



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Mr. Simon,

Thank you for your letter of September 23, 2008, regarding the state of human rights in Tunisia. I am responding on behalf of Secretary Rice.

The issue of human rights and good governance is a core component of the U.S. government's dialogue with Tunisia. We consistently raise human rights, both in broad terms and in relation to specific cases, and will continue to do so with all levels of the Tunisian government. Recently, the Secretary raised human rights and democracy reforms with President Ben Ali during her September 5-6 trip to Tunisia. She made it clear to the President that the United States expects Tunisia to expand its democratic reform efforts.

We regularly press the Government of Tunisia to unblock websites and to cease the intimidation and harassment of journalists. While we welcomed the July 21 release of Slim Boukhdhir, we are concerned at his continued harassment. Our efforts to advocate for increased freedom of the press in Tunisia are ongoing, and annual U.S. reports and statements will continue to emphasize the need for human rights reforms until websites are unblocked and intimidation tactics end.

We hope this information is useful to you. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we may be of assistance on this or any other issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "CDW", followed by a long horizontal line.

C. David Welch
Assistant Secretary
Near Eastern Affairs

Joel Simon, Executive Director
Committee to Protect Journalists
330 7th Avenue, 11th Floor,
New York, NY 10001.