Suffering in the Workplace: SUD launches an alert

A SUD staff representative launched an alert on Friday concerning possible violations of individual rights following the circulation of an anonymous petition on the topic of workplace suffering. This petition has been circulating within AFP since Monday, and there have been instances of managers sending it to their teams.

This petition, entitled "Collective Expression of Support for the Agency and Call for a More Balanced View of Internal Realities," raises numerous concerns and risks exacerbating current tensions within AFP. The decision to launch the alert was made due to management's lack of action, despite requests from several unions throughout the week, including a refusal to investigate the petition by AFP's CEO on Friday at a Works Council meeting.

Below is the letter sent to the CEO to launch this alert under Article L.2312-59 of the French Labor Code – Violation of individual rights / health / individual freedoms. The alert, which is aimed at protecting the health and safety of staff, should start a joint investigation by management and the staff representative.

Mr. President,

In accordance with Article L.2312-59 of the French Labor Code, I am writing to you to alert you to a situation that may constitute a violation of individual rights, physical or mental health, or individual freedoms, related to working conditions, work organization, or interpersonal relationships within the company.

This concerns an anonymous petition that began circulating on Monday, November 24, 2025 (the date of the first reports from employees to staff representatives) and which has caused anxiety among our company's staff. This text, entitled "Collective Expression of Support for the Agency and Call for a More Balanced View of Internal Realities," is not only problematic in itself, but its call for signatures included a clickable link that redirected to a Google Forms page where the petition could be signed. This anonymous initiative has not only shocked many employees but has had particularly damaging effects on those already suffering, especially those who have contacted the Labor Inspectorate.

Employees have contacted us to say they were hurt, or even felt directly targeted by the anonymous petition, as they could be held responsible for damaging the company's image. They are, in a way, being stigmatized.

When there is talk of a suicide risk at the company, this petition could exacerbate that risk.

It is worth noting that the petition aims to defend AFP's image in the name of loyalty to the company.

However, we know that some employees described as suffering have experienced trauma precisely because they have found themselves in conflict with the management of a company to which they have often given a great deal and to which they themselves are very attached.

Even people who do not feel concerned by suffering at work, or who do not suffer, might feel pressured because the petition could resemble a "loyalty test" towards AFP.

It should also be noted that this petition linked to a Google Forms form where employees were asked to provide their first and last names and professional email addresses.

This petition presents a problem by its anonymous nature. There is no guarantee that it did not originate from an entity outside the agency and that its aim is not to collect personal data (a possible violation of GDPR regulations). Even if it is an initiative by one or more AFP employees, the issue of confidentiality remains problematic.

Finally, there could be several violations of AFP's internal regulations, particularly its IT charter.

This petition is problematic for several reasons:

- It publicly criticizes employee testimonies describing situations of distress, implying that they "do not reflect reality," that they are "alarmist," are "interpreted as structural problems," or do not correspond to the experience of the majority;

– It invites employees to circulate this petition and join a “collective expression” aimed, in effect, at challenging the legitimacy or scope of the reports made by some colleagues;

– It explicitly downplays the existence of “sometimes difficult” individual situations, contrasting these situations with a “more balanced view,” which can be perceived as questioning the accounts of employees who have raised concerns about their health or working conditions;

This may create, for employees affected by these difficulties, a feeling of being targeted, of having their voices dismissed, or of social pressure not to report situations of distress.

<u>These elements are likely to constitute:</u>

– an infringement of the right to individual expression guaranteed by the Labor Code;

– an infringement of dignity when individual situations of suffering or distress are implicitly relativized or contrasted with a collective narrative;

– a risk of pressure or influence on the freedom to testify, report a risk, or raise an alert;

– a risk to the mental health of individuals who have testified or are preparing to do so, due to a discouraging or debilitating environment.

The foreseeable consequences of this petition are:

– a deterrent effect on employees wishing to report difficulties, file a complaint, or seek support, for fear of having their statements publicly dismissed or opposed to a “silent majority”;

– an increase in the suffering of the employees concerned, who may perceive the petition as a challenge to the reality of their situation, a lack of recognition of their suffering, or a questioning of their sincerity;

– damage to the social climate within the Agency by creating a polarization between the “silent majority” and employees in difficulty, to the detriment of the impartial and individualized handling of situations;

– a risk of trivializing or rendering invisible mental health issues or psychosocial risks;

– a possible obstruction of the right to whistleblowing or the prevention process, since a collective mobilization aimed at challenging individual testimonies can influence employees' ability to exercise their rights.

In light of all these elements,

Mr. President, I request that you, within the framework of the alert procedure outlined in Article L.2312-59, examine this situation without delay and inform me of the measures you intend to take to resolve it.

Furthermore, I request that you ensure with AFP’s Director of Information Systems (DSI) that all digital evidence concerning the dissemination of this petition is immediately preserved, if this has not already been done.

Best regards,