AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE

SUD Takes a Stand Against Coercion

At the Works Council meeting on September 25, SUD opposed management's proposal at overhauling AFP's mobility system for French text journalists, shifting from a currently voluntary system to a much more restrictive one. For SUD, this shift from voluntary to compulsory is the central issue in this project to create a "rapid-response pool." We believe that this proposal violates the provisions of our workplace agreement, so we refused to participate in the vote. We call on management to abandon the plan and instead begin negotiations with the unions on this matter.

Management first presented its plan to create a "rapid-response pool" back in June (see our previous communique), but debates about expatriation and the transparency of the job appointment process have largely preoccupied the unions, to the detriment of this issue.

Specifically, this rapid-response pool project involves creating a structure attached to the French-language editorial desk. Any French-language text journalist whose contract ends without having secured a new assignment would join this pool, not the desk itself. Journalists assigned to the pool would be included in the desk's editorial shift schedule but could be called upon at any time to work within a breaking news unit or to reinforce a Parisian production department. The key difference is that these assignments would no longer be voluntary, unlike the current situation. Management is trying to present this change as minor. However, it is fundamental. Today, all appointments to production positions, whether temporary or permanent, are based on the journalist's willingness.

A portion, admittedly limited in our view, of the journalist mobility process is governed by our workplace agreement. This agreement stipulates, in particular, that any assignment of six months or more must be advertised, and that news desks are the exception to this rule.

Management will undoubtedly argue that by making the rapid-response pool a sub-structure of the news desk, it is complying with the letter of the agreement. However, when it simultaneously asserts that this pool will perform distinct tasks and is intended to gradually replace the news desk, it is difficult to consider that the spirit of the agreement has been respected.

Even more worrying, management indicated that it would no longer limit temporary assignments to six months. Some positions outside Paris could thus be offered for longer periods, while shorter assignments could be renewed.

With such a change journalists' career prospects risk being diminished. Management could simply choose to stop advertising certain positions and prioritize temporary assignments.

This development comes as unions and management are arguing over the transparency of job postings and appointments. While we fight for maintaining transparent procedures, management's latest proposal could lead to a reduction in the number of advertised positions.

At the end of the debate in the Works Council meeting SUD read a statement explaining why we believe management's project violates the workplace agreement and announced our refusal to participate in the vote. The support of other unions for SUD's position has created an opportunity for management to reflect. They can either continue to impose reforms that clearly contradict their commitments or decide to open negotiations. SUD stands ready to defend employee rights enshrined in the workplace agreement.

Paris, September 30, 2026
SUD-AFP (Solidarity-Unity-Democracy)