

Mandates of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders

REFERENCE: AL
OTH 15/2016:

25 February 2016

Dear Ms. Gallach,

We have the honour to address you in our capacities as Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression and Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 25/2 and 25/18.

In this connection, we would like to bring to your attention information we have received concerning the **withdrawal of the accreditation of Mr. Matthew Lee, an investigative journalist with Inner City Press, a web journal reporting on issues related to United Nations.**

According to the information received:

On 19 February 2016, Mr. Matthew Lee received a letter, in which the Under Secretary General for Communications and Public Information informs him of the Department of Public Information's (DPI) decision to withdraw his Resident Correspondent accreditation at the United Nations office in New York in favour of non-Resident Correspondent, a status that would be renewable after an initial four-month period. The letter further informed him of the need to vacate his present office inside the UN and arrange for a new identification corresponding to his new status.

Later in the day, UN Security personnel removed Mr. Lee's identification and escorted him out of the UN headquarters. His laptop was allegedly tossed out of the gate onto the sidewalk. Mr. Lee's working files remained within the UN premises.

The steps taken against Mr. Lee's accreditation were, according to the letter he received, based upon an incident that occurred on Friday, 29 January 2016, which DPI allegedly determined was in violation of the United Nations Media Guidelines. On that date, Mr. Lee's allegedly tried to cover a meeting in the UN

Press Briefing Room, from where he left after being informed by the UN Security of its restricted nature. Allegedly, no information was requested from Mr. Lee or any other written communication was sent to him on this incident, until the receipt of the letter on 19 February.

Without prejudging the accuracy of this information and the pertinent accreditation procedures within the United Nations and while respecting the critical role of DPI in providing access to information within the UN system, we are nonetheless interested in understanding how the rules governing media access operate to advance the principles of access to information and press freedom and how the rules were applied in this particular case.

We would also be grateful for your observations on the following matters:

1. Please provide any additional information and any comments you may have on the above-mentioned allegations.
2. Could you please clarify the reasons for the withdrawal of the accreditation of Mr. Lee's resident correspondent accreditation at the United Nations? Please also provide relevant rules from the Media Guidelines that were applied to this situation.
3. Could you please describe the inquiry procedures pursued following the incident, which led to the withdrawal of Mr. Lee's accreditation?
4. Could you please indicate whether Mr. Lee, or other journalists similarly situated, are permitted leave to appeal against a decision to withdraw accreditation (or other such actions)?

We wish to inform you that this communication together with your response will be made available in a report to be presented to the Human Rights Council for its consideration.

Please accept, Ms. Gallach, the assurances of our highest consideration.

David Kaye
Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion
and expression

Michel Forst
Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders