
TIPS FOR WRITING ACTION ALERTS

“**Action Alerts**” or “**Urgent Actions**” are a primary tool for responding to a human rights crisis. The goal is to:

- mobilize a large number of people
- in a short amount of time
- to focus pressure on specific authorities
- through simple, straightforward action (i.e. writing letters, sending faxes, making phone calls)

The hope is that enough pressure will result in a cessation of the abuse.

An “**URGENT ACTION**” is the highest form of alert. It is used to get immediate action to address a specific crisis situation (i.e. someone arrested/jailed; specific home demolition imminent, etc.)

An “**ACTION ALERT**” addresses a more generalized crisis situation in which people can be mobilized to respond over a period of weeks (i.e. increase in land confiscation, further displacement of indigenous due to paramilitary violence and threats, etc.)

A “**PRAYER ALERT**” mobilizes people to undergird a situation in prayer (i.e. rumors of planned attacks, nonviolent marches or vigils or campaigns, etc.)

In writing an action alert, be sure to:

- 1. State the details of the event briefly and accurately:**
 - a. Who (names), what (general description), where (place), when (date and time)
 - b. 1-2 paragraphs
- 2. State the action you wish people to take** – identify one clear response; (1 paragraph)
- 3. Include sufficient background information** (*several paragraphs*) so that people feel confident enough to respond; offer a website address or other source of additional information for those interested;
- 4. Provide accurate contact information:**
 - a. test all addresses, phone and fax numbers and e-mail addresses for accuracy before releasing your alert;
 - b. prioritize your contacts in order of importance
 - (1) suggest two main contacts rather than a whole long list
 - (2) label your contact list “in order of priority”
 - c. be clear about where to send copies (i.e. CPT office, local team, etc.)
- 5. Clarify why it’s urgent** – how will people’s response make a difference?