

PUBLIC

AI Index: ASA 29/09/98

1 December 1998

Further information on UA 197/98 (ASA 29/05/98, 8 July 1998) and follow up ASA 29/06/98, 26 August 1998 - Prisoners of conscience / Fear of torture or ill-treatment

THE MALDIVES At least 20 people

Amnesty International has received information that twenty women and men detained in June 1998 on suspicion of spreading Christian beliefs have now been released.

Soon after their arrest in June, Amnesty International urged the Maldives Government to release the 20 people immediately and unconditionally if they were being held for the peaceful exercise of their religious beliefs. The government denied that the prisoners had been arrested for professing their faith and stated: "Any country in the world will have the right to apply relevant laws under due process against those who seek to subvert social harmony and denigrate national values to arouse public disorder." The prisoners were held without trial until their release.

The following is an extract sent to Amnesty International on behalf of the former prisoners.

"Please thank all the staff of Amnesty International, and your constituency, on behalf of the Maldivians for your help in this situation."
No further action is required from the UA Network. Many thanks to all those who sent appeals.