



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

July 25, 2012

Dear Mr. Simon:

Thank you for your July 5 letter to Secretary Clinton regarding the Israeli Ministry of Communication's refusal to return U.S. government-funded equipment that was confiscated from Wattan TV in Ramallah in February.

The Department of State shares your views on the importance of maintaining high-quality, independent journalism throughout the region. We are actively working with the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority at senior levels to resolve the issues raised in your letter, including the confiscation of equipment from Wattan TV. Ambassador Shapiro raised the matter with the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories recently and we are continuing to pursue the return of the equipment.

The United States Government provides funding in order to support free and independent media in the West Bank and Gaza. We consider it important that our projects, including funding for several independent media outlets, help Palestinian audiences gain access to free and fair news coverage and benefit from programming that provides in-depth information on political processes and decision making. We sincerely appreciate the valuable work undertaken by you and your colleagues at the Committee to Protect Journalists in facilitating access to independent information in the region. We understand the serious difficulties that the confiscation of this equipment poses to Al Wattan.

I can assure you that our Embassy and Consulate General in Jerusalem will continue to assist in securing the release of the Wattan TV equipment while working with the Israelis and Palestinians to ensure future access to free and fair information in the region.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lawrence R. Silverman".

Lawrence R. Silverman

Director

Office of Israel and Palestinian Affairs