

URGENT ACTION

UP TO 20 YEARS IN PRISON ON TRUMPED-UP CHARGES

Ahmed Mahloof faces charges of “terrorism” and “obstruction of police duty” for taking part in peaceful protests, along with charges of “false reporting” for two tweets about the police service. If found guilty of the trumped-up and politically motivated charges, the independent Maldivian politician could face nearly 20 years in prison.

Ahmed Mahloof, a former football star turned politician who broke away from the ruling party to become one of its fiercest critics, was arrested on 22 February 2018 for distributing gas masks at a peaceful protest where police fired tear gas and pepper spray and subsequently charged with “obstruction of police duty” – a crime that carries a minimum six-month sentence. Following condemnation by the Parliamentarians for Global Action, a non-profit international network of committed legislators, who stated that his detention was “frivolous” and “politically motivated”, Ahmed Mahloof was moved from prison to house arrest on 4 April.

In addition to “obstruction of police duty”, Ahmed Mahloof currently faces three additional charges for which he will need to appear in court starting on 13th May 2018. The first is with regard to his role in a peaceful protest, alleging that he was “leading a group of people” where some people entered the prison outside which they were protesting on 3 February 2018, in response to the government’s crackdown on opposition protests and arbitrary arrests. Eye witnesses have stated that Ahmed Mahloof was participating in the peaceful protest and was not among those who attempted to enter the prison premises. Initially charged with “obstruction of police duty”, it was later changed to “terrorism”, which carries a minimum term of 17 years’ in prison.

The remaining charges of “providing false information” relate to two separate tweets, each carrying a six-month sentence, posted by Ahmed Mahloof. The first, on 3 December 2017, tagged the Maldives Police’s official twitter account asking for a response to the claim that the former Deputy Police Commissioner of the Maldives had been demoted for refusing to poison former Vice President Ahmed Adeen. The second tweet, on 20 January 2018, was a statement that 11 people had died in police custody in the past 18 months due to “criminal negligence”.

The rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly have been under attack in the Maldives over recent years, and increasingly so following the government’s decision to impose a state of emergency in February 2018. Amnesty International believes that Ahmed Mahloof is a prisoner of conscience and calls for his immediate and unconditional release.

Please write immediately in English or Dhivehi urging the authorities to:

- Immediately and unconditionally release Ahmed Mahloof and withdraw charges against him for solely exercising his rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly;
- Ensure that the criminal justice system is not misused to target political opponents;
- Ensure that the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly are respected and a safe and enabling environment is created for people to express themselves without fear of punishment, reprisal or intimidation.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 22 JUNE 2018 TO:

Attorney General
 Mohamed Anil,
 6 Floor, Velaanaage,
 Ameeru Ahmed Magu,
 20096, Male, Maldives
 Fax: +96 03 314 109
 Email: info@agoffice.gov.mv
Salutation: Dear Attorney General

Prosecutor General
 Aishath Bisham,
 Prosecutor General’s Office,
 Majeedhee Magu Road,
 Male, Maldives
 Email: pgoffice@pgoffice.gov.mv
Salutation: Dear Prosecutor General

And copies to:
Commissioner of Prisons
 Ahmed Shihan,
 Gaazee Building,
 1st Floor,
 Male, Maldives
 Fax: +96 03 313 727
 Email: info@corrections.gov.mv

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Ahmed Mahloof received summons for all four charges following his arrest in February 2018. Before his current ordeal, Ahmed Mahloof said he had been taken into custody more than 25 times since 2012 for his peaceful political activities.

Ever since President Abdulla Yameen came to power in 2013, the Maldives has seen an unrelenting wave of repression. All major opposition figures are either behind bars or in exile. The most prominent victim of the crackdown has been former President Mohamed Nasheed, who was convicted in March 2015 to 13 years in prison on 'terrorism' charges that flowed from a deeply flawed and politically-motivated trial.

On 1 February 2018, in a surprise decision, the Maldivian Supreme Court ruled that Nasheed and eight other opposition politicians had been wrongly imprisoned, following flawed trials that did not meet international standards. Instead of implementing the Supreme Court verdict, the Maldivian government arrested the Chief Justice, Abdulla Saeed, another Supreme Court judge, Justice Ali Hameed, and other officials. The government also arrested former President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom and his son-in-law Mohamed Nadheem. They all remain behind bars.

Political repression in the Maldives has gone little noticed in the international community. Drawing comfort from the fact that tourism has been unaffected, the government has proceeded to entrench itself by choking dissent, convicting members of the opposition in trials that are suspected to be politically-motivated and that do not meet international standards.

In April 2017, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (UNWGAD) raised concern about the last time that Ahmed Mahloof had been arrested for participating in peaceful protests. According to UNWGAD, the court proceedings took place with "unjustifiable haste", his right to legal representation was interfered with, and that the government violated his right to be free from cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment – which are violations of international human rights law.

Name: Ahmed Mahloof
Gender m/f: m

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