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Human Rights Watch
1630 Connecticut Avenue NW
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Washington DC 20009
USA

20th February 2009

Dear Mr Ganesan,

I write in response to your letter of 5th February 2009 concerning your report on the adherence of European companies in the United States to international standards on freedom of association. Mr Buckles and Mr Gibson have asked me to respond on their behalf, and I thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important matter.

Business ethics

G4S is committed to being a socially responsible corporate citizen and to support this aim our Business Ethics Policy was first introduced in 2004, immediately following the formation of G4S through the merger of Group 4 Falck and Securicor. The policy has been regularly reviewed since that date so the wording has changed over time, yet our fundamental commitments to the principles of freedom of association and collective bargaining in accordance with local legislation and practice remain unchanged.

Support for freedom of association and collective bargaining

G4S is the second largest private employer in the world and actively engages in constructive dialogue with appropriate social partners and trade unions. We are proud to have formal relations with over 200 unions in developed and developing markets around the world, and in fact, more than a quarter of our employees globally are currently represented by unions.

To take these commitments to the next level, in 2008 we embarked on an Ethical Employment Partnership with UNI, the global union federation representing 20 million workers in the services sector, which will drive improvements in employment standards across the global security industry while helping to ensure that employee and union rights are respected throughout G4S.

Even when there are disagreements, a natural occurrence in any employment situation, we seek to have constructive relationships with employees and unions around the world, working together on matters of common interest and handling those issues where our interests differ in a mature and responsible manner, utilising whichever formal or informal process is appropriate.

Directors:
Alf Duch-Pedersen (Chairman)
Lord Condon QPM (Deputy Chairman)
Nick Buckles, (Chief Executive)
Trevor Dighton
Grahame Gibson
Mark Elliott
Thorleif Krarup
Bo Lerenius
Mark Seligman
Secretary: Peter David

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Labour relations in the United States

Turning specifically to the United States, our labour relations took a significant step forwards in December 2008 when our US subsidiary, Wackenhut, reached agreement with the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), which brought an end to a long dispute and established a framework to work together in the interest of our US employees and other stakeholders. This agreement builds on our positive track record in the US, where a significant percentage of our workforce is represented by labor unions and Wackenhut has signed collective bargaining agreements or other recognition agreements with five labour unions.

As you are no doubt aware, prior to reaching an agreement with the SEIU, Wackenhut endured a five year corporate campaign waged by the SEIU. Many of the legal cases cited in your letter arose as a result of the SEIU's campaign to gain recognition by Wackenhut. During the course of the SEIU campaign hundreds of claims were lodged against Wackenhut. The vast majority of these cases were either dismissed or the courts found in favour of the company, and we believe this further demonstrate that G4S's global commitment to positive labour relations is supported in practice in the US. In light of this, we respectfully request that you not include these cases, most of which were resolved many years ago, as case studies in your report. To the extent you do not agree to exclude them, we request the courtesy of knowing what you intend to write about the events in order to prepare a reasonable and appropriate response.

Conclusion

We fully appreciate your assurances of fair, balanced and accurate reporting and hope that our comments on these cases and our general approach to labour relations in the US and elsewhere will lead you to the conclusion that G4S is an industry leader, and that our treatment of employees in the US is consistent with our support for international labour standards. Our success as a business is based on the engagement and capability of our employees, and we remain committed to building constructive relationships with them, and their representatives, wherever we operate.

If you wish to discuss this matter further or have any additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact me, and I look forward to reading your report in due course.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jenni Myles'.

Jenni Myles

Director of Employee Engagement & HR