



# COMMUNICATION 2/19/ENG

## A CASE STUDY: ADDRESSING MORAL HARASSMENT & MENTAL HEALTH IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

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To: Chairs, Member Associations/Unions  
Members of the Executive Committee  
Chairs, Members with Associate Status  
Chairs, Associations with Consultative Status  
Presidents, Federations with Observer Status  
Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Standing Committees

Geneva, 17 May 2019

From: Evelyn Kortum, General Secretary

According to recent press reports, the former President of France Telecom, Didier Lombard, and six other former executives have gone on trial for accusations of moral harassment leading to 19 suicides, 12 suicide attempts and eight reported cases of serious depression of employees over the past three years. His restructuring plan consisted of laying off 22,000 jobs. However, since most jobs were held by civil servants, they were largely protected from layoffs. Some employees were transferred away from their families or left behind when offices were moved or assigned demeaning jobs.

Lombard attributes the suicides and depression to local difficulties with no link to work issues. However, evidence including a note left about why one employee who decided to end his life, blames it on "the permanent sense of urgency, overwork, absence of training, the total disorganization of the company, "plus "management by terror." Lombard's lawyer claims he is innocent because there was no way for him to know what was going on with over 100,000 employees. He admits, however, that the restructuring upset employees, but he rejects the idea that it led to people taking their own lives.

The public France Telecom became a private company now named Orange which is also on trial for the same offence, as 35 staff took their lives between 2008 and 2009. Notes were left blaming France Telecom and its managers.

Read more about the story [here](#) and [here](#) .

There are many parallels with experiences in our large and diverse organizations that regularly undergo restructuring that leads to staff facing similar anxieties and stress. These articles outline the importance of proper protection for staff, as well as their empowerment. FICSA does not believe in waiting until the last solution is put into practice. Let's be active in properly addressing moral or psychological harassment, tough restructuring plans, mismanagement, mobility and other related issues.

The FICSA website has a wealth of information available for you to use in discussions with your administrations when devising and implementing new policies.

FICSA also prepares you through professionally-led training courses on a variety of issues. Please click the links to view the [Calendar of Workshops](#) and [past webinar sessions](#) (password protected – your Staff Association/Union office holds the code).

**FICSA's resources** (please use your member access code available through the Staff Association/Union Secretariat to access the documentation):

**ficsa.org**                      **Library → FICSA Documentation**

### **Basic documentation**

FICSA Handbook on Staff Representation in the International Organizations

### **Harassment**

Against Harassment in the Common System, FICSA Resolution 71/1, Bonn, 5-9 February 2018

### **Duty of Care** (Framework under finalization)

- FICSA Circular 1309 – Report by FICSA on the 38<sup>th</sup> session of the HR Network (19-22 Feb 2019) (topics: creating an enabling environment, duty of care...)

### **Mobility**

- Mobility and Hardship Scheme – Review of the Level
- Policy on mobility (replies to questionnaire), September 2014
- Work/Life balance (replies to questionnaire), September 2014

### **Reorganization**

- 71<sup>st</sup> FICSA Council
- Organizations in Crisis – Guidelines for Organizational Change
- Guidelines on managing change and restricting process

...and many more resources, for example

### **Mental Health at Work**

- Managing and supporting mental health at work: disclosure tools for managers, CIPD Guide, December 2011
- Staff well-being survey data report, UN HQ, NY, 2017
- A healthy workforce for a better world, UN System Mental Health & Well-Being Strategy

Please contact the FICSA Secretariat for more information: [ficsa@un.org](mailto:ficsa@un.org)