

EXTERNAL

AI Index: ASA 29/01/96

26 January 1996

Further information on UA 115/95 (ASA 29/02/95, 25 May 1995) and follow-ups ASA 29/03/95, 15 June; ASA 29/04/95, 21 July; ASA 29/05/95, 23 August; ASA 29/06/95, 30 August; ASA 29/07/95, 22 September, ASA 29/08/95, 1 November))  
- Possible prisoners of conscience / Health concern

REPUBLIC OF MALDIVES Mohamed Latheef, aged 71, linguist  
Ahamed Shafeeq, aged 67, former civil servant  
Ali Moosa Didi, writer and politician

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Amnesty International has been informed that Mohamed Latheef, Ahamed Shafeeq and Ali Moosa Didi were released from house arrest on 31 December 1995. According to reliable sources, they have, however, been instructed not to leave the capital Male' without permission from the authorities as the case against them has not been fully concluded. The reason given for keeping the case open relates to the fact that a fourth person, Hassan Maniku (referred to in update 2 (ASA 29/04/95) as name unknown) continues to outside the country for medical treatment.

According to an article published on 1 January 1996 in two newspapers in the Maldives - *Haveeru* and *Aafathis* - the reason for the arrest of the three men, as given in a statement issued by police headquarters, was because they were:

"...persons who had written articles and published books and these persons had established a reputation who had written with a sense of honesty and truthfulness and had gained the confidence of both Maldivians and foreigners, and they have tried to make use of this established confidence to violate the good name and greatness of the Maldivian people and had written misleading the history and endangering the security of the Maldives. This was proven at the investigations held."

The newspaper articles also referred to five more specific grounds for the arrest of the three men including "depicting the Maldivian people as timid and good-for-nothing in their writings and speech", "among some unpublished writings, making slanderous statements about certain individuals and families", "writing and speaking in degrading terms on the activities of the head of state" and, "working for the lessening of the powers of the state through their talk and thinking".

It would appear from the information in the articles that the three prisoners were held in contravention of their right to freedom of expression.

No further action by the Urgent Action Network is required at this stage. Thank you to all those who sent appeals.