



United States Department of State

*Assistant Secretary of State for
South and Central Asian Affairs*

Washington, D.C. 20520-6258

January 27, 2010

Dear Ms. Watters:

I appreciate your expression of concern to Secretary Clinton regarding the human rights situation in Turkmenistan, which I unintentionally played down in remarks that I made in September. I have been asked to respond on Secretary Clinton's behalf.

The United States Government considers human rights to be an important aspect of our engagement with governments around the world, particularly the Central Asian countries. Our discussions with the Government of Turkmenistan and other Central Asian countries provide opportunities to promote a strong human rights agenda throughout the region. The human dimension comprises a critical component in our new initiative to hold annual bilateral consultations with every Central Asian country. When I lead the U.S. side in our consultations with Turkmenistan this spring, I plan to highlight human rights as an important element in our relationship. My colleagues and I continue to engage Turkmenistan's government on an ongoing basis in frank dialogue that encourages awareness of and respect for human rights and political reforms that will respects its citizens' fundamental freedoms. I have raised, and will continue to raise, human rights concerns publicly and in our conversations with the government of Turkmenistan.

I assure you that I consider the human rights situation in Turkmenistan as serious as any other country in Central Asia, and apologize for the misunderstanding. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

Robert O. Blake, Jr.

Ms. Kate Watters,
Executive Director,
Crude Accountability,
P.O. Box 2345,
Alexandria, VA 22301.

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