

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

PUBLIC STATEMENT

ASA 29/5605/2017

1 February 2017

Maldives: Halt imminent plans to resume executions after six decades

The Maldives authorities must immediately halt plans to resume executions and instead impose a moratorium on the implementation of the death penalty with a view to its eventual abolition. Amnesty International has received reports that the resumption of executions could be imminent.

The Maldives Supreme Court has to date upheld the death sentences of three prisoners, meaning that their domestic legal appeals are exhausted and that they are at immediate risk of execution:

- **Hussain Humaam Ahmed** (Humaam) was convicted of and sentenced to death for murder in 2012, and the Supreme Court upheld his conviction and death sentence on 24 June 2016. Amnesty International and other human rights organisations have raised serious concerns about the fairness of Humaam's trial. The Human Rights Committee in July 2016 issued an order to stay his execution pending its consideration of the case.
- **Ahmed Murrath** was convicted of and sentenced to death for murder in 2012 along with his girlfriend Hanaa Fathmath. The Supreme Court upheld his conviction and death sentence on 9 July 2016, but has yet to carry out its final review of Hanaa's death sentence.
- **Mohamed Nabeel** was convicted of and sentenced to death for murder in 2009. The Supreme Court upheld his death sentence on 27 July 2016.

In 2014, the Maldives government under President Abdulla Yameen announced Maldives would resume executions, which had not been carried out for almost 60 years. Since then, authorities have taken steps to resume executions, including by amending national legislation. Recent regulations have removed the power from the executive to grant pardons or commutations in murder cases, depriving those facing the death penalty of the right to apply for these as guaranteed under international law. In 2016, the government changed the method of execution from lethal injection to hanging, while government officials pledged that executions should happen within 30 days of confirmation of guilty verdicts by the Supreme Court.

A resumption of executions after more than 60 years would be a massive step back for human rights in the country. The Maldives government should instead urgently impose a moratorium on executions, with a view to the full abolition of the death penalty. It is also concerning that Maldives government officials have justified the need to use the death

penalty on public safety grounds. There is no evidence that the death penalty is more of a deterrent to crime than life imprisonment.

According to statistics from the Maldives Correction Services and media reports, there are at least 18 prisoners currently under sentence of death in the country. Of these, at least five were convicted and sentenced to death for crimes committed when they were below 18 years of age. International customary law and two international treaties to which Maldives is a state party prohibit the use of the death penalty against juvenile offenders. The prisoners or their representatives have raised concerns about the violation of the right to a fair trial and use of coerced, self-incriminating statements in several cases.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases without exception, regardless of the nature or circumstances of the crime. The world is moving away from the death penalty. At this time, 141 countries are abolitionist in law or practice, and a majority of the world's countries (104) have now abolished the death penalty fully from their legal books.

Amnesty International urges the Maldives authorities to immediately:

- Halt any plans to resume executions and establish an official moratorium on all executions, with a view to abolishing the death penalty;
- Immediately commute the death sentence against all prisoners under sentence of death, including those imposed for crimes committed when the prisoners were below 18 years of age; and
- Amend national legislation to remove provisions that are not in line with international law and standards and abolish the death penalty for all crimes.

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