

**September 8, 2015**

**Michael G. Fisch**

*President and Chief Executive Officer*

*American Securities, LLC*

299 Park Avenue, 34th Floor

New York, NY 10171

**Re: Global Tel\*Link and Human Rights Watch**

Dear Mr. Fisch:

I write regarding the inherent conflict between your participation on the board of Human Rights Watch and American Securities, LLC's ownership of Global Tel\*Link (GTL), this country's largest exploiter of the basic communication rights of some of its poorest people: prisoners and their families.

As I'm sure you are aware, GTL is the leading telecommunications service provider serving approximately 2,400 correctional facilities and 1.3 million prisoners in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. GTL proudly reports on its website that it holds 31 state prison system contracts (including 8 of the largest 10) and over 800 county jail contracts, including 32 of the largest city/county jail facilities.

GTL's website also states: "Connecting inmates to their friends and loved ones is an essential service with benefits for all involved." Unfortunately, the definition of "all" apparently only includes GTL, American Securities and the detention facilities that contract with GTL. It does not include the families of prisoners who must choose between rent, groceries or utility bills and expensive calls from their incarcerated loved ones. At its basic level, GTL succeeds remarkably well in monetizing that most fundamental of all human rights: the right to communicate with one's family and loved ones.

While GTL claims it is committed to fulfilling "its responsibilities with the highest level of integrity and ethics," we submit it is inherently unethical to gouge prisoners' families through exorbitant telephone rates and monopoly contracts while providing kickbacks to correctional agencies – kickbacks that are funded by income from prisoners' family members. Prior to the FCC's imposition of rate caps on interstate prison and jail phone calls in February 2014, GTL charged some of the highest rates in the nation – up to \$17.30 for a 15-minute call – and the company continues to charge high in-state rates.

The Human Rights Defense Center (HRDC), a non-profit organization and co-founder and leader of the national Campaign for Prison Phone Justice, has been working on reform of the prison phone industry since 1992. The Campaign has been instrumental in providing comprehensive data and analysis to the FCC related to prison phone rates, commissions and ancillary fees.

We realize that GTL is in the business of making money, as are you, and that exploiting the families of prisoners through monopoly phone contracts is a legal and accepted business practice in the U.S. for the moment. However, a conflict arises when you purport to care enough about human rights to be a member of the board of Human Rights Watch while you profit personally from the violation of the human rights of millions of people, including children, who have incarcerated family members and parents.

We realize that GTL is reportedly for sale, yet the basis for that sale appears to be the potential for diminished profits due to additional regulation by the Federal Communications Commission, not any moral qualms about exploiting poor people who wish to communicate with their loved ones. You are, of course, free to profit in any legal manner you so desire. But you are not free to launder your reputation at the expense of millions of impoverished families enmeshed in the criminal justice system. Comparably, we do not see tobacco executives nor owners of the tobacco industry sitting on the boards of the American Cancer or Lung Associations.

According to Human Rights Watch's mission statement, the organization "defends the rights of people worldwide" and works to "investigate abuses, expose the facts widely, and pressure those with power to respect rights and secure justice," in order to "uphold human dignity and advance the cause of human rights for all." We submit that GTL's exploitation of the ability of prisoners to communicate with their families and children is the antithesis of upholding human dignity and advancing human rights, and is in direct conflict with Human Rights Watch's mission.

In light of this obvious ethical conflict we are duly requesting that you step down from the board of Human Rights Watch as long as you remain affiliated with American Securities and GTL remains a part of the American Securities portfolio.

We look forward to your response, and would appreciate hearing from you by September 22.

Sincerely,

Paul Wright  
Executive Director, HRDC

cc: Brian D. Oliver, CEO, Global Tel\*Link  
Kenneth Roth, Executive Director, HRW