

PUBLIC

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UA 186/03

Fear of torture or ill-treatment/incommunicado detention/  
prisoners of conscience

MALDIVES

Mohamed Zaki (m)  
Ahmed Ibrahim Didi (m)

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Prisoners of conscience Mohamed Zaki and Ahmed Ibrahim Didi were reportedly recently transferred from the prison island of Maafushi to Dhoonidhoo detention centre, on a small island north of the capital Male'. They are being held incommunicado and are at risk of torture or ill-treatment.

Mohamed Zaki and Ahmed Ibrahim Didi are serving life prison sentences, handed down in July 2002, for writing articles critical of the government. Around 20 June, they were reportedly taken to the police headquarters in Male' for interrogation. Amnesty International has learned that they were then transferred to Dhoonidhoo detention centre. They have been held incommunicado since their transfer from Maafushi.

The transfer and interrogation of the two men follows the escape of another prisoner of conscience, Ibrahim Moosa Luthfee. There are fears that Mohamed Zaki and Ahmed Ibrahim Didi may be tortured or ill-treated in an attempt to obtain information from them about the escape and whereabouts of Ibrahim Moosa Luthfee.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Mohamed Zaki, Ahmed Ibrahim Didi and two other prisoners of conscience, Ibrahim Moosa Luthfee and Fathimath Nisreen, were arrested between 30 January and 1 February 2002 by the National Security Service (NSS). They were accused of writing for Sandhaanu, an Internet e-mail magazine critical of the government which continued to be circulated in secret. The four were held in solitary confinement without access to their relatives for several months. On 7 July 2002 Mohamed Zaki, Ibrahim Moosa Luthfee and Ahmad Didi were sentenced to life imprisonment on charges of "insulting" the President, calling for the overthrow of the government, causing hatred against the government, spreading false news, and circulating Sandhaanu via e-mail. Fathimath Nisreen was sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment for writing "false information" in Sandhaanu, criticizing government policies, calling for the overthrow of the government and assisting the originators of Sandhaanu. They were held in the island prison of Maafushi, where hygiene, particularly for food, is reportedly poor, prisoners are sometimes kept handcuffed for days, and access to health care is severely limited.

Ibrahim Moosa Luthfee developed a severe eye infection while in detention and following concerns about his wellbeing, was eventually sent to the Sri Lankan capital Colombo for medical treatment. While he was receiving specialist medical care in late May 2003, friends helped him escape.

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

- expressing concern at the recent transfer and interrogation of Mohamed Zaki and Ahmed Ibrahim Didi;
- calling on the authorities to ensure that Mohamed Zaki and Ahmad Ibrahim Didi are treated humanely and to guarantee that they are not subjected to torture or ill-treatment;
- calling for the two men to be granted immediate access to lawyers, relatives and any medical attention they may require;
- calling for their immediate and unconditional release as prisoners of conscience, imprisoned solely for exercising their right to freedom of speech;
- urging that other prisoners of conscience, including Fathimath Nisreen, be released immediately and unconditionally.

**APPEALS TO:**

President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom

The President's Palace

Maafannu Theemuge

Male' 2002

Republic of Maldives

**Telegram: President Gayoom, Male Republic of Maldives**

**Fax: + 960 32 55 00**

**Salutation: Dear President Gayoom**

**COPIES TO:** diplomatic representatives of Maldives accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 6 August 2003.