



12 September 2018

Tan Sri Jamaludin Ibrahim  
Axiata Group Berhad  
Chief Executive Officer  
Axiata Tower  
9 Jalan Stesen Sentral 5  
Kuala Lumpur Sentral  
Kuala Lumpur, 50470, Malaysia

Dear Mr. Bin Ibrahim,

Access Now is a global organization fighting to defend and extend human rights in the digital age, particularly for users most at risk. We are writing to draw your attention to your company's performance in the [2018 Ranking Digital Rights Corporate Accountability Index](#) and to invite you to offer a public response.

As you may be aware, the Index evaluated 22 of the world's leading internet, mobile, and telecommunications companies, including yours, and found that all companies could make significant improvements in disclosing policies and commitments that affect their users' rights to freedom of expression and privacy. Axiata's score was based on an evaluation of its disclosed policies for Celcom's pre-paid mobile and post-paid mobile services in Malaysia.

Axiata ranked eighth out of 10 companies in its category, a slight increase in its Index score from 2017 when it was the third-lowest-ranked telecommunication company. The company's poor ranking is attributed to the fact that Axiata made no significant improvement.

The 2018 Index shows that Axiata did not disclose sufficient information about its governance processes to ensure that it is effectively upholding the human rights to freedom of expression and privacy. Your company received credit in only two of the six indicators and lagged behind most of its competitors for failing to disclose the manner in which Axiata responds to requests to block content or accounts. Further, Axiata demonstrated a serious lack of transparency on issues related to users' privacy. Axiata was among the only three companies in this category to disclose nothing about how it handled third party user data requests. Nor did this company publish any information pertaining to the volume or nature of these requests. This, coupled with the company's lack of transparency relating to users options to control what information the company collects about them, demonstrate that the company should take significant steps to respect privacy and freedom of expression rights.

We would like to draw your attention to several concrete steps that your company can take to improve disclosure of policies affecting users' rights. We recognize that in some instances, legal obligations may prevent companies from disclosing certain types of information about specific policies and practices. However, the Ranking Digital Rights team has consulted with legal experts and identified steps that your company can take in the immediate future to improve disclosure within the current legal environment.



- Axiata should **be more transparent about the manner in which it handles external requests**. The company should disclose information about the policies and practices for responding to government and third party request to block content and accounts, as well as to hand over user information.
- The company should **increase its transparency about network shutdowns**. The company should disclose more information on how it handles government orders to disrupt networks and make a clear commitment to push back against these types of demands.
- Axiata should **clearly articulate and communicate information on the company's process for protecting user information**, including how it responds to data breaches.
- Axiata should **join the Global Network Initiative (GNI)**, whose members not only make human rights commitments but also undergo independent assessments to verify whether they have implemented and institutionalized them. Axiata should also participate in the [RightsCon](#) Summit Series.

Transparency on these issues is not only important from a human rights perspective, but also key to ensuring user trust. Investors also depend on companies to be transparent about these issues to verify they are making sound choices that are encouraging user growth.

We encourage you and the relevant officers within your company to read through the Index findings and recommendations, and the ["report card" for your company](#) in particular, and develop a public response to the issues raised here. This is an opportunity to distinguish your company from others in the sector as a leader on these issues, and to demonstrate a commitment to your users to respect their rights. The full results and raw data can be found at: <https://rankingdigitalrights.org/index2018>. For your convenience I am also attaching PDFs of the full report as well as your company's report card.

This letter will be published this week on the website of the Business and Human Rights Resource Centre, alongside letters to each of the other companies evaluated in the Index. Company responses will be published in a timely manner on the same website upon receipt. A similar set of letters and company responses were published in 2016, visible at: <https://business-humanrights.org/en/access-now-sends-digital-rights-demands-to-tech-and-telco-firms>

We encourage you to send a response for publication by September 26, 2018, to demonstrate to your users and stakeholders that your company is serious about upholding freedom of expression and privacy. Please send your letter via email to Peter Micek <[peter@accessnow.org](mailto:peter@accessnow.org)> with Ana Zbona <[zbona@business-humanrights.org](mailto:zbona@business-humanrights.org)> in copy.

The Access Now team would be happy to speak with you about your results and provide feedback as you develop your response.

Sincerely,

Peter Micek  
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