The Citizen Lab
At the Munk School of Global Affairs

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Fwd: The Citizen Lab Report

Chaim Gelfand [redacted] Tue, May 4, 2021 at 11:25 AM
To: Ronald Deibert [redacted]

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Dear Professor Deibert:

We are in receipt of your letter dated April 27, 2021, which responds to our letter of February 18, 2021.

In our February letter, we explained in depth our human rights framework, our efforts to develop an international consensus and set of standards related to our sector, and the good faith manner in which we conduct investigations of alleged misuses of our products. We offered a detailed description of how we are trying to balance the tension between assisting states and state agencies in their duty to protect individuals from terrorism and violent crime, with rights to privacy, freedom of expression, and the potential for misuse by those state actors. We understand, of course, that this tension is exacerbated by the fact that terrorist plots and highly impactful criminal enterprises often seek shelter in countries where respect for the rule of law is inconsistent. Nonetheless, we have been clear that we will continue to enhance our framework through, among other things, active engagement with stakeholders and experts.

In that spirit, we reiterated our invitation to meet and discuss your concerns and our program in further detail, in the same manner that we have with many well-established research institutes and organizations. Those invitations have been made with the sincere hope that Citizen Lab might have constructive and tangible suggestions about how we might improve our efforts to strengthen our processes and thereby mitigate and prevent potential human rights violations connected to the use of our products by third-party customers.

Your most recent letter again rejects that invitation, claiming that you "see no particular value." That is deeply regretful, as we would have thought that your prior reporting on our sector and in relation to our products may place Citizen Lab in a position to provide insights that could lead to enhancements that limit future abuses. Should you wish to engage constructively – bilaterally or with a group of others – our invitation remains open.

Likewise, we will continue to investigate the allegations of misuse you have identified, and should you wish to provide further information in relation to them, please let us know.

Best regards,

Chaim