

HOW TO WRITE AN EFFECTIVE APPEAL LETTER

BASIC TIPS FOR WRITING APPEALS TO GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

1. **Be factual.** Refer to the details of the case as outlined by the Write for Rights case sheet. Human rights are based on international laws, agreements and obligations. Effective letters of appeal are based on these obligations as they pertain to the specific concerns of the case. Appeals should not include political judgments or jargon as they are not effective and can sometimes do harm.
2. **Be brief** Stay concise to keep the attention of the reader. A few paragraphs is enough to convey your message.
3. **Be polite.** This rule is essential and invariable. Using offensive language is not effective. Governments do not respond to abusive or condemnatory letters, however well deserved.
4. **Be explicit** in expressing your concern for the victim. If you have a specific name, repeat the victim's name throughout the letter to ensure that the official will recognize the name and remember the letters sent on the victim's behalf.
5. **Write clearly AND in English,** unless you are completely fluent in the language of the involved country. The recipient must be able to easily read your letter so if you are not typing it, please make sure that your writing is plain and legible.

Referring to Amnesty International. It is not necessary, as this is a letter from a private US citizen (you!) and that gives it plenty of strength. **SAMPLE MESSAGES**

The following phrases and sentences are offered to help you write your letter of appeal. Use them as a functional starting point but try to focus on your own heart felt comments and suggestions as those will be more impressive and effective.

STARTERS

I wish to appeal to you on behalf of _____ who is the subject of my deepest concern.

Many here in my city are very worried about _____ who is said to be unjustly detained in your country.

I write to you out of deep concern for the current state of health of recently imprisoned _____.

I would like to take the opportunity to call your attention to the case of _____ .

I am writing to you at this time to seek your assistance in the situation of a detainee, _____.

CLOSERS

Sincerely,

I urge you to resolve this in a manner that respects basic human rights.

I hope to hear from you in the very near future.

I, and those who share my concern, will be watching this case closely.

Finally, in view of the above-mentioned information, I urge you to act quickly to correct this situation and ask that you inform me of the outcome of your investigation.

Thanking you in advance for your time on this important and urgent matter, I am respectfully,

You are encouraged to include your address at the end of the letter and on the envelope. It will have much more impact that way. However, it is not required, you can just put in your name, city, state and country. Please note: if you are writing a support letter to the person or family themselves, it would be best to include your address; they might write back!

The diagram illustrates the layout of a letter. It features three main components:

- Return Address:** A red-bordered box in the top left corner containing the text: "Your name", "Your SPO#", "Luther College", "700 College Drive", "Decorah, Iowa 52101-1045". A red line points from this box to the label "Return Address".
- Stamp:** A green-bordered box in the top right corner containing an image of the United States flag and the text "USA". A green line points from this box to the label "Stamp".
- Address:** A purple-bordered box in the bottom right corner containing the text: "Recipient's Full Name", "Business Name", "Street Address", "City State Zip Code", "Country". A purple line points from this box to the label "Address".