

# Writing Letters to the Editor



A letter to the editor is a letter sent to the editors of a newspaper about materials that have appeared in the publication or issues of concern to the readership. Letters to the editor are an effective way of quickly telling people about an issue you care about. Letters to the editor can be an important tool for every STAND chapter.

## You can write Letters to the Editor:

1. In response to something the newspaper has covered or ignored. If your local paper writes an article on the situation in Darfur, you can write a letter telling readers to attend your chapter's next event or meeting if they are interested in helping to end the genocide.
2. To call on your member of Congress to act. Local papers are very interested in members of Congress, and they are likely to print anything that focuses on a locally elected official.
3. To campaign for an official endorsement from the paper's editorial board. Local papers can have an immense effect on readers (for example, on Election Day, readers often bring editorial page with them into the ballot box). Blitzing the newspaper with similar letters to the editor, though they won't all be printed, can lead to an endorsement of some strong anti-genocide action, like school/state divestment or a vote in Congress.

## Here are some tips that will help you get your letter in the paper:

1. Keep it short. Every paper has different expectations, but the average is around 300 words; don't exceed that. Be careful to follow all requirements set by your newspaper.
2. Get to the point. Letters to the editor should focus on one specific ask or criticism. Letters should get to the point quickly, stating it as clearly as possible.
3. Bring your point home. When writing a letter, you should relate it to yourself and the community as much as possible. Student writers should identify themselves as such – it adds a lot to the letter. Incorporate the school/community into the letter as much as you can.
4. Include ways to take action. Always give readers a way to get involved in the movement, whether it be donating to civilian protection, calling their Senator and asking them to support the Darfur Accountability and Divestment Act, or attending your next meeting.
5. Mention your elected officials. Always try to bring up your elected officials, praising or criticizing them for their action to end genocide, and give specific steps that the official can take next.
6. Represent a large group of people. Sometimes writing on behalf of a large group of students can strengthen your point. You can use phrases like, "Students at George Washington University stand against genocide, and this administration should too."
7. Include your contact info. Editors usually have to call you to confirm authorship, so don't forget to include your phone number and e-mail address in your submission.
8. Ask STAND for help. If you want guidance while writing your letter, or just want another pair of eyes to take a look at it, e-mail [media@standnow.org](mailto:media@standnow.org) with your letter.