your meeting agenda. Write it boldly on flipchart paper or a whiteboard. Agree as well on a time to end your meeting. Create an atmosphere which says "This meeting belongs to each of us, it's ours." Delegate agenda items so that different people have opportunities to speak and lead discussion.

Make decisions

After exploring an agenda item and giving everyone an opportunity to speak, it is important to decide what you can do with an item. Do you need more information, or can you make a decision? Record who will be responsible for any follow-up that is required.

Wrap up

Review and clarify the group's decisions. Remind everyone of upcoming activities and projects. Possibly evaluate your meeting: ask people to name the thing they like best, and liked least, about the meeting. Gather name and contact information from new participants. Thank everyone for their participation.

Film festival venue checklist

Venue:		
Venue address:		
Proposed date(s):		
Contact:		
Screening room		
Room capacity	Type of seating	Video/DVD projection
Podium for guest speaker	Microphones	Temperature control
Ventilation	Technical support	
Other film formats		
Lobby/entrance area		
Ticket sales booth/table	Space for info/action tables, how many	
Wheelchair accessibility		
Level entrance or ramp	Elevator	Washroom
Food and beverage issues		
Water fountain	Vending machines	Snack bar
Exclusive catering, contact:		
Own food/catering allowed, contact:		
Venue security		
Who opens		
Who closes		
Overtime if running late	Emergency contact	
Parking capacity	Access to transit	
Is childcare available		
Rental issues		
Total cost	Deposit amount	Deposit due
Full payment due	Cancellation date	Parking capacity
Notes		

Budget worksheet

EXPENSES - Venue	
Venue rental	
Video projector/screen	
Security	
Film rental	
Shipping	
EXPENSES - Publicity	
Poster	
Handbills	
Program	
EXPENSES - Other	
Opening reception	
TOTAL EXPENSES	

REVENUE	
Group contribution	
Co-presenter(s)	
Cash donations	
Ticket sales	
TOTAL REVENUE	

SURPLUS/DEFICIT	
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FILM FESTIVAL DIRECTORY

Amnesty International film festivals and screenings

Amnesty International Canada

An Amnesty International Film Festival has been operating in Vancouver since 1996 and in 2002 the festival started “touring” to several BC communities. Currently more than 30 communities across Canada host monthly or annual film events.

<http://www.amnesty.ca/filmfest>

Amnesty International Netherlands

The annual film festival presented in Amsterdam by AI Netherlands is probably the largest Amnesty film event in the world. Their event takes place in March every year.

http://www.amnesty.nl/filmfestival/index_en.shtml

Amnesty International Sweden

New annual film festival presented by the Swedish section.

<http://net11.amnesty.se/www/wk/filmfestivaleng.pdf>

Amnesty International UK

Behind the Screen brings you the real lives, the real stories and the real human rights issues behind some of the most powerful films of the moment. We will bring you face to face with some of the film's makers and stars and introduce you to experts in the human rights field who can put the films in context.

<http://www.amnesty.org.uk/content.asp?CategoryID=2077>

Amnesty International USA

The Amnesty International Human Rights Film Festival was launched in the United States in 1992 (as the Seattle Human Rights Film Festival) with the purpose of showcasing the best in documentary and fiction filmmaking related to human rights. Many of these films have few other opportunities for public screening. Until 2006 the AI USA film festival ran annually in numerous cities across the USA. However, the festival office closed in 2006 and the program shifted to the youth section, although many groups continue to host film events. The website below will take you to the film festival section which includes a list of international human rights film festivals and a link to the “On Campus” film festival program.

<http://www.amnestyusa.org/filmfest/>

Global Visions Film Festival – Edmonton

The Global Visions Film Festival presents a selection of documentary films from around the world and has been doing so for more than 25 years.

<http://www.globalvisionsfestival.com>

Human Rights Watch

“Human Rights Watch's International Film Festival has become a leading venue for distinguished fiction, documentary and animated films and videos with a distinctive human rights theme. Through the eyes of committed and courageous filmmakers, we showcase the heroic stories of activists and survivors from all over the world. The works we feature help to put a human face on threats to individual freedom and dignity, and celebrate the power of the human spirit and intellect to prevail.”

<http://www.hrw.org/iff/>

Montreal Human Rights Film Festival

This new festival uses cinema to promote awareness and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms

<http://www.ffdpm.com/en/home.php>

One World

The One World film festival was created by the non-profit People in Need-Czech TV Foundation with the aim of using the powerful medium of film and video to foster mutual understanding between cultures, heighten public awareness about human rights, and promote global responsibility.

<http://www.oneworld.cz/>

United Nations Association Film Festival – New York

Established several years ago at Stanford University, UNAFF celebrates the power of international documentaries dealing with UN related issues such as human rights, environmental survival, women's issues, protection of refugees, homelessness, racism, disease control, universal education, war and peace. This festival travels throughout the United States.

<http://www.unaff.org>

World Community Film Festival

The World Community Film Festival is BC's largest annual social issues film festival. The festival features dozens of covering a wide range of social issues from around the world and closer to home. The Traveling World Community Film Festival visits ten or more communities in BC and beyond every year.

<http://www.worldcommunity.ca>

World Inter-Action Mondiale – Ottawa

WIAM's annual *One World Film Festival* promotes global issues through powerful documentary films. The festival is a place for people to learn and exchange ideas on global issues with independent Canadian filmmakers and locally based groups working for social justice and international development.

<http://wiam.ca/programs/one-world-film-festival/>

Selected Canadian documentary film festivals

Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival – Toronto

Hot Docs is North America's largest documentary festival with over 100 cutting-edge documentaries from Canada and around the globe.

<http://www.hotdocs.ca>

Planet in Focus – Toronto

Planet in Focus promotes the use of film and video to frame and explore social and ecological focal points, and as a catalyst for awareness, discussion and action.

<http://www.planetinfocus.org>

ReelWorld Film Festival – Toronto

ReelWorld Film Festival aims to promote, encourage and showcase the works of culturally and racially diverse films and videos to Canadian and International audiences and creates awareness and appreciation for diverse stories.

<http://www.reelworld.ca>

Selected U.S. documentary film festivals

Full Frame (Durham, North Carolina) -- <http://www.fullframefest.org/>

Silverdocs (Silver Spring, Maryland) -- <http://silverdocs.com/>

Tribeca (New York City) -- <http://www.tribecafilmfestival.org/>

Chicago -- <http://www.chicagodocfestival.org/>

Film festival online directories

Documentary festivals – <http://www.documentary.org/resources/festivals/php>

International film festivals – <http://www.mptv.com/html/filmfestivals.htm>

Women's film festivals – <http://www.widc.org/links.html>

Human Rights Film Network – http://www.amnesty.nl/filmfestival/hr_festivals.shtml

Selected film distributors

The Amnesty International Film festival has sourced films through the following film distributors.

Bullfrog Films - <http://www.bullfrogfilms.com/>

First Run/Icarus Films – www.frif.com

National Film Board of Canada – www.nfb.ca

ThinkFilm - <http://www.thinkfilmcompany.com/>

Women Make Movies – www.wmm.com

Film Festival Planning Kit Evaluation

This kit was prepared to help local planning committees present an Amnesty International Film Festival. We would really appreciate your feedback about the usefulness of this kit so that we may better support membership events in the future.

What did you like about this planning kit?

What did you dislike about this planning kit?

Name the most useful two or three sections:

Name the least useful two or three sections:

What was missing from this kit?

Any other comments:

Please return to:

Don Wright, Amnesty International, #430-319 West Pender St, Vancouver BC V6B 1T4

