

July 10<sup>th</sup>, 2016

The Managing Director/CEO  
Asset Radio Broadcasting (Pvt) Ltd  
105/3, 5<sup>th</sup> Lane, Colombo 3

Dear Sir/Madam,

**Unethical media practices by Neth FM**

I am the President of the Advocacy and Reconciliation Council [ARC] which is an unincorporated association of Sri Lankans who have come together to work towards a united Sri Lanka where all citizens enjoy equality.

We at ARC write to raise our concerns with regard to unethical and dangerous media practices adopted by Neth FM in its ‘Balumgala’ programme broadcast on June 14<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

The said programme sought to discuss issues pertaining to the construction work taking place at the mosque at Sri Maha Vihara Road, Kalubowila, Dehiwela.

The presenters who presented the programme made several false assertions. They claimed that the mosque was an ‘අන්තවාදී මුස්ලිම් පල්ලියක්’ which was being constructed by ‘අන්තවාදී පිරිසක්’ and that the mosque was an ‘අන්තවාදී අතවසර ඉදිකිරීමක්’ and that it was part of a ‘කුමන්ත්‍රණයක්’. We waited to hear your presenters back these broad statements with supporting material but no such material was produced.

This is not surprising as the assertions were entirely false. Accordingly to have made such allegations that the mosque was being built by ‘extremists’ who were part of a ‘conspiracy’ was unethical, irresponsible and dangerous.

The broadcasters also claimed that the construction was being done by ‘පීටිං ආඥ අන්තවාදී කට්ටියක්’ – which is also entirely false and which also they failed to substantiate.

The programme was biased, one sided and was clearly targeted at creating fear amongst its listeners against Muslims. It was not a programme but propaganda. The bias of the broadcasters was evident in that despite making such serious allegations they failed to interview a single Muslim member of the congregation or a member of the board of trustees of the said mosque.

This failure to allow the Muslim side of the story to go on air confirms that the presenters had no intention of looking at the issue objectively but were furthering a plan to foment fear, hatred and anger against Muslims. It is indeed disappointing that radio presenters have fallen to such low levels.

We expect radio channels to act to bring communities together. However Neth FM is doing its best to rip communities apart and damage social cohesion in Sri Lanka.

If the presenters have any material that the mosque and those involved in the construction of the mosque are a threat to public security in Sri Lanka – as good citizens which they claim to be they have a duty to bring it to the attention of the law enforcement authorities. They have not done so. This is because in fact there is no such material and the presenters are acting on pseudo – public interest and pretend to be patriotic just to further the political interests of their masters. The fact that the presenters have sold their independence and intelligence to political agenda – which was evident throughout the programme – is pathetic.

We do not need to remind you that radio stations broadcast on a special privilege conferred on them by the State. The radio frequencies are public property and are held in trust by the licensees and should only be used for the benefit of society. Neth FM has failed to discharge this duty.

Finally we write to also inform you that the construction work of the afore stated mosque at Sri Maha Vihara Road is complete and the Sinhalese, Muslim and Tamil residents of Kalubowila are going about their business peacefully.

Yours faithfully,

**Aslam Othman**