

## WHAT IS A PRESS RELEASE?

A press release is an official statement issued to provide specific but brief information about an event or happening. The main purpose of a press release is to promote something significant and specific. It has a strict format and has three main promotional purposes:

1. **Inform the media** of a specific event in the hopes that it will be shared with the public;
2. **Raise awareness** about your organization, attract the attention of journalists, and gain coverage for your mission, activities, research, and policy positions on a more regular basis;
3. **Promote your organization** online through social media, blogs, and other relevant websites in order to reach the public more directly.

Press releases can also be a **powerful advocacy tool** and can be strategically used to put pressure on policymakers to take action on a particular issue. They should be used carefully and should not be issued to publicize routine events.

## PRESS RELEASES IN THE AGE OF TWITTER.

Although social media have changed the world's communications landscape, press releases remain vital tools and may in fact be more important than ever in both promoting your organization and making a statement on the public record. With the Internet, press releases have become:

- An important **search engine optimization** tool that can help donors, journalists, policymakers, potential employees and other target audiences find your organization;
- An important and **permanent part of your organization's public record** that will be available for the foreseeable future, documenting your positions and statements, especially as disinformation campaigns grow to be more ubiquitous;
- A method for **direct delivery of an unfiltered message** to the public.

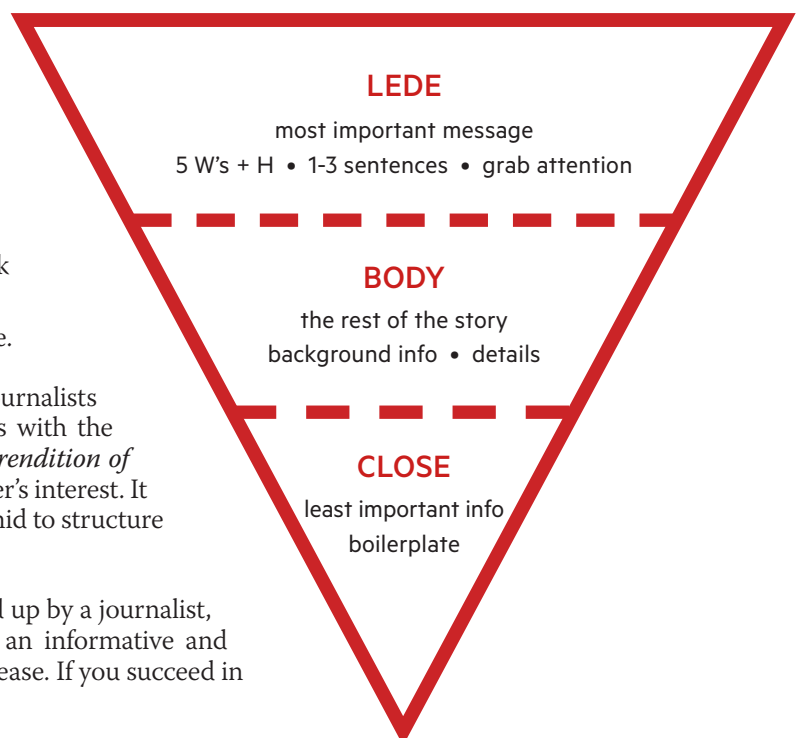
## HOW TO WRITE AN EFFECTIVE PRESS RELEASE:

Before beginning to write a press release, *consider whether your story is newsworthy* and ask yourself:

- Is there anything new here?
- Is something unusual or unexpected being reported?
- Will someone outside of my organization or network find this interesting?
- Will anyone really care? If so, why? This is your angle.

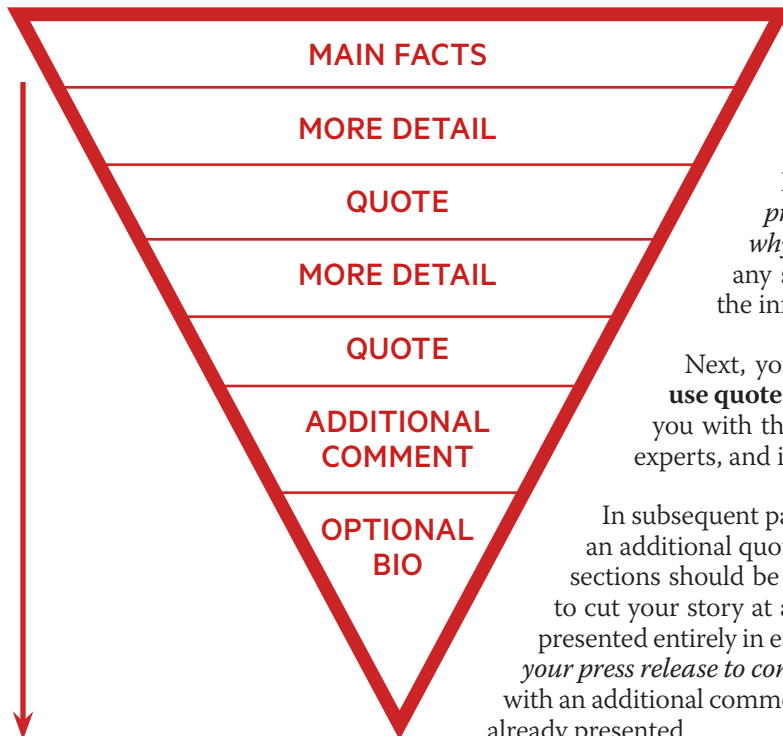
A press release *adheres to a strict format* in order to allow journalists to find information quickly and easily and always begins with the name of the city in which it originates. It is *not merely a rendition of facts* and should be written with the goal of piquing a reader's interest. It is helpful to use journalists' metaphor of an inverted pyramid to structure your press release.

To improve the chances of your press release being picked up by a journalist, *make sure you have a strong headline* or, in an email, an informative and interesting subject line that is clearly marked as a press release. If you succeed in getting a journalist to continue reading, *get to the point*.



The first line of your press release should contain the most important part of your announcement. Like a news story, the first line of a press release should contain a summary of the story and should grab the attention of its reader while answering as much of the following questions as possible:

1. **Who** is making the announcement?
2. **What** is being announced?
3. **Where** is this happening?
4. **When** is the announcement being made? When is an event taking place?
5. **Why** is this happening or why did it happen?



The final question is, of course, the fundamental question and its answer should in turn answer the question of why a reader should care about this announcement or story.

Having answered these questions, your next priority is to *provide detail, add contextual information, and highlight why your story is important*. Here, you should seek to answer any secondary questions your readers will have, expanding on the information provided in the first paragraph.

Next, you can *add quotes to provide insight and opinion*. **Do not use quotes for the purposes of adding information.** Quotes provide you with the opportunity to present your organization, promote your experts, and illustrate your positions, your mission, and your goal.

In subsequent paragraphs you may add detail to explain a quote and include an additional quote to expand on themes presented in earlier sections. These sections should be written with the understanding that a journalist may have to cut your story at any point. This makes it imperative that key information is presented entirely in earlier paragraphs and that you *do not rely on later sections of your press release to convey important information*. You may conclude your release with an additional comment detailing omitted information or summarizing what you already presented.

Necessarily, *a press release is concise* and should not exceed one page, or about 400 words. While you should include background information about your organization, this can be added to a section at the end and can spill over into a second page. This, along with other additional information should be labelled clearly as “Notes to Editors”.

### WHEN SENDING A PRESS RELEASE:

- **Include a short outline** of your story idea and explain where you think it might fit into the target publication;
- Make an effort to **write a personalized email** to each major news outlet or journalist;
- **Include a copy of your release in the body of your email**, as some journalists may not open an attachment;
- **Avoid sending photos** unless they add something important to a story;
- Aim high, but **be realistic** and realize that it can take some persistence before you secure coverage.

---

#### REFERENCED SOURCES:

<https://www.theguardian.com/small-business-network/2014/jul/14/how-to-write-press-release>  
<https://fredrickscommunications.com/write-a-press-release/>  
<https://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/external/news/publicising/how-to-write-a-press-release/inverted-pyramid>

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 20, 2018

**Contact:** *Andrew Miller*, Deputy Director for Policy, Project on Middle East Democracy (POMED), [andrew.miller@pomed.org](mailto:andrew.miller@pomed.org), 202-804-4741 (office); *April Brady*, Communications Coordinator, POMED, [april.brady@pomed.org](mailto:april.brady@pomed.org), 202-804-4747 (office)

# POMED Welcomes Acquittal of NGO Employees in Egypt's Foreign Funding Trial

(Washington, D.C.) – In response to today's news that an Egyptian court has acquitted 41 NGO employees convicted in June 2013 in the so-called "NGO foreign funding" trial, Project on Middle East Democracy Deputy Director for Policy Andrew Miller issued the following statement:

"The Project on Middle East Democracy (POMED) welcomes today's [news](#) that an Egyptian court acquitted 41 employees of U.S.-based nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) who were convicted in the so-called "NGO foreign funding" trial in June 2013. The defendants included Americans, Egyptians, and citizens of other countries who worked for Freedom House, the International Center for Journalists, the National Democratic Institute, and the International Republican Institute on projects in Egypt. We understand that efforts will continue to secure the exoneration of the last two defendants in the case.

"For the acquitted and their family and friends, today's verdict marks the culmination of a long ordeal that began more than seven years ago, just months after the 2011 revolution, when the Egyptian authorities launched an unprecedented and politicized crackdown against U.S.-funded democracy and human rights NGOs. In December 2011, Egyptian security services raided the Egyptian offices of 17 NGOs on baseless accusations that they were conspiring against national security. Set against what amounted to an organized media campaign that portrayed the NGO workers as American agents and spies, the ensuing 2012-2013 trial was grossly unfair and resulted in all 43 defendants receiving prison sentences of up to five years for the illegal receipt of foreign funding, operating an NGO without a license, and performing prohibited activities.

"The Egyptian campaign against these U.S.-based NGOs precipitated a crisis in the bilateral relationship. Over the years, a coalition of groups in the United States and Egypt, including the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, Human Rights Watch, the Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy, Human Rights First, the Bipartisan Working Group on Egypt, and POMED, joined with the organizations of the NGO workers to help ensure that their fate was not forgotten. Ultimately, it was sustained pressure on the Egyptian government from the Obama administration, the Trump administration, and especially the U.S. Congress that eventually led to today's exoneration of the victims of this travesty of justice.

"Yet Egyptian NGOs remain under severe government repression. Indeed, the 2013 trial was only part of a larger state investigation into the activities of independent civil society organizations, known as Case 173/2011. Many of Egypt's most prominent human rights NGOs have been targeted in the other part of this case, under which asset freezes and travels bans have been imposed on the country's leading civil society activists. Separately, last year President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi ratified a draconian NGO law that goes against all international standards for freedom of association. Unless al-Sisi changes course, the combined effect of Case 173 and the NGO Law will be to snuff out any genuinely independent civil society work in Egypt, to the detriment of the Egyptian people. The United States should continue to urge Egypt to close Case 173 immediately and to amend the NGO Law to comply with international standards of freedom of association. Failure to do so would not only be a missed opportunity, but could ultimately render today's victory somewhat hollow."

###

---

### Additional POMED Resources on NGOs in Egypt:

- [Op-Ed – A New Hope for NGOs in Egypt \(The Hill\)](#)
- [Backgrounder – The Campaign Against NGOs in Egypt](#)
- [Fact Sheet – Egypt's Campaign Against Civil Society](#)
- [Fact Sheet – The Dangers of Egypt's NGO Law](#)

---

*The Project on Middle East Democracy (POMED) is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to examining how genuine democracies can develop in the Middle East and how the United States can best support that process. Through research, advocacy, and civil society partnerships we work to strengthen the constituency for U.S. policies that peacefully support democratic reform in the Middle East.*