

THE SECRETARY OF STATE
WASHINGTON

October 25, 2011

The Honorable Howard L. Berman
Committee on Foreign Affairs
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Berman:

Thank you for your letter of September 8 regarding Internet freedom and the relationship between Internet freedom and the protection of intellectual property rights on the Internet.

The State Department is strongly committed to advancing both Internet freedom and the protection and enforcement of intellectual property rights on the Internet. Indeed, these two priorities are consistent. The protection and enforcement of intellectual property rights on the Internet is critical for the United States, for its creators and inventors, and for the jobs it promotes and the economic promise it provides. There is no contradiction between intellectual property rights protection and enforcement and ensuring freedom of expression on the Internet.

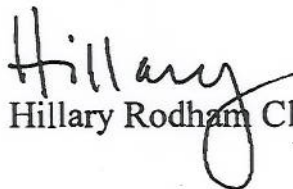
We must hold governments accountable to the international commitments and obligations they have undertaken with respect to freedom of expression, which apply equally to online activity. Given the volume of communication over the Internet today, we have focused our efforts on ensuring that the Internet is a medium through which people can safely and effectively express their opinions. The Arab Spring shows the promise of the Internet as a medium by which peaceful demonstrators can mobilize citizens in the face of government oppression. The Internet also offers tremendous opportunity for creators and inventors, but that promise will not be met unless the rules of copyright and trademark are protected and enforced. The rule of law is essential to both Internet freedom and protection of intellectual property rights, which are both firmly embedded in U.S. law and policy.

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There will be many opportunities in the future for the State Department to reiterate publicly that Internet freedom and intellectual property protection are mutually consistent. And as those opportunities arise, we will take care to ensure that our international partners understand that our commitment to the rule of law encompasses both online and offline activity. We will also ensure that our international partners understand they must meet their own commitments to Internet freedom and intellectual property protection online, just as they do offline.

We hope that this information is helpful to you. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of further assistance on this or any other matter.

Sincerely yours,


Hillary Rodham Clinton