

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

AI Index: ASA 29/02/95

Distr: UA/SC

This is a limited action. Please restrict appeals to 20 per Section.

UA 115/95 Possible prisoners of conscience / Health concern 25 May 1995

**REPUBLIC OF MALDIVESAhamed Shafeeq, aged 67, former civil servant, writer
Ali Moosa Didi, writer and politician**

Ahamed Shafeeq, former Senior Under Secretary in the Ministry of Education and writer of articles about the history of the Republic of Maldives and Ali Moosa Didi, writer and politician, were arrested on 21 April 1995. Amnesty International believes that they may be prisoners of conscience and is seriously concerned for their health.

The arrests were carried out at Ahamed Shafeeq's home in Male' by about a dozen police officers, who also reportedly took away five personal diaries kept by Ahamed Shafeeq and some of his personal papers, which suggests that he is being held in connection with his writing.

Ali Moosa Didi was a candidate during the parliamentary elections of early December 1994 but failed to get elected. There are reports that his arrest may be connected to his alleged criticism of several members of the government for promoting government-backed candidates.

On 30 April, Ahamed Shafeeq was admitted to hospital in Madras, India. On 10 May, he returned to Male' and was taken back into police custody. A psychiatrist who treated him in Madras diagnosed that he was suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder and advised him to avoid anxiety-provoking situations. Ahamed Shafeeq is also said to be an asthma sufferer and to have a lung infection. Concern about his health has been heightened by his age.

At 67, Ahamed Shafeeq is above the average life expectancy of 60 years for men in the Maldives. There are also unconfirmed reports that he has twice been taken to a private hospital in Male' since his return from Madras. Amnesty International understands that he is having breathing difficulties and is generally in a weak physical condition. His relatives have reportedly not been given permission to visit him.

Ali Moosa Didi is reported to be in hospital in Madras, where he is still under police custody. There is no information about his state of health.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

On the basis of the available information, Amnesty International considers Ahamed Shafeeq and Ali Moosa Didi to be prisoners of conscience held in contravention of their right to freedom of expression. On 18 May 1995, the organization appealed to President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom to give the reasons for the arrests of the two men and for details of any charges against them.

Particularly in view of the health concerns, Amnesty International called for their immediate and unconditional release unless they were to be charged with recognizably criminal offences. To date, no reply has been received.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters either in English or in your own language:

- expressing concern about the arrests of Ahamed Shafeeq and Ali Moosa Didi, who were taken by police from Ahamed Shafeeq's house on 21 April 1995;

- expressing concern that they appear to be held in contravention of their right to freedom of expression;
- expressing concern about their health;
- calling for their immediate and unconditional release, if they are not to be charged with recognizably criminal offences.

APPEALS TO

President Maummon Abdul Gayoom
The President's Office
Marine Drive (North)
Male'
Republic of Maldives
Faxes: * 960 32 55 00
Telegrams: President Gayoom, Male, Maldives
Salutation: Dear President

Lt Colonel Adam Zahir
Officer in Charge
Police Headquarters
Bandeyrige
Male'
Republic of Maldives
Telegrams: Lt Colonel Zahir, Police Headquarters, Male, Maldives
Salutation: Dear Lt Colonel

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

Abdulla Hameed
Speaker
Office of the Citizens' Majlis
Naadi, Ameer Ahmed Magu
Male', Republic of Maldives

and to diplomatic representatives, if any, of Republic of Maldives accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 12 July 1995.