

**Venues' Crisis Protocol Process:  
How to Respond to Boycott or Cancellation Pressure**

This process provides a clear, step-by-step process for decision-makers. It ensures that institutional responses are proportionate, lawful and consistent with freedom of expression.

The protocol focuses on ensuring coordinated and evidence-based response to external pressure. This includes recording concerns accurately, assessing risks and legal context, bringing together key decision-makers, briefing staff clearly, and communicating externally in a measured way. The priority is to protect safety, uphold freedom of expression and maintain organisational consistency.

FITA can provide confidential advice or referral to professional security consultants. The aim is not to cancel, but to ensure that the event can proceed safely.

A well-prepared venue is often the best defence against intimidation or misinformation.

**Stage 1 - Receive and Record**

**Trigger:**

A petition, open letter, protest threat or email campaign calls on your organisation to drop an artist, event or sponsor.

**Action:**

- **Acknowledge internally**, don't rush to reply publicly.
- **Log** all correspondence (emails, posts, screenshots, press inquiries).
- **Notify** key staff: CEO/Director, Comms, Legal and Artistic leads.
- Assign a single **point of contact** for all responses.

➔ Move to **Stage 2: Assess**

**Stage 2 - Assess**

**Key Questions:**

- Is this a **safety issue** (credible threats, risk to staff or audiences)?
- Is it **reputational** (media or social pressure)?
- Is it **contractual** (partner or sponsor objection)?
- Is it **ideological** (political disagreement, boycott demand)?

**Action:**

- Assess **risk and legal context** before making any decision.
- Consult your **Freedom of Expression Policy** (or FITA's model version).
- Seek legal advice if discrimination, contractual or public order issues arise.

➔ Move to **Stage 3: Convene**

**Stage 3 - Convene a Core Response Group**

**Recommended members:**

- Artistic Director / Head of Programming
- CEO or Senior Management
- Communications/Press Lead
- Legal/HR Advisor
- External PR or Legal Counsel (if needed)

**Purpose:**

- Review facts, policies, contracts and potential consequences.
- Agree on who speaks, what is said and when.
- Ensure alignment between artistic and institutional values.

➔ Move to **Stage 4: Communicate Internally**

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**Action:**

- **Brief staff** clearly before making public statements.
- Emphasise that your organisation *supports artistic freedom and safety for all staff*.
- Keep internal discussions confidential to prevent misinformation.
- Provide staff with a **line to take** if questioned externally.

➔ Move to **Stage 5: Respond Externally**

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**Choose one of three paths, depending on context:**

- **Clarification Response:**
  - For mild public pressure or misinformation.
  - Short, factual, non-defensive clarification.
- **Public Statement:**
  - For widespread media interest or organised protest.
  - Balanced tone, emphasising due process, safety and freedom of expression.
- **Action Response:**
  - If genuine security or legal grounds exist for change (e.g. credible threats).
  - All actions documented, legally advised and communicated transparently.

➔ Move to **Stage 6: Record & Review**

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**After the event:**

- Document what happened, including:
  - Timeline of decisions
  - Internal discussions
  - Public reactions
- Review the response with your team:
  - Were values upheld?
  - Were communications effective?
  - What can be improved next time?
- Consider contributing an anonymised case to FITA's knowledge base.