

To Colleagues and other members of the United Nations community:

I regret to report that today I have been fired from my position at WIPO, where I have had the honor to serve for the past four years as President of the Staff Council. My term of service coincided with a new administration that was determined to force change regardless of its impact on staff, and that governed with a level of secrecy and manipulation favored only by the most autocratic national governments. It was my job during this time to advocate for the staff and for ethical and transparent governance. I have tried to do this in the most effective way I could, knowing that being in opposition would make me a target.

In fact, the recent trumped-up charges against me are only the latest in a long pattern of retaliation and harassment by the WIPO administration, which wants a compliant, weak Staff Association that will not trouble it with substantive opposition. In 2011, I was subjected to a groundless disciplinary charge that was later withdrawn. In 2012, after I blew the whistle on the administration's secret transfer of computer equipment to a regime subject to worldwide condemnation and sanctions, the administration blocked a request by the U.S. Congress Foreign Affairs Committee for my testimony. It is widely known within WIPO that the Director General has for years been looking for an excuse to get rid of me.

No one should fall prey to the ridiculous insinuation, made yesterday by the Director General, that the charges against me are like murder, because they are so serious and so disconnected from my work as a staff representative. Anyone reading the papers in my case can see that the claims come directly from my attempt to provide legal representation to individual staff within the internal justice system at WIPO.

The charges put against me are so weak that my attorneys have requested the Internal Audit and Oversight Division to examine the administration's behavior as an abuse of power. I intend to resist this attempt to silence me and intimidate the Staff Council, and will continue to do what I can from the outside to support the struggle of UN staff for a decent, respectful working environment.

Whatever happens to me and my family as a result of my firing, I plead with the Member States to recognize that something much larger is at stake here. The concentration of unbridled power at the top of WIPO has led to willful disregard for the fundamental human rights of freedom of speech and association. It is ironic that the United Nations, which holds the promise of advancing respect for universal human rights, finds itself in such a retrograde position. Please, look at what is happening, see the truth, and do something about it.

A. Moncef Kateb,
Geneva, 19 September 2014

Anyone wishing to review my dossier may contact my legal counsel at: flaherty@sfalegal.com