

Mohamed Ibrahim
Secretary General
NUSOJ

December 2 2011

Dear Secretary General,

BROADCASTING INCIDENT, HALANE BASE, Nov 29th 2011

I am the Chief News Editor of Radio Bar Kulan (RBK) and I have been passed your letter of 29 Nov 2011 so that the response to it and the issues it raises comes from the responsible broadcaster and not the organiser of the press conference.

Over the past two years, RBK, funded by the UN, has been operating in Mogadishu working alongside other media bodies in Somalia, including NUSOJ, who have benefitted directly from AU and UN support. I am particularly grateful that you acknowledge that we have come to assist and support the media in Mogadishu and that we would never intentionally endanger anyone's life. This is entirely correct.

On behalf of Radio Bar Kulan I offer sincere apologies and regret for this very unfortunate incident. By way of explanation I wish to inform you of the events that led to this mistake. No blame or responsibility lies with AMISOM or the UN directly.

I must reassure you that the error was entirely unintentional, and any thoughts or allegations to the contrary should be dismissed.

We have also apologised to the Minister of Information, the AMISOM Force Commander and the Commanders of the TFG Security Forces who were present. Along with all the media attending, we understood that the purpose of the press conference was to raise a very important issue – the rise in bombings and civilian casualties – and begin a public awareness campaign. We understand that the 'off-the-record' section, which was introduced by the Force Commander, was to begin the process of opening up better relations between AMISOM and the media in Mogadishu, a perfectly reasonable aim.

I am doubly saddened by this accident, not just for the personal concerns and fears that have resulted, but that the mistake may have diminished trust between us all and damaged a genuine attempt to build a stronger relationship.

Along with the other Somali/Mogadishu based media RBK was invited to cover the press conference on November 29th. The equipment that had been used for live transmission from the previous day was still in place, and the decision was taken to use this to produce a live feed of the press conference. The decision to begin the conference with an off-the-record session was not known by the media when the press conference was called but was announced as the journalists arrived. Although

it was clear to those attending, and all agreed, RBK did not get this message as none of our reporters were directly present.

With hind-sight the first mistake was that RBK took a live feed rather than attending in person and thus were less aware of the off-the-record nature at the beginning. It was this, not any wish to broadcast what other media would not be covering, that led to the transmission of the first part. It is regrettable and should not have happened. But, I can assure you that this happened by mistake and that neither ill intention nor any desire to gain advantage over other media was behind the mistaken action. It warrants a full apology to the journalists, and all media organisations in Mogadishu, which I whole heartedly offer in this response to your letter.

On learning about this mistake, and on behalf of RBK, Richard Bailey, from the AU/UN Information Support Team, who was involved in helping AMISOM organise the conference, made several calls and text messages to the journalists that attended, explaining this mistake and offering apologies. We are grateful for his immediate action on our behalf.

Today the news editor of RBK has met with some of the journalists involved to further explain the very regrettable circumstances that led to this mistake and to reiterate the apologies already offered, and in this letter, and to listen to their concerns. We will also write to their respective employers to explain the situation. We expect to hold more meetings in person with the journalists in the near future, and we have given them a point of contact through which they can keep in touch.

We have submitted apologies to the Force Commander and the Minister of Information, but my priority was to respond to your letter and via this and our direct meetings to apologise to the journalists who attended the conference.

A full editorial and procedural investigation is underway within RBK and you will be informed within one week of the procedural changes to be implemented to prevent this ever happening again.

I remain at your disposal for any other information on this subject, and hope that we will be able to meet the next time I am in Mogadishu. It is important for RBK, as a Somali organisation, to have active contact with NUSOJ and I hope that we can foster this in the coming period.

Yours sincerely,



Farah Lamaane