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Business and Human Rights Resource Center

Dear Malena Bengtsson,

Thank you for your email dated 24 November, inviting Ericsson to comment on the following article:

Excuses, excuses: Surveillance Technology and Oppressive Regimes, Human Rights First, 18 Nov 2011:

<http://www.humanrightsfirst.org/2011/11/18/excuses-excuses-surveillance-technology-and-oppressive-regimes/>

There have recently been media reports suggesting that Syria and Iran are using 'surveillance products' supplied by technology companies such as Ericsson to monitor political opposition. Ericsson is deeply concerned about such claims, and would like to clarify our position as follows.

Ericsson sells standard GSM telecommunications systems to operators in Syria and Iran, the same standard equipment that we sell to operators in our other 178 markets, so the media reports are incorrect.

We believe that telecommunication contributes to a more open and democratic society and people all around the world benefit from access to telecommunications. We see access to communication as a basic human right, and telecom is itself a powerful enabler to rights, such as the right to health, education, a livelihood and freedom of expression. At the same time, there is a risk that such systems can be abused.

A standard GSM system includes lawful intercept capabilities, and most operators throughout the world require these capabilities, normally because of the legal requirements that they must meet.

Location information is inherent in all mobile operating systems. Networks require a location element in order for a phone call to be routed correctly. Without it, no phones would be able to locate each other and no calls would be connected. Similarly operators require location information to accurately charge for calls made. Without this, an operator would not know whether a call has been placed locally, nationally, or to somewhere abroad.

Many experts say that the development in the Middle East during the Arab Spring would not have happened without telecommunication. When people get access to communication they can share, spread and discuss opinions inside and outside a country. Today SMS, MMS, e-

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mail, Facebook, Twitter and other social media are used as information channels. Telecommunication and the internet are inclusive technologies that prevent isolation and enable participation of people all over the world in global conversations.

Ericsson has a well-defined and strong governance framework, including a trade compliance policy and a rigorous compliance process that applies to all 180 countries where we operate in. We are following rules and regulations from international bodies such as the UN and the EU. This also applies to our operations in Iran and Syria.

We recognize the U.N. [Guiding Principles](#) on Business and Human Rights, and work with due diligence throughout our value chain, and we are currently evaluating multistakeholder initiatives like the Global Network Initiative.

Should you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact us.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Elaine Grunewald', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Elaine Weidman Grunewald  
Vice President, Sustainability & Corporate Responsibility