



**UNITED NATIONS APPEALS TRIBUNAL  
TRIBUNAL D'APPEL DES NATIONS UNIES**

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Judgment No. 2018-UNAT-889

**Sall**  
**(Appellant/Respondent on Cross-Appeal)**  
**v.**  
**Secretary-General of the United Nations**  
**(Respondent/Appellant on Cross-Appeal)**

**JUDGMENT**

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Before: Judge Sabine Knierim, Presiding  
Judge John Murphy  
Judge Martha Halfeld

Case No.: 2018-1182

Date: 26 October 2018

Registrar: Weicheng Lin

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Counsel for Mr. Sall: Abbe Jolles

Counsel for Secretary-General: Wambui Mwangi

**JUDGE SABINE KNIERIM, PRESIDING.**

1. The United Nations Appeals Tribunal (Appeals Tribunal) has before it an appeal against Judgment No. UNDT/2018/056, rendered by the United Nations Dispute Tribunal (UNDT or Dispute Tribunal) in New York on 4 May 2018, in the case of *Sall v. Secretary-General of the United Nations*. Mr. Gavril Sall filed the appeal on 12 June 2018, and the Secretary-General filed his answer and a cross-appeal on 13 August 2018. Mr. Sall filed his answer to the cross-appeal on 10 September 2018.

**Facts and Procedure**

2. Mr. Sall joined the Organization in 2005, resigned effective 28 May 2008 and rejoined the Organization on 14 June 2008. Prior to his separation from service in May 2016, he served as a Procurement Assistant in the United Nations - African Union Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), duty station El Fasher, on a fixed-term appointment at the FS-4 level.

3. From April 2011, Mr. Sall was involved in a romantic relationship with Ms. SaS (complainant), a United Nations volunteer serving with UNAMID. On 3 November 2012, the complainant filed an incident report alleging that she had been physically assaulted by Mr. Sall in her room at the UNAMID compound. Two witnesses took her to the Level-1 hospital in El Fasher. Medical reports dated 6 and 7 November 2012 note that she sustained multiple injuries to her body including, but not limited to, a bite mark on her scalp, and that Mr. Sall had wounds on his thumb, consistent with the complainant's account that she had bitten his thumb when he covered her mouth as she shouted for help.

4. The UNAMID Special Investigations Unit (UNAMID/SIU) investigated the incident. When reporting the matter, the complainant stated that she had been pressured by Mr. Sall, his wife and other people to withdraw her complaint and that she and her children had been threatened. When investigators interviewed Mr. Sall, he denied having assaulted the complainant on 3 November 2012 or on any previous occasion. He claimed that he had cut his thumb when preparing food and he refuted the allegation that he had pressured the complainant.

5. The UNAMID/SIU finalised its report on 10 January 2013 and sent it to the UNAMID Director of Mission Support (DMS) on 14 January 2013. The investigation report concluded that Mr. Sall had indeed physically assaulted the complainant on 3 November 2012 as well as on previous occasions. Based on the investigation report, UNAMID recommended on 13 April 2013

that the matter be referred to the Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM) through the Under-Secretary-General, Department of Field Support (DFS), for appropriate action against Mr. Sall. On 16 June 2013, the UNAMID/SIU referred the matter to the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) for assessment. OIOS sought clarifications from the UNAMID/SIU on 28 October 2013, including an evidential statement of Mr. WH, the Chief of the Conduct and Discipline Team (CDT), UNAMID. On 11 December 2013, the UNAMID/SIU sent an amended report to OIOS. The report contained additional evidence gathered during the course of the investigation against Mr. Sall, including a copy of an interview conducted with a team leader, UNAMID/SIU, on 23 November 2013. The report mentioned that the investigator had, for a second time, failed to obtain a statement from Mr. WH, whom the report describes as a witness who visited the scene after the incident before the UNAMID/SIU arrived. The investigation continued until April 2015. A former UNAMID staff member, Mr. AR, was interviewed on 26 January 2015 and Mr. WH was interviewed on 7 April 2015 by the UNAMID/SIU, as requested by ID/OIOS.

6. On 31 March 2015, the complainant left UNAMID.

7. On 25 August 2015, the Investigations Division, OIOS (ID/OIOS) submitted an “Assessment of the [SIU] report on a physical and sexual assault by a staff member at [UNAMID]” in which it concluded as follows: “[I]n as far as circumstances allowed it, [UNAMID/SIU] conducted a full and thorough investigation of the reported misconduct. (...) OIOS considers this case closed.” Based on this report, the Director ID, OIOS, issued a confidential memorandum dated 25 August 2015 titled “Completion on referral response (ID Case No. 0300/13 [C])” which, *inter alia*, states as follows: “[ID/OIOS] acknowledges receipt of the responses from [UNAMID] (...). OIOS notes the clarifications and further evidence provided, and considers the case closed.”

8. By memorandum dated 11 September 2015, the Assistant Secretary-General (ASG), DFS, referred the matter to the ASG, OHRM, finding that, based on the investigation report dated 10 January 2013 together with the supporting materials, there was clear and convincing evidence that Mr. Sall had physically and sexually assaulted the complainant on 3 November 2012, which constituted *prima facie* evidence that he had engaged in misconduct and violated the Staff Regulations and Rules including Staff Regulation 1.2 and Staff Rule 10.1. “DFS therefore concur[red] with the recommendation of UNAMID that Mr. Sall be subject to appropriate disciplinary action” and recommended his dismissal.

9. By a memorandum dated 15 December 2015, the Chief of the Human Resources Policy Service, OHRM, issued formal charges of misconduct against Mr. Sall and requested him to provide comments within two weeks. Mr. Sall claims to have effectively received the memorandum on 19 January 2016. Subsequently, his counsel was provided several extensions of the time limit to submit comments. On 20 April 2016, Mr. Sall filed his comments on the allegations of misconduct, requesting that the investigation be closed because no action was required as OIOS had closed the matter and indicating, *inter alia*, that the complainant had withdrawn her complaint.

10. On 4 May 2016, the ASG/OHRM informed Mr. Sall of the decision of the Under-Secretary-General for Management (USG/DM) to impose the disciplinary measure of separation from service with compensation in lieu of notice without termination indemnity in accordance with Staff Rule 10.2(a)(viii), for having physically assaulted the complainant.

11. On 29 July 2016, Mr. Sall filed an application with the UNDT contesting the decision to impose on him the disciplinary measure of separation from service with compensation in lieu of notice and without termination indemnity and requesting “reinstatement with back pay and benefits”.

12. By joint submission filed before the UNDT on 9 November 2017, the parties agreed that no oral hearing be held in this case.

13. The UNDT rendered its Judgment on 4 May 2018, granting the application in part. It found that the contested decision to impose the disciplinary sanction of separation from service was unlawful because it had been taken on the basis of the evidence and recommendations contained in the January and December 2013 reports although the investigation was not finalized at the time as additional interviews were conducted in January and April 2015. No new investigation report was prepared in 2015 and there was no mention of the additional 2015 witness statements in the referral to the ASG/OHRM on 11 September 2015 or the ASG/OHRM’s 4 May 2016 letter conveying the contested decision by the USG/DM. The UNDT found that the confidential ID/OIOS assessment report dated 25 August 2015 was not communicated to the UNAMID/SIU, was not part of the documentation presented to the ASG/OHRM and/or the USG/DM, and therefore, remained unknown to the decision-maker. The UNDT further found that no exculpatory evidence, such as the alleged withdrawal by the complainant of her complaint and change of her previous statement so as to confirm Mr. Sall’s version of the facts, had been

evaluated or taken into consideration during the investigation and disciplinary process. Mr. Sall was not informed after his last interview in 2012 that the investigation was still ongoing and he was not re-interviewed in relation to the factual elements presented by the witnesses in 2015 and therefore had no opportunity to present any additional explanations or evidence in his defence. Moreover, the UNDT considered that the plain language used in the ID/OIOS memorandum dated 25 August 2015, together with the non-communication of the strictly confidential OIOS assessment report, created the appearance of a closure of the case. Consequently, the ensuing disciplinary action was unlawful. The UNDT stated that in light of these procedural irregularities, there was no need to further review whether the facts in question had been established, whether those facts constituted misconduct and whether the sanction imposed was proportionate to the misconduct committed.

14. By way of relief, the UNDT ordered rescission of the decision to separate Mr. Sall from service and removal of any reference related to this disciplinary sanction from his official status file as well as USD 5,000 compensation in lieu of rescission. Furthermore, the UNDT awarded material damages in the form of Mr. Sall's net base salary for the period of 8 May 2016 (the date he was separated from service) to 30 June 2016 (the date of the expiry of Mr. Sall's appointment) minus the compensation in lieu of notice received by Mr. Sall. It rejected Mr. Sall's request for reinstatement, considering that his appointment would have expired on 30 June 2016 and that fixed-term appointments do not carry any expectancy of renewal. The UNDT further noted that Mr. Sall did not request moral damages.

### **Submissions**

#### **Mr. Sall's Appeal**

15. Mr. Sall submits that he was denied due process during the investigation and disciplinary proceedings. He asserts that such denial of due process rendered his separation defective and, as such, he must be reinstated with back pay. He submits that if no reinstatement was granted, due process requirements would be systematically voided as only reinstatement constitutes an effective remedy.

16. Moreover, Mr. Sall asserts that he is entitled to moral damages. As he was "discarded (...) like the trash", left without employment in a foreign country and his family was "left to destitute, to starve to death", this constitutes harm *per se* from which moral damages are inferred. He also

continues to suffer as he was unlawfully terminated and has not been reinstated. Mr. Sall claims that he worked for the United Nations for more than ten years with an unblemished record and positive evaluations. Therefore, had he not been terminated, he would have continued working for the United Nations and his contract would have almost certainly been renewed.

17. In light of the foregoing, Mr. Sall requests that the Appeals Tribunal order his immediate reinstatement and payment of lost earnings from the date of his unlawful separation from service to the date of his reinstatement, plus interest. Moreover, he asks for moral damages in the amount of USD 50,000 and interest of an additional five per cent above the prime rate for any payment not made within ten days of the issuance of the Appeals Tribunal Judgment.

### **The Secretary-General's Answer**

18. The Secretary-General submits that there were no procedural errors justifying the rescission of the contested disciplinary measure and that Mr. Sall has not established any error on questions of law or fact by the UNDT warranting reinstatement. In particular, Mr. Sall has not produced any evidence that, but for the contested decision, his appointment would have been renewed upon its expiry, i.e. beyond 30 June 2016. In the past, his appointments were only renewed for three-month to one-year periods, his performance was rated “partially meets expectations” in June 2015 and January 2016 and he was placed on a performance improvement plan. As he had just over one month left on his appointment when he was separated from service in May 2016 and as Mr. Sall has not produced any evidence of a firm commitment by the Administration to renew his appointment beyond 30 June 2016 and since, according to the established Appeals Tribunal jurisprudence, fixed-term appointments do not carry a legitimate expectation of renewal in the absence of such firm commitment, the UNDT rightly rejected his request for reinstatement. The fact that Mr. Sall may have obtained satisfactory performance appraisals in 2012 or 2013 does not guarantee that his appointment would have been renewed in 2016.

19. The Secretary-General further argues that Mr. Sall has not established any error of law or fact by the UNDT warranting an award of moral damages. First, Mr. Sall did not request moral damages or present evidence of alleged harm to him and his family at any point during the proceedings before the UNDT although the underlying information was available to him. Under Article 2(5) of its Statute, the Appeals Tribunal does not accept evidence submitted for the first time on appeal which could have been presented at the UNDT level. Therefore, Mr. Sall

is now estopped from requesting moral damages. Second, it is a misrepresentation of the facts for Mr. Sall to claim that he was separated from service and abandoned in Darfur. In fact, he was paid one-month salary in lieu of notice and all the benefits and entitlements associated with separation such as repatriation and relocation grants. Third, as there was no fundamental breach of Mr. Sall's rights and he has failed to present evidence of harm, his request for moral damages before the Appeals Tribunal is legally unsustainable.

20. Consequently, the Secretary-General requests that the Appeals Tribunal reject the appeal.

### **The Secretary-General's Cross-Appeal**

21. In his cross-appeal, the Secretary-General argues that no procedural irregularities warranted the rescission of the contested disciplinary measure and the subsequent award of compensation in the present case.

22. According to the Secretary-General, the UNDT erred in fact and in law in finding that the contested decision was unlawful and therefore it erred in rescinding it.

23. First, the UNDT erred in finding that Mr. Sall's due process rights were violated. The UNDT's assessment in this regard was based on factual errors and a misunderstanding of the investigative record. The statement by Mr. WH was transmitted to Mr. Sall together with the written charges of misconduct and he thus had an opportunity to comment on it. Further, the statements taken in 2015 were part of the complete dossier that had been transmitted to the ASG/OHRM and USG/DM and they were therefore before the decision-makers at the time of the respective decisions, as were Mr. Sall's comments of 20 April 2016 in response to the written charges. The absence of an explicit reference to the witness statements in the contested disciplinary decision does not alter this fact. Moreover, the only possibly exonerating evidence in the record would have been a supposed withdrawal of the complaint. However, there is no evidence that the complainant made a retracting statement concerning the assault in November 2012 and the UNDT was possibly misled by earlier statements regarding previous incidents in 2011 where the complainant had withdrawn her complaint under pressure from Mr. Sall. In this regard, Mr. AR's statement did not contain exculpatory information about the November 2012 incident—as he was not at the scene and thus could not have been a witness—but rather solely related to the previous assaults in 2011. If anything, his statement contained inculpatory evidence by showing a pattern of abuse by Mr. Sall directed against the complainant.

As it was not relevant to the matter at hand, the statement was not shared with Mr. Sall but he nonetheless had an opportunity to comment on the allegations of assault dating from 2011 which were part of the investigation report. In addition, the statements given by Mr. WH and Mr. AR did not warrant a re-interview of Mr. Sall as there was no new material evidence in their statements which merely corroborated previous accounts. The main fairness requirement in a subject interview, namely that the subject has an opportunity to respond to all allegations presented against him, had been respected and the fact that Mr. Sall was not re-interviewed consequently does not amount to a procedural irregularity. Even if it did, such irregularity would not have affected the contested decision as the evidence of physical assault, in particular the consistent and credible evidence given by the complainant in her five interviews, which was corroborated by other witness statements and the medical reports, was overwhelming.

24. Second, the UNDT erred in concluding that the investigation had been closed by OIOS and should therefore not have resulted in a disciplinary measure. The UNDT misunderstood the nature and legal effect of the 25 August 2015 OIOS assessment report which was an internal, strictly confidential document for the decision-makers. The UNDT erred in law by referring to Section 6.3.1 of the OIOS Investigations Manual as it was not an investigation report arising from an investigation carried out by OIOS but rather an assessment by OIOS of an investigation carried out by UNAMID/SIU. The UNDT further erred in law and on a question of fact when it concluded that a closure notice had been issued in this case. A closure notice is sent to a subject who was interviewed and investigated by OIOS informing him or her that the investigation is closed. In this case, however, there was no communication between OIOS and Mr. Sall. OIOS did not interview him or any of the witnesses and did not issue an investigation report but only assessed whether UNAMID/SIU had carried out a thorough investigation. As the 25 August 2015 communication was not sent to Mr. Sall, it could not create any misunderstandings or expectations for him. In accordance with its consistent practice, the language used by OIOS was to be understood as meaning that OIOS would close the case in its case management system and the investigation was to be continued by other investigatory bodies, as was clarified by the Director, ID/OIOS, in his witness statement before the UNDT.

25. The Secretary-General further argues that, irrespective of the procedural irregularities the UNDT may have found in this case, which he argues did not occur, the UNDT failed to exercise its jurisdiction in not conducting a judicial review of the disciplinary measure to render a fully reasoned judgement as required by the Appeals Tribunal jurisprudence on the standard of review



in disciplinary cases. Had it conducted a proper review, the UNDT would have found that (i) the Administration established by clear and convincing evidence, including the consistent evidence given by the complainant and several witnesses and the medical reports, that Mr. Sall physically assaulted the complainant causing her to suffer multiple serious injuries; (ii) the assault qualified as misconduct under the Organization's legislative framework, including Staff Rule 1.2(f); and (iii) the sanction imposed was proportionate to the offense.

26. Finally, the Secretary-General maintains that the UNDT erred in awarding Mr. Sall compensation. As Mr. Sall's procedural rights were not violated, he was not entitled to compensation. Moreover, had the UNDT exercised its jurisdiction as required it would have found that the disciplinary sanction was lawful. Therefore, the relief awarded to Mr. Sall was unjustified and should be vacated in its entirety.

27. Based on the foregoing, the Secretary-General requests the Appeals Tribunal to vacate the Judgment in its entirety.

### **Mr. Sall's Answer to the Cross-Appeal**

28. In his answer to the cross-appeal, Mr. Sall submits that the purpose of a cross-appeal is to respond to the points raised in the appeal, which the Secretary-General fails to do. Rather, the Secretary-General's cross-appeal adds new claims and challenges several of the UNDT's findings and orders which, however, had not been appealed by Mr. Sall. Therefore, the cross-appeal should be dismissed.

29. Mr. Sall reiterates his request for reinstatement, payment of lost earnings and moral damages in the amount of USD 50,000 plus interest.

### **Considerations**

#### *Request for an oral hearing*

30. Mr. Sall's request for an oral hearing is denied. According to Article 8(3) of the Statute of the Appeals Tribunal and Article 18(1) of the Rules of Procedure of the Appeals Tribunal (Rules), oral hearings may be held where they would "assist in the expeditious and fair disposal of the case". In the present case, there is no need for, or added value to, further clarification as the factual and legal issues arising from this appeal have been

clearly defined by the parties. We note, further, that before the UNDT, the parties agreed not to have a hearing and to let the case be decided on the papers. It is only before the Dispute Tribunal as the court of first instance that oral hearings form a common part of the proceedings while the Appeals Tribunal will only hold hearings under exceptional circumstances.

*Receivability of the cross-appeal*

31. The Secretary-General's cross-appeal is receivable. The admissibility of cross-appeals is governed by Article 9(4) of the Rules, which reads as follows:

... Within 60 days of notification of the appeal, a party answering the appeal may file a cross-appeal, accompanied by a brief which shall not exceed 15 pages, with the Appeals Tribunal stating the relief sought and the grounds of the cross-appeal. The cross-appeal may not add new claims.

32. Within the specified time limit, the Secretary-General filed a cross-appeal to Mr. Sall's appeal of the UNDT Judgment. Contrary to Mr. Sall's assertion, we find that the cross-appeal does not "add new claims" in violation of Article 9(4) of the Rules. In his appeal, Mr. Sall requests the Appeals Tribunal to order reinstatement instead of only rescission of the contested administrative decision, and further seeks compensation for material and moral damages. The Secretary-General, in his cross-appeal, requests the Appeals Tribunal to vacate the UNDT Judgment in its entirety, arguing that the contested disciplinary decision was lawful. As Mr. Sall's claims on appeal are directly linked to the lawfulness of the contested underlying administrative decision, the cross-appeal does not add any new claims.

*Merits of the appeal and the cross-appeal*

*Alleged procedural irregularities*

33. We find that the UNDT erred in law in holding that the disciplinary investigation was flawed by procedural irregularities, rendering the decision of separation from service unlawful. We cannot find any irregularities in the disciplinary procedure; Mr. Sall's due process rights were not violated. To give guidance to the UNDT we point out that, under our consistent jurisprudence, only substantial procedural irregularities will render a

disciplinary measure unlawful.<sup>1</sup> Even a very severe disciplinary measure like separation from service can be regarded as lawful if, despite some procedural irregularities, there is clear and convincing evidence of grave misconduct, especially if the misconduct consists of a physical or sexual assault.

34. The UNDT erred in finding that the contested 4 May 2016 decision was taken exclusively based on evidence contained in the January and December 2013 UNAMID/SIU reports although the investigation continued until April 2015 with interviews of two additional witnesses. We are convinced that the totality of the evidence was taken into account as OHRM stated in its 4 May 2016 letter that the allegations were based “among other things” on the explicitly listed evidence and referred to the “entirety of the record”. Further, the relevance of the two additional witness statements was minimal as they did not contain any material evidence (Mr. AR’s statement was not related to the 3 November 2012 incident and Mr. WH’s statement provided, if anything, a further confirmation of the incident as described by other witnesses and the complainant).

35. The UNDT also erred in holding that the decision-makers failed to consider exonerating evidence, in particular the reference in the interview conducted with Mr. AR on 26 January 2015 to a possible change of the complainant’s account of the facts so as to match Mr. Sall’s version and Mr. Sall’s indication in his submission filed on 20 April 2016 that the complainant had withdrawn her complaint. There is no exonerating evidence in the present case. Mr. Sall has advanced no evidence of a withdrawal of the complaint other than his bare assertion and the complainant’s consistent statements show that she did not intend to retract her complaint despite threats by Mr. Sall. Mr. AR in his 26 January 2015 statement, after making clear that he had no knowledge of the 3 November 2012 incident as he had already left UNAMID, referred to another incident of alleged assault by Mr. Sall prior to November 2012 where the complainant had subsequently changed her account of the facts.

36. The UNDT further erred in holding that Mr. Sall’s due process rights were violated because he was not informed of the continuation of the investigation after his last interview on 9 December 2012, was not re-interviewed in light of the witness statements of January and April 2015 and had no opportunity to defend himself against them. Following

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<sup>1</sup> *Muindi v. Secretary-General of the International Maritime Organization*, Judgment No. 2017-UNAT-782, para. 48. See also *Mbaigolmem v. Secretary-General of the United Nations*, Judgment No. 2018-UNAT-819.

our consistent jurisprudence, due process requires that a staff member who is subject to an investigation be informed of the misconduct charges and be provided with the opportunity to contest the allegations against him or her.<sup>2</sup> In the present case, Mr. Sall was informed of the allegations of misconduct (including prior incidents dating from 2011 described in Mr. AR's statement) and had the opportunity to comment on them. He had another opportunity to contest the misconduct charges having been provided with the 15 December 2015 letter and he did so by submitting comments on 20 April 2016 which were considered by the decision-maker. There is no legal or administrative provision obliging the Administration to re-interview a staff member subject to a disciplinary investigation after each statement obtained. In the present case, given the inconsequential evidence of the testimonies of the two additional witnesses and in light of the overwhelming evidence against Mr. Sall (see below), we do not see any reason why Mr. Sall should have been re-interviewed.

37. The UNDT erred in finding that the investigation was closed by OIOS on 25 August 2015 and the subsequent imposition of a disciplinary sanction was therefore unlawful. This error results from a misunderstanding of OIOS's role in the process and of the nature and legal effect of the OIOS assessment report. OIOS's memorandum was not an OIOS investigation report compiled from an investigation carried out by OIOS. It was UNAMID/SIU, not OIOS, who was carrying out the investigation. OIOS's role was to assess whether the SIU investigation had been carried out fully and thoroughly based on the documentation provided. Pending OIOS's assessment, UNAMID and DFS suspended Mr. Sall's referral to OHRM for disciplinary action. Closing the case meant that OIOS was satisfied that SIU investigation had been carried out fully and thoroughly. As a consequence, UNAMID and DFS proceeded to refer Mr. Sall to OHRM for disciplinary action, based on the SIU report.

38. The UNDT further erred in concluding that a closure notice had been issued in this case. A closure notice would have been sent to the subject under investigation to inform him or her that the investigation was closed. However, the 25 August 2015 memorandum was not addressed to Mr. Sall. It was marked strictly confidential and was only addressed to the USG/DFS. In his written statement of 8 November 2017, the Director, ID/OIOS explained that the statement in question was commonly used by OIOS to indicate that the case was closed within OIOS's internal case management system, and that OIOS would be taking

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<sup>2</sup> *Leal v. Secretary-General of the United Nations*, Judgment No. 2013-UNAT-337, para. 24.

no further action (i.e. not investigate and issue a report) but that other investigatory bodies should handle the matter, in this case UNAMID/SIU which had recommended that the matter be referred to OHRM for appropriate action.

39. Irrespective of any irregularities, the UNDT should have conducted a further review of the disciplinary measure. The general standard of judicial review in disciplinary cases requires the UNDT to ascertain whether the facts on which a sanction is based have been established, whether the established facts qualify as misconduct, and whether the sanction is proportionate to the offence.<sup>3</sup> When termination is a possible outcome, misconduct must be established by clear and convincing evidence, which means that the truth of the facts asserted is highly probable.<sup>4</sup> Save exceptional cases involving major violations of due process rights,<sup>5</sup> it is not sufficient for the UNDT to find procedural errors in a disciplinary process but, where necessary, it has to conduct a *de novo* review of the facts and a judicial review of the remaining aspects of the case.<sup>6</sup> The requirement of a *de novo* review of the facts does not mean that the UNDT will have to re-hear all the witnesses of the investigation or to hear new witnesses. If there is sufficient and substantial evidence in the written record, the UNDT may also base its findings on this record. We find that by limiting its review to procedural aspects, the UNDT failed to exercise the jurisdiction vested in it.

40. In the present case, we are satisfied that the Secretary-General has discharged his overall onus to show, by clear and convincing evidence, that Mr. Sall physically assaulted the complainant on 3 November 2012 in her room in the UNAMID compound. It is not disputed that the complainant was found at approximately 2:45 pm on the day in question sitting on the ground outside her room in the compound, naked except for a torn bra, crying for help and having suffered injuries to her body. In the immediate aftermath of the event on 3 November 2012, the complainant made a first report to the UNAMID/SIU describing in detail the preceding assault by Mr. Sall. That report is a previous consistent statement and of considerable evidentiary weight. The complainant made several subsequent statements which display a conspicuous consistency with her initial report. Added to that, contemporaneous medical reports for the complainant dated 6 November 2012 and Mr. Sall

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<sup>3</sup> *Portillo Moya v. Secretary-General of the United Nations*, Judgment No. 2015-UNAT-523, para. 17.

<sup>4</sup> *Applicant v. Secretary-General of the United Nations*, Judgment No. 2013-UNAT-302, para. 29, citing *Molari v. Secretary-General of the United Nations*, Judgment No. 2011-UNAT-164.

<sup>5</sup> See e.g. *Muindi v. Secretary-General of the International Maritime Organization*, Judgment No. 2017-UNAT-782.

<sup>6</sup> *Mbaigolmem v. Secretary-General of the United Nations*, Judgment No. 2018-UNAT-819.

dated 7 November 2012, both stamped and signed by a medical doctor employed by UNAMID, are consistent with the assault described by the complainant. Additionally, one UNAMID staff member provided a statement on the situation she found the complainant in immediately after the incident and three other UNAMID staff members provided statements related to the complainant's apparent physical state shortly thereafter. These various evidentiary statements consistently relayed the complainant's version of the events which added to their credibility. Finally, several witnesses testified that Mr. Sall had already physically assaulted the complainant prior to November 2012 (in August 2011 and February 2012). By contrast, Mr. Sall's statements reveal that he was vague, evasive and contradictory in his account. His credibility has been additionally damaged by countervailing evidence, including a statement of a UNAMID staff member who refuted Mr. Sall's account of the morning preceding the incident.

41. The disciplinary measure of separation from service is proportionate. According to the established jurisprudence, the matter of the degree of the sanction is usually reserved for the Administration, who has discretion to impose the measure that it considers adequate to the circumstances of the case and to the actions and behaviour of the staff member involved.<sup>7</sup> For that reason, it is only if the sanction imposed appears to be blatantly illegal, arbitrary, adopted beyond the limits stated by the respective norms, excessive, abusive, discriminatory or absurd in its severity, that the judicial review would conclude its unlawfulness and change the consequence.<sup>8</sup> Given the kind and degree of misconduct, namely severe and repeated physical assault involving a sexual element, if not sexual assault, inflicted upon a former United Nations volunteer, separation from service lies within the discretion of the Secretary-General and is not disproportionate.

42. As the disciplinary decision is lawful, there can be neither rescission nor reinstatement.

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<sup>7</sup> *Portillo Moya v. Secretary-General of the United Nations*, Judgment No. 2015-UNAT-523, para. 19.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 21.

*Compensation for material damages*

43. The UNDT erred in awarding Mr. Sall compensation for material damages in the amount of his net base salary for the period from the date of his separation from service to the expiration date of his employment contract. As there was no illegality, there can be no compensation for harm under Article 10(5)(b) of the UNDT Statute.

*Compensation for moral damages*

44. Mr. Sall is not entitled to compensation for moral damages as he did not request compensation for moral damages before the UNDT nor did he present evidence of alleged harm to him and his family as required by Article 9(1)(b) of the Appeals Tribunal Statute. Additionally, the impugned administrative decision is not unlawful.

**Judgment**

45. The appeal is dismissed and the cross-appeal is upheld. Judgment No. UNDT/2018/056 is reversed to the extent that it ordered rescission, in-lieu compensation and compensation for material damages, and it is affirmed to the extent that it rejected Mr. Sall's request for reinstatement.

Original and Authoritative Version: English

Dated this 26<sup>th</sup> day of October 2018 in New York, United States.

*(Signed)*

Judge Knierim, Presiding

*(Signed)*

Judge Murphy

*(Signed)*

Judge Halfeld

Entered in the Register on this 20<sup>th</sup> day of December 2018 in New York, United States.

*(Signed)*

Weicheng Lin, Registrar