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FOR INFORMATION

NINETEENTH ITEM ON THE AGENDA

Other personnel questions:
Safety and security of ILO staff

Introduction

1. This paper outlines the actions taken by the Office in the aftermath of the bombing of the United Nations building in Algiers, which housed the ILO's operations in Algeria. It also provides summary information on the outcome of a wider reflection on the adequacy of safety and security arrangements for ILO staff globally.

Bombing of UN premises in Algiers

2. A bomb blast at the UN building in Algiers on 11 December 2007 claimed the lives of 17 UN staff members, including one ILO official, Mr Abderrahim Hanniche. Two other ILO staff members were among those injured and initially hospitalized.

3. As an immediate response to this incident, the Director-General dispatched an official mission to Algiers. During the mission, the Director-General's representative met with the widow and other family members of the deceased ILO colleague, and the ILO staff, including those in the hospital. The mission also addressed a range of security and administrative arrangements. The Staff Union was regularly briefed on the situation and provided valuable support to the Office in the implementation of its immediate responses and subsequent follow-up actions.

4. Further support missions to Algiers have been undertaken by headquarters and Regional Office for Africa in January and February 2008. On the basis of their findings, an action plan for further support was established. This plan includes a number of regular follow-up missions from headquarters and the Regional Office. These missions focus on support to staff and families, communication and security. The administrative backstopping for ILO operations and projects in Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia has been temporarily transferred to the Regional Office for Africa. Local constituents have been informed of the interim arrangements.

5. Family members of all deceased victims were invited by the UN Secretary-General to attend a Memorial Ceremony on 23 January 2008 in the Palais des Nations, Geneva. The Office made arrangements to facilitate the participation of the father and sister of

Mr Hanniche in this ceremony. The Director-General led the ILO's participation which comprised a wide cross-section of staff and representatives of the Staff Union Committee.

Field security management in the UN

6. The events in Algiers have prompted new assessment of the adequacy of security arrangements for UN staff globally. The ILO, alongside other UN agencies, is part of a common security management system which is coordinated by the UN Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS). Under this system, the UNDSS is responsible for providing leadership, operational support and oversight of the security management system to enable the safest and most efficient conduct of the programmes and activities of the UN system.

7. In the aftermath of the bombing, the UN Secretary-General established an independent review panel to "evaluate the strategic issues vital to the delivery and enhancement of the security of UN personnel and premises and the changing threats and risks faced by the system". [1] The panel will examine the inherent vulnerabilities of UN operations around the world, study the responses of host countries and identify the fundamental lessons drawn from preceding reports on the subject, including the preliminary report of the UNDSS on the Algiers attack. The Office will follow closely the work of the panel, with a view to implementing recommendations aimed at better protecting ILO staff.

8. The Office has launched its own internal review of the adequacy of its staff safety and security system evaluated against existing guidelines. Some aspects of this review have been completed at the time of writing, others are still ongoing. The main items under review include the level of Minimum Operating Security Standards (MOSS) compliance, the adequacy of the accountability framework, training, and resourcing arrangements.

Compliance with Minimum Operating Security Standards

9. The UNDSS has established a set of minimum operational security standards based on its risk assessment of a particular location. All offices in that location are expected to conform with these standards (i.e. be MOSS compliant). While MOSS compliance of established field offices is monitored on an ongoing basis through regular correspondence and online questionnaires, it was decided after the Algiers bombing to conduct a survey to identify precisely any specific security issues at this time.

10. The survey confirmed that levels of MOSS compliance were satisfactory in the majority of established ILO offices. It did reveal, however, that in a few no-phase (low-risk) duty stations, further efforts were required to raise the level of compliance. Steps have therefore been taken to remedy deficiencies by requesting field offices to provide without delay a costing of necessary measures and a timetable for implementation.

11. MOSS compliance remains inadequate in several project offices. Compliance evaluation missions undertaken by the UNDSS in 2006–07 in nine countries in which the ILO operates, found that while established offices were assessed at the two highest levels of compliance, the same was not the case for project offices. It is clear that the Office must ensure that project offices are MOSS compliant. Apart from issues related to physical infrastructure and equipment, an inventory of the location of project offices and up to date

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[1] UN News Centre: "Veteran diplomat Lakhdar Brahimi to head UN staff security review", 5 Feb. 2008.

staff and dependants lists must be maintained and transmitted to the requisite officials in the duty station and elsewhere. The Office is taking a number of other steps including the clarification of the role and responsibilities of project leadership in the security management accountability framework, and the systematic inclusion of project staff in its security training activities.

12. An enhanced security management system for project offices and staff will entail additional expenditures for the Office. As a result, the Office is participating in a system-wide effort to agree on the inclusion of a budget-line on security in all new projects. In the case of existing projects, a request is being made to donors to authorize the earmarking of resources to cover the security of staff. In all cases, the allocation will be commensurate with the existing security phase in the location in which the project staff are located.

13. More widely, the Office will continue to work with the UNDSS to ensure that security risk assessments (SRA) are undertaken for all offices in a particular location; and that funds are available to implement measures identified as necessary during the SRA. It is currently working within the framework of the Inter-Agency Security Management Network (IASMN) to review and better align MOSS requirements to the SRA in each duty station.

Review of ILO security management accountability framework

14. The security policy of the UN system is promulgated in the United Nations Field Security Handbook and other policy documents issued by the UNDSS. However, each agency is required to develop its own organizational policy statement incorporating the principles of accountability and outlining the roles and responsibilities of each individual in the security management system adapted to its specific organizational structure. This not only decreases the potential for varying interpretations and application of security measures but also provides a basis for accountability.

15. In light of recent experience, the Office is currently reviewing its own security management accountability framework, with a view to ensuring that roles and responsibilities in the system are clearly identified and understood. These will be spelt out in the updated and integrated set of Office documents on staff safety and security that will be issued shortly.

Training of managers and staff

16. The Office has been working with the UNDSS to implement a training programme for staff at all levels. At the basic level, all staff members, regardless of their function or duty station, are required to complete an online training programme on basic security in the field. In addition, those staff members who are assigned, or required to travel to areas where there are heightened security phases (phase 1 or above), must complete the advanced course on security in the field. Training programmes have also been implemented for directors of field offices and their security focal assistants.

17. The Office intends to step up the training of managers, especially in the field, to ensure that they are aware of their specific responsibilities and are trained to carry out such responsibilities. The training of other staff will also receive heightened attention.

Resources

18. The field-related component of the UNDSS budget is funded by contributions from each participating agency. Costs are apportioned on the basis of the actual percentage of field staff, with a minimum amount of US$75,000. [2] For 2006–07, the ILO's contribution amounted to approximately US$4.1 million. A similar amount has been budgeted for 2008–09. Additionally, in 2006–07, the Office spent approximately US$3.3 million (US$1.9 million from centralized resources and US$1.4 million from field office budgets) to cover expenditures such as security equipment for staff, offices and vehicles, telecommunications, management and training. A budget of approximately US$2.3 million has been allocated centrally for 2008–09, and it is envisaged that expenditure will also be made from external office budgets at a similar level to 2006–07.

Conclusion

19. The Office is committed to taking all necessary steps to enhance staff safety and security, especially in the field. This will include the monitoring and enforcement of the accountability framework at all levels in the regions; the systematic inclusion of security concerns on the agenda of office meetings in the regions and the systematic inclusion of project staff in training plans.

Geneva, 3 March 2008.

Submitted for information.

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[2] Field staff includes all personnel based in countries not members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) for whom the UN has a responsibility in terms of security and safety, irrespective of the type or duration of their contract.