

STAFF UNION BULLETIN BULLETIN DU SYNDICAT BOLETIN DEL SINDICATO



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JOB SECURITY IN THE ILO: MYTH OR REALITY?

Dear Colleagues,

This is first of all to inform you about recent developments concerning the situation of **Mr. BASLAN QURASHI**. As you know, this colleague, holding a permanent contract, employed by the ILO for more than 20 years, had to be dismissed over night at the beginning of November 2003, following a long procedure.

Confronted to the protest of the Union and to the immediate reaction of the Annual General Meeting, the Director General had decided to give time a chance, and changed his initial decision not to ask Mr. Qurashi to work during the period of notice. The corresponding three months, coming to an end on 31 January, had to be used by HRD for “exploring fully the possibilities of alternative employment ».

As for assistance in finding suitable employment, HRD first provided Mr. Qurashi at his request with a hand-written list of some forty positions deemed to be vacant at appropriate grade levels. When Mr. Qurashi immediately expressed interest in a dozen of field positions, HRD in substance advised him to contact directly the units concerned, while informing that in several instances a recruitment process was indeed already under way and nearing finalization.

Being made aware of the fact that this could not constitute the whole action by the Office in terms of identification of employment opportunities for some one who must not be this bad, when the Director General decided to reconsider his initial decision of immediate termination, HRD subsequently established preliminary written contacts with some responsible chiefs, including in sister Agencies of the UN family with HQ in Geneva.

Meanwhile, the Union did not remain idle. We contacted, well ahead of HRD, all responsible chiefs for the positions envisaged, and even beyond; we drew the attention of CABINET on the wasted time; we mobilized our representatives in the field ... We received expression of sympathy and support from quite a number of managers, for which we are thankful. At the same time, it is quite obvious that, in such circumstances, no commitment may be made by anyone else but the Director General or HRD acting on his behalf.

A positive decision still remains to come, and nothing practical has in fact as yet been considered in some details – whereas some managers noting that the deadline approaches already use this precedent as a threat towards the staff falling under their responsibility: **dismissal is not that difficult in the ILO, and permanent contracts do not provide any « genuine and serious » protection.**

As a matter of fact, and referring to the 3 grounds for the decision – THERE IS NOTHING ELSE! – of dismissal for « unsatisfactory services », one sees that, as soon as a bureaucratic procedure was formally adhered to, it becomes possible to terminate a contract after 20 years of good services on the basis of a recommendation of the Reports' Board based on:

1. a negative evaluation of quality of work (including when a mysterious, anonymous expert chosen by the Chief with whom you are in conflict is asked to confirm this appreciation using work which is not attributable to you, while all those who know your work and use its results consider it as excellent);
2. a productivity allegedly too low (including when there are no official benchmarks to define what is an adequate productivity, while equal weight is given to translation into one's mother tongue and into a foreign language, notwithstanding the common understanding among all translators that this is not correct);
3. « bad relations » with one's chief (including when these « bad relations » happen when a new chief is brought back in from outside without you being informed, to take care of the duties you were fulfilling, for which you had received signs of positive appraisal during a long interim period, while having never had difficulties with any of the previous chiefs).

Any of us really should worry when such grounds are used; when a body, the Reports Board, solely composed of a few responsible chiefs whose names are not even public, endorses these grounds perhaps in the name of peer solidarity; when these Happy Few infer, while the evaluation just concluded to the need to search for transfer opportunities, that one should get rid of the individual displeasing his Chief; when the Director General feels bound by this ukase; when the decision gets over the Joint Panel just because it was procedurally correct; when time passes towards the inescapable without applying the powers to directly fill or to create vacancies which the Administration abundantly used in often less defensible cases; when no one among those making decisions seems to really worry that, in the same Department, ten identified cases are pending, each representing an individual grievance or an abuse concerning recruitment or selection ...

THE OFFICE HAD THREE MONTHS TO CONVINCINGLY SHOW, BY IDENTIFYING A SUITABLE ALTERNATIVE POSITION FOR BASLAN QURASHI, THAT EMPLOYMENT SECURITY WAS NOT IN JEOPARDY IN THE ILO, AND THAT THE «FAIT DU PRINCE » COULD NOT TAKE PRECEDENCE OVER THE RIGHTS OF THE STAFF.