

Management Response to the External Review into the death of Gaëtan Mootoo

London, 19 November 2018

Dear colleagues, dear friends,

I have now received the report by James Laddie QC on his independent investigation into the circumstances preceding the death of our colleague Gaëtan Mootoo. I welcome the report and accept its findings and recommendations. I know it will trigger important reflections and learnings within our organization.

On behalf of the International Board and the Senior Leadership Team, I would like to express our deepest regret about the tragedy that occurred, and the pain suffered by Gaëtan's family, friends and colleagues who held him dear.

I would like to acknowledge what a difficult time it has been for all of us, especially those who knew Gaëtan well. The report makes for a difficult read, as it brings back to memory not only the circumstances of Gaëtan's death, but also the difficult years of organizational change, which affected many.

We always need to ask ourselves whether we should have done things differently and most importantly, what we can and should do differently now. Having had the opportunity to discuss the findings with Gaëtan's family, I would like to set out my response and my commitment to them and to the entire Amnesty International movement.

The report is a devastating account of how a long-standing and respected colleague struggled in the face of organizational change. The report's findings trouble me profoundly and we must acknowledge our failures in the light of Gaëtan's tragic death.

It casts a shadow over some of the management practices during this period of change in Amnesty International. Staff wellbeing must be at the heart, front and center of our leadership and management practice. Nobody in the organization should feel isolated, undervalued, or ignored. I would like to assure you that the International Board, the Senior Leadership Team and I will work together to ensure that the recommendations are implemented. We will publish a detailed plan and timetable by the end of the year, including ways in which staff can feed into and help shape the work on wellbeing and duty of care.

James Laddie's report points to challenges that arise from our organizational structure and to failures in our collective responsibility for staff wellbeing and support. No one individual is at fault, and I am comforted to learn that Gaëtan received acknowledgement and support from his line-manager and experienced kindness and encouragement from many of his colleagues.

I am considering changes to the culture, ways of working and structure of the Senior Leadership Team. I had previously committed to doing this, and it is now more relevant than ever, given the criticism we are facing. I will work with an external expert on this process and will ensure that we take the findings in James Laddie's report into account. I will report my decisions early in the new year.

As you already know, to follow on from James Laddie's investigation my predecessor Salil commissioned an extensive assessment of our policies and procedures in order to identify additional measures we should take to ensure adequate support to our staff and their wellbeing. This second part of the External Review will provide specific recommendations for enhancing the approach to staff wellbeing at the International Secretariat. KonTerra are the group of experts chosen by the Oversight Group to undertake this work. They have extensive experience conducting staff care and duty of care assessments for organizations in the humanitarian and development sector and will help us to develop this plan. The report will be published in January and will enable us to quickly build on important initiatives that have already been launched.

The Senior Leadership Team are fully committed to working with me and everyone in our global movement to rebuild your trust through following up on all of James Laddie's recommendations and creating a work environment that will make Amnesty International a truly compassionate employer.

I would like to express my thanks and gratitude to James Laddie QC, who conducted the independent investigation, and to Manon Schick, Kate Allen and Seydi Gassama, who form the Oversight Group that accompany the entire External Review process.

As we work hard to improve our internal culture in these difficult times, I invite everyone in Amnesty International to reflect on James Laddie's findings and to look after yourselves and others as we remember Gaëtan and seek to learn from the past.

In particular, I ask Section Directors to share this management response and upcoming KonTerra report with your Boards and your staff. The International Board, the SLT and I are relying on your feedback and input as we evolve our culture and refocus our priorities, and all proposals will be welcome. I know that especially in our smaller Sections we are facing difficult situations regularly, and I hope that working together we can address these challenges in future.

I stand with you and ask you to work with me and the SLT moving forward. I also hope that those who would like to, will find me or other senior managers in the coming weeks to share your thoughts, your sorrow, your criticism and advice.

Sincerely,

Kumi Naidoo
Secretary General
Amnesty International