

**PUBLIC**

**AI Index: ASA 29/007/2004**

**20 September 2004**

**Further Information on UA 249/04 (AI Index: ASA 29/005/2004, 17 August 2004) and follow-up (AI Index: 29/006/2004) - Incommunicado detention / fear of torture or ill-treatment / prisoners of conscience**

**MALDIVES      At least 69 people detained following demonstrations for democratic reform**

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At least 69 people, including 20 people whose names appeared in previous Urgent Actions, are now known to be in detention following demonstrations in the Maldives calling for democratic reforms. As fresh evidence of torture and ill-treatment emerges and arrests continue, Amnesty International is increasingly concerned for the safety of all the detainees.

Official responses from the Maldives government stand in sharp contrast to the information received by Amnesty International. In a response to an Urgent Action letter-writer in the United Kingdom dated 2 September, Mohamed Hussain Shareef, Assistant Director of the Strategic Communications Unit in the President's Office, wrote: "There is no ill treatment or torture of detainees, nor are they kept incommunicado. Detainees are given access to their families and allowed a phone call. Adequate facilities are provided at detention centres. Detainees are provided with access to medical attention."

This statement is directly contradicted by persistent reports of beatings, torture and ill-treatment. Detainees are reported to have been severely beaten around the head, waist and genitals, handcuffed for several days, or blindfolded for long periods. Several detainees have reportedly required medical attention as a result of beatings. One person is thought to have received a fractured arm, with another person suffering partial loss of hearing and knee problems. Detainees at Dhoonidoo Detention centre have complained that the water provided is not suitable for drinking.

Reports have also emerged of severe beatings and ill-treatment of detainees at the time of their arrest. One detainee was reportedly thrown down the stairs while being arrested at his home. Another detainee was reportedly chased by police to a harbour where he was beaten so severely that he fell into the sea. A witness reports that while the detainee was in the water, the police continued to throw projectiles at him. When they eventually brought him out of the water, police continued to beat him as they took him away.

Amnesty International has received reports that over 30 of the detainees have been denied access to their families, while detainees who have had access to their families are reportedly only allowed to meet relatives in the presence of police and are forbidden talking about certain issues. None of the detainees have had access to a lawyer.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Scores of people were taken to police headquarters in the Maldives capital, Malé, after they took part in large demonstrations on 12 and 13 August against the slow pace of democratic reforms and the continued detention of four political prisoners.

The Maldives government alleges that those detained were involved in criminal activity during the demonstrations; for example, the government response to the Urgent Action letter-writer asserts that, "[t]here are no political prisoners in the Maldives. None of the detainees listed in your letter were arrested for political activities."

However, the government has not produced any credible evidence to support this claim. Meanwhile, Amnesty International's information strongly indicates that those in detention were peaceful protestors, who were advocating political reform. At least three of those detained, Fathimath Nisreen, Mohamed Zaki and Ahmed Ibrahim Didi, are known to be prisoners of conscience, imprisoned solely for exercising their right to freedom of expression. Another of those in detention, Mohamed Mahir, has reportedly been exiled once and detained several times after writing a "poem" in 1986 perceived as being critical of the government. At least three other people who were arrested after the demonstrations are being held under house arrest, while others who have since been released have been told that they must not leave the country.

In the last three days there have been reports of two more arrests of opposition political activists by the government. These include the reported arrest of Ismail Asif from his home on 17 September, where he was reportedly involved in organising an informal meeting of hundreds of people to discuss democratic reforms.

The names of others in detention are known to include Fathimath Nisreen (f); Mohamed Niyaz (m), her brother; Ahmed Ibrahim Didi (m); Mohamed Zaki (m); Maria Manike (f); Ibrahim Ismail (m); Ibrahim Hussain Zaki (m); Ghasim Ibrahim (m); Dr Mohamed Monawar (m); Ali Faiz (m); Dr Hussain Rasheed (m); Ilyas Hussain Ibrahim (m); Ibrahim Zaki (m); Husnood Alsuood (m); Jennifer Latheef (f); Aminath Najeeb (f); Mohammed Naseem (m); Ahmed Shafeeq (m); Ahmed Adil (m); Asad Whaeed (m); and Mohamed Mahir (m).

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English or your own language:**

- refer to the letter sent to a member of the public on 2 September by Mohamed Hussain Shareef, Assistant Director of the Strategic Communications Unit in the President's Office, in which he wrote: "There is no ill treatment or torture of detainees, nor are they kept incommunicado."
- point out that this statement is in sharp contrast to information Amnesty International has received that those detained in connection with the 12 and 13 August demonstrations have been beaten, handcuffed, blindfolded, and otherwise tortured and ill-treated;
- ask for full, independent and impartial investigations into all accounts of torture, and for those responsible for such acts to be brought to justice;
- urge that all prisoners are treated humanely and not tortured or ill-treated, and given immediate access to their families, lawyers of their choice and any medical attention that they may require;
- urge the authorities to disclose the identities of all those who are still in custody, and express concern that they appear to be held solely for the peaceful exercise of their right to freedom of speech and assembly. Call on the authorities to release them immediately and unconditionally unless they are to be charged with a recognisably criminal offence.

**APPEALS TO:**

President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom  
The President's Palace  
Maafannu Theemuge  
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Republic of Maldives

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**Salutation:** Dear President Gayoom

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and to diplomatic representatives of the Maldives accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 1 November 2004.