

system into conformity with fair trial standards. A National Human Rights Commission was established and a special *Majlis* (assembly) was elected to rewrite the constitution in May.

Tension emerged on 19 July when sessions of special *Majlis* were suspended because many Members of Parliament (MPs) objected to the voting process. They were concerned that the speaker of the special *Majlis* should be elected through secret ballots, and not by show of hands. According to reports, at least 24 MPs walked out of the session and held a demonstration outside the building, which was reportedly joined by a large number of people.

The recent arrests followed large demonstrations calling for democratic reform and a change of government in Malé that lasted several days. On 13 August, large numbers of injured people needed hospital treatment after the police reportedly used sticks and batons to attack them during the demonstrations. The government later imposed a state of emergency and began a wave of arrests of its political opponents. In a press release issued the same day, the government announced that "about 80 persons [were] assisting the security services with their inquiries", which suggests they are in detention. Other sources, however, say the number of detainees has risen significantly since then.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English or your own language:

- expressing concern about those arrested since demonstrations on 12 and 13 August, including those named above;
- expressing concern that the people named above are held incommunicado, and urging the authorities to ensure that they are treated humanely and not tortured or ill-treated, and given immediate access to their families, lawyers of their choice and any medical attention that they may require;
- expressing concern that they appear to be held solely for the peaceful exercise of their right to freedom of speech and assembly;
- urging the authorities to release them immediately and unconditionally unless they are to be charged with a recognisably criminal offence.

APPEALS TO:

President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom
The President's Palace
Maafannu Theemuge
Male 2002
Republic of Maldives
Fax: + 960 32 55 00
Salutation: Dear President Gayoom

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PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 28 September 2004.