

OHR Policy Guidelines

Measures to support staff who have been victim of hostage incidents.

OHR/PG/2024/1 – 19 January 2024

I. Scope and purpose

1. The present guidelines include administrative measures designed to support staff member's well-being and mental health recovery after a hostage incident. These administrative measures are meant to complement existing benefits and entitlements (such as sick leave entitlement, compensation in the event of death, injury, or illness attributable to the performance of official duties on behalf of the United Nations) and the support provided by the Critical Incident and Stress Management Section / Department of Safety and Security (DSS), and the Division of Health-Care Management and Occupational Safety and Health (DHMOSH).
2. These guidelines do not replace the applicable Staff Regulations and Rules and the relevant administrative issuances which prevail in case of conflict with the provisions in these guidelines. They also do not replace the provisions of the United Nations Security Management System (UNSMS) Security Policy Manual which prevail in case of conflict with the provisions in these guidelines.

II. Definition

3. For the purposes of these guidelines, hostage-taking is defined as the seizure or detention with a threat to kill, injure or to continue to detain individuals (hostages) in order to compel a third party to do or to abstain from doing any act as an explicit or implicit condition for the release of the hostages. The authority to determine if a situation qualifies as hostage-taking rests with DSS.

III. Support measures

Special Leave with Full Pay (SLWFP)

4. Under their delegated authority, heads of entity may make the following decisions:
 - a. Following their release, staff members may be granted up to 10 working days of special leave with full pay (SLWFP), irrespective of the duration of their captivity.
 - b. For captivity that goes beyond 30 days, an additional 5 days of SLWFP per full month of captivity may be granted, with an overall cap at 70 working days (including the initial 10 days). This would amount to 15 days if a staff member is held hostage for 2 months, 35 days if the captivity lasts for 6 months.
 - c. The SLWFP should be taken in units of one working week minimum (5 consecutive working days) within 6 months from the release date or within the duration of the

appointment as applicable (i.e., no extension of appointment for the sole purpose of availing of SLWFP).

- d. Consideration may be given to granting additional periods of SLWFP in case of new or aggravating circumstances.

Annual leave carry-over

5. In cases where staff members have accumulated over 60 days of annual leave as a result of their captivity, they may request an exception from ASG/OHR to staff rule 5.3. Requests will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis, taking into account all relevant factors including the reasons that led staff members to accumulate annual leave days prior to their captivity, if applicable.

Measures for staff members who reached mandatory age of separation while in captivity

6. The appointment of a staff member who reaches the mandatory age of separation during captivity will be extended on an exceptional basis for the duration of the hostage period. Upon release, the staff member's appointment may be further extended for a period of special leave with full pay sufficient to allow them to complete the required processes for separation and retirement. Such period should start immediately after the release and be availed of in a continuous manner.

IV. Other measures

Reassignment / change of functions

7. Some victims of hostage incidents may benefit from serving in another duty station, and some may benefit from changing functions, including on a temporary basis. In consultation with the staff member, counsellors, DHMOSH, supervisor etc., all efforts should be made to identify and facilitate a working environment that would facilitate the staff member's return to work. Locally recruited staff can be reassigned within the same duty station.

Flexible working arrangements

8. Special consideration should be given to authorize released staff members to avail of a period of telecommuting under the provisions of ST/SGB/2019/3, to ease their return to work.

Performance rating

9. In the event that the staff members' performance cannot be assessed due to a period of captivity covering half of the reporting period or more, the staff member should automatically receive a satisfactory rating.