



December 2, 2010

Mr. Jeff Bezos, CEO  
Amazon  
1200 12th Ave. South, Ste. 1200  
Seattle, WA 98144-2734

Dear Mr. Bezos:

Amazon's decision to cease hosting Wikileaks on its servers raises serious concerns about Internet freedom that I urge you to consider before responding to Senator Joseph Lieberman's demand for information about how Amazon facilitates the distribution of material online. In particular, I urge you to make clear the decision making process that led Amazon to drop Wikileaks from its servers and to share with the public which parts of the United States government contacted Amazon to request that it do so.

Concern for human rights activists prompted me to write to Mr. Julian Assange on November 28th to urge him to exercise caution and not release the names or identities of human rights defenders who might be persecuted by their governments for having received assistance from the United States. The same concern for the rights of activists compels me to write to you today.

Recently, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton championed Internet freedom as a "Fifth Freedom," as important to the struggle for human rights as freedom of expression, freedom of worship and freedom from want and fear. But just as repressive regimes violated their citizens' rights of free speech and expression in FDR's day, today they restrict access to information online.

It is sad, but not surprising, that the Chinese government yesterday blocked access to the Wikileaks documents with its great firewall. That is the censorship we have come to expect from China. Similarly, Egypt restricted access to new technology in the lead up to this Sunday's flawed parliamentary elections. Iran is notorious for its restrictions on its citizens' online speech and association. The examples go on.

The United States has been a leader in the global struggle for human rights, and freedom of expression in particular; because of that leadership, what it does has consequences for human rights around the world. And while there are many good reasons for diplomats to engage in candid, private -- and sometimes classified -- communications, Americans are rightfully concerned over the Wikileaks documented revelations that our government exerted pressure on Germany to quash

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a torture prosecution or that officials tried to silence discussion of an ally's extrajudicial killings.

Amazon may very well have complied with its own terms of service in dropping Wikileaks. And reasonable people can disagree about whether Wikileaks has violated the law by publishing classified information. But, the stakes are too high for companies to act with anything but the utmost concern for due process and transparency in making crucial decisions about how and whether to comply with government demands to control access to information and online speech. So that these concerns can be adequately considered by all of us who have a stake in defending freedom of expression, I urge you to make clear the decision making process that led the dropping of Wikileaks from Amazon's servers and to share with the public which parts of the United States government contacted Amazon with the request to halt service.

With the holiday gift giving season approaching, undoubtedly the last thing Amazon wants to see is customers concerned by talk of boycotts, possible legal issues, and political uproar. However, like information technology companies the world over facing government requests to censor or restrict online activity, your company's actions affect the rights of millions of individuals today and will help determine whether the Internet of tomorrow lives up to its promise to provide people with greater freedom to express themselves and organize or, instead, becomes simply another forum where governments exercise unjust control over the rights of their citizens.

Iryna Vidanyava, an activist fighting for free speech in her native Belarus, has called information technology companies "the last resort of freedom," and urged them to consider that, for human rights activists, Internet freedom is not just about business, it's about life. I urge you to recognize that the policies Amazon adopts with respect to decisions in the United States will have consequences all over the world.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Elisa Massimino". The signature is written in a cursive style and is centered within a light gray rectangular box.

President and CEO