

EXTERNAL

AI Index: ASA 29/01/97

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

UA 36/97 Fear of torture / Prisoner of Conscience

31 January 1997

REPUBLIC OF MALDIVES Mohamed Shaheeb, journalist

Mohamed Shaheeb, a journalist writing for the newspaper *Haveeru*, was arrested on 20 January 1997, reportedly in connection with a fictional short story he had written, called "Kuda Golhi" ("the interrogation room"), about the treatment of a young woman detained in solitary confinement in a police cell. It is believed that Mohamed Shaheeb is currently in Dhoonidhoo detention centre. Amnesty International considers him to be a prisoner of conscience, held in contravention of his right to freedom of expression, and is seriously concerned for his safety while in police custody.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Journalists and writers have over the last few years been among those detained for expressing views considered to be critical of the government of President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, who has been in power since 1978. Another freelance journalist, Mohamed Nasheed, was arrested in November 1994 and charged apparently in connection with an article he had written about the 1994 general elections and the 1993 presidential elections, published in a magazine in the Philippines. He was tried and sentenced in April 1996 to two years' imprisonment, reduced to six months on appeal. He was released on 26 December 1996 on completion of his sentence. Ahamed Shafeeq, a writer and historian, and Ali Moosa Didi, a writer and politician, were arrested in April 1995 reportedly in connection with articles and statements they had made and were held for several months in detention without charge or trial. Amnesty International considered that Mohamed Nasheed, Ahamed Shafeeq and Ali Moosa Didi were prisoners of conscience (see UA 115/95, ASA 29/02/95, 25 May 1995 and updates).

Amnesty International has received several reports that while in detention political and other prisoners have been subjected to torture or ill-treatment and that confessions were made under duress. Before they are brought to trial, political prisoners are either kept at Male' police headquarters or at Dhoonidhoo detention centre, which also comes under the direct responsibility of the police. Several prisoners who have been held at Dhoonidhoo have complained of ill-treatment there during the period of their interrogation. Some detainees have been held for long periods without charge or trial, either at Dhoonidhoo detention centre or under house arrest, and sometimes in solitary confinement.

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

- expressing concern about the arrest of Mohamed Shaheeb on 20 January 1997;
- expressing concern that he is a prisoner of conscience held in contravention of his right to freedom of expression, and calling for his immediate and unconditional release;
- urging that he be treated humanely and not subjected to torture or other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

APPEALS TO:

President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom
The President's Office
Marine Drive (North)

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Male'
Republic of Maldives
Fax: * 960 32 55 00
Telegrams: President Gayoom, Male, Maldives
Salutation: Dear President

Lt Colonel Adam Zahir
Officer in Charge, Police Headquarters
C/O Ministry of Defence and National Security
Bandeyrige
Ahmed Magu
Male'
Republic of Maldives
Fax: * 960 325525
Telegrams: Lt Colonel Zahir, Police Headquarters, Male, Maldives
Salutation: Dear Lt Colonel

COPIES 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 20 March 1997.