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To: H
Cc: Sullivan, Jacob J; Reines, Philippe I; Abedin, Huma
Subject: Posner response to Washington Post editorial

Philippe and Jake asked me to send along this response to the Washington Post editorial:

By Michael Posner

The Post's Dec. 27 editorial ("Redefining Human Rights") on the Obama Administration's human rights and democracy policies, and Secretary Clinton's recent speech at Georgetown in particular, misses the critical point: human rights, democracy, and development are mutually reinforcing, not competing goals. They complement each other in the task of making human rights a human reality.

President Roosevelt understood the fundamental link between liberty, prosperity and security, tying together freedom of speech and worship with freedom from want and freedom from fear in his famous "Four Freedoms" speech. At Georgetown, Secretary Clinton articulated a 21st century vision grounded in this wisdom.

To accuse Secretary Clinton of embracing a Soviet-bloc approach to human rights because she includes development in a discussion of democracy not only strains the bonds of credulity and common sense, it also walls off a crucial avenue for ensuring that people can actually exercise the rights that are naturally theirs - including the rights to freedom of religion, association, and speech-in their daily lives.

As Secretary Clinton made clear, policies that address development alone are not adequate: "Freedom doesn't come in half measures, and partial remedies will not solve the whole problem," she said. But experience shows us that where broad-based development occurs, people are more likely to demand a say in securing their futures, and governments are more likely to have the resources to maintain the strong institutions, including reliable police and fair courts, that help ensure the consistent protection of rights. Where people are given the right to speak freely, to participate in their nation's political process and have access to basic information about government, sustainable development is more likely to occur. At the same time, democracies without development do not last. These are mutually reinforcing tracks, and the Obama Administration is committed to pursuing both simultaneously.

As President Obama said in his Nobel lecture, "engagement with repressive regimes lacks the satisfying purity of indignation." But the Post's overheated outrage ignores the lessons learned by generations of men and women who worked to advance human rights around the world.

To suggest that Secretary Clinton somehow provided excuses to rights-abusing dictators in a speech in which she forcefully criticized specific abuses across the world, is simply not credible. Far from being an excuse for any regime, this is an approach that pushes governments to do more to advance civil and political rights and to ensure that democracy actually delivers a measure of prosperity and opportunity for all. That is the right approach for the Obama Administration and for the 21st century.

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