

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

31 January 2019

Review into staff wellbeing in Amnesty International, conducted by The KonTerra Group

A review into staff wellbeing at the International Secretariat of Amnesty International was commissioned by the Secretary General after the tragic death by suicide of our colleague Gaëtan Mootoo in May 2018. It aims to identify the organization's response to staff wellbeing and to develop concrete actions to address the concerns raised and to restore trust within Amnesty International.

The comprehensive review was based on a representative staff survey, interviews with employees and an examination of current practices, procedures and policies on wellbeing at the organization's International Secretariat.

The report explores the significant stress levels our staff find themselves exposed to and identifies flaws in the organizational culture and management failures as root causes of staff wellbeing issues.

The recommendations complement current approaches to staff wellbeing and identifies concrete steps towards an integrated, sustainable and comprehensive commitment to staff wellbeing and health.

The review was undertaken by Kavita Avula (PsyD), Lisa McKay (MA, MPsychol) and Sébastien Galland (MSc, MBA) of The KonTerra Group. It was shared with Amnesty International staff today.

Kumi Naidoo issued the following statement in response to the review:

London, 31 January 2019

I have now received the report on Staff Wellbeing, which my predecessor had commissioned from The KonTerra Group, a well-known service provider in the humanitarian and development sectors. Based on a representative

staff survey, interviews with employees and a review of current practices, procedures and policies, the report paints a somber picture of Amnesty International's recent internal track record.

Our own engagement surveys already indicated some time ago that we are facing an alarming trust deficit in the International Secretariat. We always knew that the complexities of our organization and the nature of our work pose particular challenges to managing stress and wellbeing, and I note with concern that they have been visible in the organization for many years. Tragically amplified by the death of Gaëtan Mootoo in May last year, we have been acutely aware of the seriousness of the internal issues at the International Secretariat. It now is time to move on.

We need to accelerate and widen our efforts to establish credible and effective wellbeing measures and find better ways to recognize the tremendous dedication of staff to our mission.

The KonTerra report brings that into stark focus, and it is a difficult read. To hear our employees speak of a culture of secrecy and mistrust where discrimination, bullying and abuse of power have been condoned is profoundly troubling. Unacceptable management practices, attitudes and behaviours cannot and will not be tolerated at any level in the organization.

In my first months as Secretary General, I have spent many hours meeting with and listening to staff, and numerous people have come to me raising concerns about stress, anxiety, relationships, harassment, and internal communication. And while I am confident that this will not be the lived experience of everyone working for Amnesty International, the report points out that committed diligent staff have lost trust in the senior leadership and are feeling disillusioned with their work.

The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) takes shared responsibility for the climate which emerged where colleagues felt, or continue to feel, undervalued and unsupported, and we are truly sorry. But an apology is not enough. This lesson has been learnt. We need to look after each other and develop compassion and mutual care to help Amnesty International become the uplifting community it needs to be.

For now, it is abundantly clear that there is a deep deficit in our duty of care and support to staff. These challenges are not exclusive to Amnesty

International, and there is widespread awareness and acceptance of the problems, commitment to respond positively, and an urgency to turn a corner. Despite the complexities of our global organization, we need to be more positive and supportive.

To that end, I want to outline and reiterate the following actions I have committed to in order to address these challenges:

- I would like to acknowledge the strength of feeling that I have heard and repeat my undertaking – that where individuals have been found wanting – in SLT or elsewhere – this will be addressed. This may include disciplinary action if necessary.
- Moving our organizational culture towards more compassion and respect is something I have made my priority to address. As previously announced, I have commissioned Deloitte to conduct a review into the structure and ways of working of the SLT.
- In addition to raising issues and concerns about the interaction with managers and the SLT, the People and Organisational Development team (P&OD) have been spotlighted for their role in the International Secretariat. I am committed to listening to the feedback and equally committed to supporting the P&OD team in their complex role, supporting managers and balancing staff needs and working practices. Based on external advice received late last year, we have already begun to reconsider team structures and functions. The additional feedback in the KonTerra report will provide added steer to this process. I encourage you all to continue to rely on the P&OD team as your support mechanism. As the report explains, we must reflect on the challenges the team face, and not rush to blame. The P&OD team are colleagues as well, who are equally committed to Amnesty International's mission and values.
- We will also address the need for more guidance and support for managers across all levels, so that a comprehensive and systematic approach to staff wellbeing will bear fruit.

We will now look in detail at the recommendations of the KonTerra review – and in consultation with staff draw up an overall implementation plan, assessing to what extent and in what stages we will deliver on them, and

how we best integrate them with James Laddie's recommendations. To that end, I will engage with the wellbeing committee, the union and the management team to identify what is most urgent and what is seen as most appropriate to address the systemic challenges and to restore trust, and how we best communicate these efforts across the organization. I will present the new plan by the end of March 2019.

The KonTerra review focused on how the International Secretariat can better support staff experiencing stress and other wellbeing issues, but we know that staff in Sections face similar pressures. We invite Section leaders to engage with the findings and assess how they can build on the recommendations to improve their own approach to wellbeing.

Staff wellbeing is now our absolute priority and will be at the heart of everything we do. As the report states, we have started to take steps in the right direction. However, we have a long way to go.

I would like to express my sincere thanks and gratitude to The KonTerra Group consultants – Kavita Avula, Lisa McKay and Sébastien Galland – for conducting the review, and the Oversight Group – Kate Allen (Amnesty International UK), Seydi Gassama (Amnesty International Senegal), Manon Schick (Amnesty International Switzerland), Alan Scott (Unite) and Richard Eastmond (International Secretariat) for guiding us through the process and ensuring the independence of the review was upheld.

I share the hope expressed by the consultants and remain confident that the findings and recommendations in this review will allow us to address the challenges with a genuine desire for restoration, reconnection and renewal for employees across the organization.

With the increasing pressure on human rights defenders globally, Amnesty International needs to be stronger and more effective than it has ever been, and our resolve and fortitude must start from within.

Sincerely,

Kumi Naidoo
Secretary General
Amnesty International