

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

News Flash

AI Index: ASA 29/001/2006 (Public)
News Service No: 045
22 February 2006

Maldives: Release of artist and internet dissident highlights failings of justice system

Amnesty International welcomes today's release of prisoners of conscience Ahmad Ibrahim Didi and Naushad Waheed, but urges the government to take decisive action to reform the criminal justice system to prevent further politically motivated detentions.

"Ahmad Ibrahim Didi and Naushad Waheed were tried in grossly unfair trials simply for expressing their peaceful opinions," said Abbas Faiz, South Asia researcher at Amnesty International. "Their release today is welcome but long overdue. We urge the government to release all the other prisoners of conscience still detained in the Maldives."

"This case highlights the urgent need for reform of the criminal justice system to safeguard against the prevalent use in the Maldives of arbitrary arrest and unfair trials," said Abbas Faiz.

Ahmad Ibrahim Didi was sentenced to life imprisonment in 2002 for his involvement in the production of an internet email magazine, *Sandhaanu*. It contained articles critical of the government and was circulated widely amongst Maldivians. Naushad Waheed, an artist and cartoonist, was detained in 2002 after contacting Amnesty International and taking part in debates critical of the government.

Other political prisoners detained in the Maldives for expressing their peaceful opposition to the government's policies include Mohamed Nasheed, opposition party politician, and Jennifer Latheef, a prisoner of conscience convicted in an unfair trial in October 2005 for taking part in demonstrations in the capital Male.

Public Document

For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566

Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW. web: <http://www.amnesty.org>

For latest human rights news view <http://news.amnesty.org>