



UNITED NATIONS DISPUTE TRIBUNAL

Case No.: UNDT/NY/2017/016
Order No.: 182 (NY/2017)
Date: 7 September 2017
Original: English

Before: Judge Ebrahim-Carstens
Registry: New York
Registrar: Morten Albert Michelsen, Officer-in-Charge

SEBILLOT

v.

SECRETARY-GENERAL
OF THE UNITED NATIONS

ORDER

ON WITHDRAWAL

Counsel for Applicant:
Robbie Leighton, OSLA

Counsel for Respondent:
Steven Dietrich, ALS/OHRM

Introduction

1. On 24 February 2017, the Applicant, a Claims Officer at the P-3, step 11, level with the United Nations Assistance Mission in Haiti (“MINUSTAH”), filed an application in which she contests the “decision to terminate [her] Continuing Appointment”. The Applicant requests that the contested decision be rescinded and that she be reinstated to her continuing employment, or in the alternative, an award of three years’ net-base salary plus pension contributions, together with moral damages.

2. On 23 March 2017, the Respondent filed a request for an extension of time of 30 days until 27 April 2017, to file his reply, pending continued informal settlement efforts. The Respondent further informed that Applicant had been consulted and did not object to the request.

3. By Order No. 55 (NY/2017) dated 24 March 2017, the Tribunal granted the parties’ joint request for further suspension of proceedings and suspended the proceedings for a month, including the time limit for submitting the reply, pending the parties’ efforts to find an amicable resolution to the present case.

4. Thereafter, at the parties joint request, the Tribunal granted five further orders for suspension of proceedings, including extensions of the time limit for submitting a reply, in the months following, that is, on 26 April, 31 May, 30 June, 31 July, and 29 August 2017.

5. By Order No. 176 (NY/2017) dated 29 August 2017, the Tribunal suspended the proceedings for one week, following the parties joint request and advice that a settlement agreement was in the process of being finalized, the terms whereof having been agreed and the Applicant having signed.

6. On 31 August 2017, the Applicant, expressing appreciation to the Tribunal for the various suspensions and extensions that had been granted in the case, filed a

motion confirming that a resolution to the case has been found, and requesting “to withdraw her Application fully, finally and entirely, including on the merits”.

Consideration

7. Although it has taken some time to resolve this matter, the Tribunal commends the parties and Counsel on both sides for their efforts. The Tribunal commends the Applicant for withdrawing the present case based on informal resolution. This saves valuable resources of the Organization and also contributes to a harmonious working environment and culture.

8. The desirability of finality of disputes within the workplace cannot be gainsaid (see *Hashimi* Order No. 93 (NY/2011), dated 24 March 2011, and *Goodwin* UNDT/2011/104). Equally, the desirability of finality of disputes in proceedings requires that a party should be able to raise a valid defence of *res judicata*, which provides that a matter between the same persons, involving the same cause of action, may not be adjudicated twice (see *Shanks* 2010-UNAT-026bis, *Costa* 2010-UNAT-063, *El-Khatib* 2010-UNAT-066, *Beaudry* 2011-UNAT-129). As stated in *Bangoura* UNDT/2011/202, matters that stem from the same cause of action, though they may be couched in other terms, are *res judicata*, which means that an applicant does not have the right to bring the same complaint again.

9. The object of the *res judicata* rule is that "there must be an end to litigation" in order "to ensure the stability of the judicial process" (*Meron* 2012-UNAT-198) and that a party should not have to answer the same cause twice. Once a matter has been resolved, a party should not be able to re-litigate the same issue. An unequivocal withdrawal means that the matter will be disposed of such that it cannot be reopened or litigated again.

10. With regard to the doctrine of *res judicata*, the International Labour Organization Administrative Tribunal (“ILOAT”) in Judgment No. 3106 (2012) stated at para. 4:

The argument that the internal appeal was irreceivable is made by reference to the principle of *res judicata*. In this regard, it is argued that the issues raised in the internal appeal were determined by [ILOAT] Judgment 2538. As explained in [ILOAT] Judgment 2316, under 11:

Res judicata operates to bar a subsequent proceeding if the issue submitted for decision in that proceeding has already been the subject of a final and binding decision as to the rights and liabilities of the parties in that regard.

A decision as to the “rights and liabilities of the parties” necessarily involves a judgment on the merits of the case. Where, as here, a complaint is dismissed as irreceivable, there is no judgment on the merits and, thus, no “final and binding decision as to the rights and liabilities of the parties”. Accordingly, the present complaint is not barred by *res judicata*.

11. In the instant case, the Applicant filed a motion stating that she “withdraws her Application fully, finally and entirely, including on the merits”.

12. The Applicant's unequivocal withdrawal of the merits signifies a final and binding resolution with regard to the rights and liabilities of the parties in all respects in her case, requiring no pronouncement on the merits but concluding the matter *in toto*. Therefore, the dismissal of her case with a view to finality of the proceedings is the most appropriate course of action.

Conclusion

13. The Applicant has withdrawn the present case in finality, including on the merits. There no longer being any determination for the Tribunal to make, this application is dismissed in its entirety without liberty to reinstate.

(Signed)

Judge Ebrahim-Carstens

Dated this 7th day of September 2017