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Maldives: Over one hundred people at risk of being flogged

Amnesty International has learned that at least 180 people face being flogged in the Maldives as a punishment for extra marital sex.

The vast majority of those who are flogged in the Maldives are women, even though both men and women can be sentenced to flogging. The most up to date official statistics on flogging from the Department of Judicial Administration dates back to 2006 and shows that from a total of 184 people sentenced to flogging in 2006, 146 were women.

Amnesty International is calling on the government of the Maldives to immediately stop this inhuman and degrading punishment.

Amnesty International has received credible reports that an 18-year-old woman was flogged in public on July 5th. She received 100 lashes after being accused of having sex with two men outside of marriage. Local journalists reported the woman fainted after receiving the lashes and was taken to hospital to receive medical attention

The woman, who was pregnant at the time of sentencing had her punishment deferred until after the birth of her child. The court ruled the woman's pregnancy was proof of her guilt. The men involved in the case were acquitted.

"Amnesty International opposes flogging; it's a cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment which is banned by international human rights law. The practice is humiliating and leads to psychological as well as physical scars for those subjected to it for years. The severity of the pain and suffering often means that whipping is in fact a form of torture," said Abbas Faiz, Amnesty International's researcher on the Maldives.

The government of the Maldives is obliged to abolish flogging under the international human rights laws it has signed up to such, as the Convention against Torture and its Optional Protocol.

"Under international law the government must ensure that nobody is sentenced to flogging and that the punishment isn't carried out against anyone," said Abbas Faiz.

Amnesty international calls upon the government of the Maldives to impose an urgent moratorium on flogging and for the punishment to be ultimately abolished.