

URGENT ACTION

OPPOSITION POLITICIAN FACING TRUMPED UP CHARGES

Opposition politician Adam Azim has been arrested and is facing trumped up charges in Maldives after criticizing the government in a TV interview. He is currently being held at a prison on Dhoonidhoo Island. He risks up to 17 years in prison if he is convicted.

Adam Azim, 46, is a well-known advocate for democracy in Maldives and a shadow minister in the opposition alliance, Maldives United Opposition (MUO). Shortly after his return to Maldives from a visit to Europe, Adam Azim was interviewed on the private TV channel *Sangu TV* on 8 June where he criticized the lack of independence of the judiciary as well as alleged corruption among government officials. Hours after his interview, police arrested him at his home in the capital, Malé. According to the arrest warrant, Adam Azim is suspected of inciting rioting and forceful overthrow of the government as well as obstructing police officers and obstructing the administration of law (under Sections 532, 533 and 610 of the Penal Code). He faces up to 17 years in prison if charged and convicted.

Since his arrest, Adam Azim has been moved to a prison on Dhoonidhoo Island near Malé, where the Criminal Court has ordered that he is kept in remand until 14 June when he is due for a hearing. He has access to his legal team and his family was able to visit him in prison on 13 June. Amnesty International believes that Adam Azim has been targeted simply because he has peacefully exercised his right to freedom of expression, and urges the Maldives authorities to release him immediately and unconditionally. His arrest comes amid a wider crackdown on opposition politicians, media workers and activists in Maldives, which has intensified in recent months.

Adam Azim has been one of the most vocal campaigners for the release of his brother, Colonel Mohamed Nazim, who was jailed in 2015 following a trial that Amnesty International, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detentions and other organisations have called grossly unfair. In May 2017, Adam Azim was part of an MUO delegation which visited some European countries to highlight the deteriorating human rights situation in Maldives.

Please write immediately in English, Dhivehi or your own language:

- Calling on the Maldives authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Adam Azim, and drop any criminal proceedings against him;
- Urging them to end all harassment of opposition politicians, including through the use of arbitrary criminal charges, and to drop all criminal proceedings against those who have been targeted simply because of their peaceful political activities;
- Urging them to immediately end all efforts to arbitrarily restrict the work of media workers and outlets through harassment or other means.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 25 JULY 2017 TO:

Minister of Home Affairs

Azleen Ahmed
Ministry of Home Affairs
10th Floor, Velaanaage, Malé
Republic of Maldives
Twitter: @homeministrymv
Email: info@homeaffairs.gov.mv
Salutation: Honourable Minister

President

Abdulla Yameen Gayoom
The President's Office Boduthakurufaanu Magu
Malé 20113
Republic of Maldives
Fax: (960) 332 5500
Twitter: @presidencymv
Salutation: Honourable President

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

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Adam Azim was appointed the managing director of the State Trading Organization when President Abdulla Yameen came into power in 2013, but resigned when his brother Colonel Mohamed Nazim was arrested in 2015. Colonel Nazim was sentenced to 11 years in prison in March 2015, following a grossly unfair trial, for possessing an unlicensed weapon. Adam Azim has since been one of the most vocal campaigner's for his brother's release. In January 2017, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detentions concluded that Colonel Nazim was arbitrarily deprived of liberty as his trial had been marked by serious flaws and did not meet international standards of fairness. Although the Working Group recommended that Colonel Nazim should be released immediately, he is still serving his sentence under house arrest in Malé.

Adam Azim's arrest comes amid a wider crackdown on the political opposition and activists in Maldives, which has intensified in recent months as authorities have harassed and brought trumped up criminal charges against a number of individuals. In April, for example, the leader of the opposition Jumhoree Party, Gasim Ibrahim was arrested on suspicion of bribery and attempting to overthrow the government. His legal team say these arrests were politically motivated.

Over the past year, restrictions on freedom of expression in Maldives have also increased. In August 2016, parliament passed a law criminalizing defamation, which was widely criticized by human rights groups and media outlets as punishing peaceful expression and contributing to self-censorship. Privately owned media outlets faced harassment in the form of lawsuits and bans in 2016. The news outlets Haveeru, DhiTV, AdduLIVE and Channel News Maldives were on occasion blocked or forced to shut down. Amnesty International has also highlighted how a number of media workers and activists were harassed and detained in March and April 2017, as criticism mounted against the government over a proposed development deal with Saudi Arabian involvement.

Name: Adam Azim

Gender m/f: m

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