

MEMORUNDUM

To: Sarah Gibson, Head of International Bureaux.

Date: 15-03-2018.

Dear Sarah,

We the staff of the BBC in Kenya who are also members of the Kenya Union of Journalists (KUJ) know you are here to discuss the issue of expenses following a heated email exchange between the finance staff and editorial staff a few days ago. The union has already made official communication to BBC in a letter addressed to Pat Strong and an email addressed to her and copied to Rachael Akidi, Head of East Africa Languages in line with Article 41 of the Constitution of Kenya, where every employee is entitled to fair labour practices and Labour Relations Act 2007 that regulates employer-employee relations.

In view of above, we would like to let you know that the concerns raised in the email exchange between individual employees and section heads are just pointers to a brewing tension in the BBC Nairobi Bureau and longstanding issues that have not been resolved for many years. Whereas we acknowledge that there have been improvements in some areas, there is still work to be done to achieve descent work environment, especially job security, freedom of employees to express themselves and participate in decisions that affect their lives as required by the International Labour Organization (ILO), which the United Kingdom is a member and holds the Director General position. Many staff in the bureau have felt harassed on the way they have been treated by the IBM finance team and the Bureau manager Pat Strong in particular, but chose to suffer in silence.

There is no room for social dialogue in this office as recommended by the Kenyan industrial relations mechanisms if the tone at which Pat and most recently Samuel Guchu use address employees, is anything to go by. They have been very rude while addressing staff on various issues including expenses and claims or requests for facilitation and at times intruding people's privacy. We know you think the BBC has a right in this, but it is something we are willing to seek a legal interpretation on Kenyan terms.

Even on very petty issues like airtime for staff, it has seemed as if Pat has the discretion to decide on who gets it or not even if line managers have ok it. It has seemed as if Pat has the monopoly of getting angry and mad at staff. She has walked out on several staff or used strong language on them whenever there is a difference in opinion. A good example is when she walked out on a meeting to discuss the pending issue of overtime, and called one of the colleagues present at the meeting 'stupid'.

Since the introduction of the union and the signing of the recognition agreement, Pat has appeared allergic to union activities. She has severally attempted to stop union members from meeting in the office contrary to the Labour Relations Act 2007. She has deliberately refused to engage staff in any meaningful way to discuss major changes including the decision on where the new bureau should be located and the pending issue of parking for staff.

There are staff members who have been defamed and their reputation injured because of Pat's witch-hunt schemes. She has stage-managed disciplinary cases against individuals, which have later been dismissed despite the fact that third parties, especially hotels/service providers were involved in the investigations. But while she is left to go scot-free after botched disciplinary cases, the victims continue to suffer from her character-assassination, mental anguish and deformation. The victims are ready to testify.

We also have reason to believe that the BBC in Kenya with facilitation by Pat Strong has been asking staff for many years to fill forms for the membership of Foreign Correspondents Association (FCA) and the BBC has been paying directly the said association a total of Ksh. 4000 per person on behalf of staff for many years. We would like to find out what the BBC policy says about payment for such fees because we understand the only fees that the BBC has a legal obligation to pay on behalf of its editorial staff is the annual Media Council fee. We would also like to point out Pat's reluctance to submit the BBC Staff Welfare monthly contribution from members' salaries despite the fact that members of the Association are willing to give consent for such deductions. This is in sharp contrast to her willingness to pay from BBC money and assist in the recruitment of the foreign staff to join the FCA. This we feel is an indicator of outright discrimination on the basis of nationality and or color which is unacceptable.

We have also reason to believe that the IBM team has been receiving gifts from service providers without declaring them in line with the BBC policy. We want this investigated and we are ready to provide information.

We feel treated differently from other staff, especially foreign staff from the UK be it on the issue of staff relocation or on return from duty trip. Pat, has wanted to be everything in the bureau, from Finance manager, to Human Resource manager to administration manager. Her micro management style has led to a huge turnover of staff in the Nairobi IBM department compared to other departments.

Veronica Nyaichowa, Phillip Nyanumba, Christine Macharia, Diana Oduor and Beverly Isanjiri who worked under Pat have all had to leave the BBC after work related frustrations. Some of this people have unsuccessfully raised their frustrations with the relevant BBC managers but nothing has been done.

In fact the current BBC relocation project to the new building in Riverside is dogged with frustrations perpetuated by Pat Strong and I am sure this is now subject to a different inquiry that you may want to follow up.

The BBC family in Kenya is expanding with the World 2020 projects now on motion. We are happy that the BBC has chosen to invest in our country, but the current IBM structure in Nairobi has old ways of doing things which have since been passed on to some new staff in the department. We feel with more than 300 staff members expected **at 9 Riverside**, we doubt she is the right person to create a good environment for a nutritious co-existence between new staff and the so called business as usual.

It is against this backdrop that we are urging you to act and restore order and harmony in Nairobi before things get out of hand.

Approved by all members of Kenya Union of Journalists who work with the BBC at the Nairobi Bureau.

cc: The Secretary General,

Kenya Union Of Journalists.