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From: UNCA Executive Committee [mailto:news=unca.com@mail123.us2.mcsy.net] On Behalf Of UNCA Executive Committee
Sent: Thursday, June 14, 2012 2:43 PM
Subject: UNCA Executive Committee letter to ALL MEMBERS

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United Nations Correspondents Association

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June 14, 2012

Dear colleagues,

Following is a letter agreed today by the UNCA Executive Committee by a vote of 13 to 1.

In favor: Barbara Plett, Bouchra Beryousser, Masood Haider, Gianpeolo Piofi, Zhenqi Gu, Louis Charbonneau, Nizar Abboud, Marcelle Hopkins, Tim Witchar, Kahraman Haliscelik. By proxy: Talal al-Haj, Margaret Besheer, Sylviane Zehil.
Against: Matthew Lee
Absent: Flavia Krause-Jackson

Dear UNCA members,

This letter represents the position of the UNCA Executive Committee as agreed on June 14, 2012. It is for UNCA members only.

Five members of the UNCA Executive Committee recently requested the establishment of a Board of Examination (Article 6 of the UNCA constitution) to investigate allegations of harassment and unethical behavior by Matthew Lee, the writer and publisher of Inner City Press. The Executive Committee decided by a vote of 13-1 (One member was absent and Matthew Lee was the sole dissenting vote) on June 1, 2012 to establish that Board of Examination.

The Executive Committee believes that Matthew Lee has been using his blog to present a distorted and one-sided view of his case and unfairly attacking UNCA and its elected Executive Committee members. We therefore feel compelled to communicate to UNCA members the Executive Committee's view of the dispute.

One of the five members of the Board of Examination announced her resignation on June 11, at an UNCA Executive Committee meeting. She explained in tears that she felt offended and intimidated by the way Matthew Lee had described her in his blog. Another member of the Board of Examination requested that Matthew Lee guarantee that he would not use his website to attack him while the Board of Examination carries out its assigned task of considering harassment and bullying complaints made against Matthew Lee. Matthew Lee refused to grant that guarantee.

We believe that Matthew Lee has also used his blog to attack and attempt to intimidate the chairman of the Board of Examination.

We have decided to replace the Board member who resigned with UNCA member Tarek Fathi. We hope the Board of Examination can begin its work as soon as possible. The UNCA Executive Committee strongly urges Matthew Lee to pledge not to attack, threaten or intimidate in any way the members of the Examination Board.

The creation of the Board of Examination comes after months of attacks by Matthew Lee on his colleagues. The UNCA Executive Committee believes Matthew Lee has increasingly used his blog as a weapon to punish colleagues who have criticized him or who he feels crossed him in some way. He has published lies about colleagues that could damage their credibility and has recently started writing to UNCA members' editors, complaining about them in a way that could damage their careers and/or advancement possibilities. He has leveled wild and false allegations against UNCA itself – primarily that it is attempting to censor him and remove his accreditation. UNCA has nothing to do with the accreditation process. It is handled by the U.N. secretariat. Matthew Lee has also sent individual UNCA Executive Committee members threatening emails, suggesting to them that he would retaliate if they supported the Executive Committee's move to establish the Board of Examination. Matthew Lee has also suggested that UNCA is somehow responsible for threats against him and negative reports about him in the Sri Lankan press. The suggestion that UNCA was somehow behind those reports or in any way condones such threats against him is a false and damaging claim. The Sri Lankan news reports that UNCA is trying to evict him from the U.N. and that he could face jail time are false and did not come from UNCA. UNCA condemns in the strongest terms all threats against any journalist.

The Executive Committee also expresses its regret that Matthew Lee began publicizing the Committee's internal dispute with him.

Last week Matthew Lee had expressed a willingness to apologize for using his blog to attack UNCA President Gianpeolo Piofi, First Vice President Louis Charbonneau, Third Vice President Sylviane Zehil and other UNCA Executive Committee members, including Talal al-Haj, Margaret Besheer and Flavia Krause-Jackson, as well as members of the Examination