

EXTERNAL

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Denial of medical treatment/deteriorating health conditions
25 November 1997

THE MALDIVES Ismail Saadiq, businessman

Amnesty International is concerned about the deteriorating health of Ismail Saadiq, a 38-year-old Maldivian businessman, who has reportedly been in detention or under house arrest for various periods since July 1996 on allegations of business irregularities. He is passing blood in his urine and suffering other medical problems. He is reportedly not receiving adequate medical care.

Ismail Saadiq has not received a trial, and the decision on whether or not he should remain in detention is reportedly solely with the Maldivian President. There is suspicion that his detention may be politically motivated because of his support for a candidate who was defeated and subsequently tried for "unconstitutional behaviour" after he contested presidential elections in 1993.

Doctors have reportedly said that Ismail Saadiq needs to visit a hospital abroad with adequate medical facilities, but the Government of Maldives has apparently turned down his request to be allowed medical treatment in Bangkok, where his wife and two children live.

Amnesty International is urging the Government of Maldives to allow him necessary medical investigation and treatment in a hospital with adequate medical facilities. Amnesty International is further concerned about his intermittent detention or house arrest without trial for the last 17 months.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Ismail Saadiq has operated a container liner service between the Far East and Persian Gulf and the Maldivian capital, Male' for the past few years. In July 1996, he was charged with business irregularities and was sent to Dhoonidhoo prison, where he was kept in solitary confinement in a cell about 2 metres wide and 3 metres long. There, he was reportedly subjected to long periods of sleep deprivation and denial of adequate food and medicine. From then on, and for periods of up to several months each time, he was either under house arrest, detained in Dhoonidhoo, or released, but with no right to leave Male'. The charges against him were then reportedly dropped.

In March 1997, after an initial hearing of the case, court proceedings stopped with no explanation. On 5 April, Ismail Saadiq was arrested again, apparently as a result of a letter he wrote to the Foreign Minister seeking the release of his passport so that he could visit his sick child in Bangkok. The minister reportedly objected to the letter saying its tone was improper and contained false personal allegations against the minister. Ismail Saadiq was sent to solitary confinement in Dhoonidhoo prison where his health deteriorated. The doctors are believed to have confirmed that he was suffering from acute haematuria (blood in urine) and other medical problems.

On 1 July, he was reportedly sent to Colombo for medical treatment at his own expense, escorted by two senior police officers. There, he was taken to a clinic. In the course of the diagnosis, the two Maldivian police officers reportedly objected to Ismail Saadiq's disclosure of information about his arrest and treatment in prison. His medical treatment was stopped by the police officers, who said he would have to be returned to Male'. They took him back to Male'

on 4 July and he was sent to Dhoonidhoo. His condition reportedly deteriorated further. On 4 August, he was transferred to house arrest at his home with no access to telephone, and with an official notice on the door of the house saying "no one is allowed to enter these premises".

Ismail Saadiq has requested government approval for medical treatment in Thailand where his family lives, but an official reply has reportedly made it clear that he would not be allowed medical treatment abroad. He is now reportedly suffering from internal bleeding, dramatic loss of weight and other health conditions apparently due to lack of adequate medical attention.

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

- expressing concern about reports of the deteriorating health of Ismail Saadiq;
- urging the government of Maldives to immediately allow him access to adequate and necessary medical facilities;
- expressing concern that he has been detained or under house arrest intermittently without trial for the last 17 months in contravention of international human rights standards.

APPEALS TO:

President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom
The President's Office
Marine Drive (North)
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 32 5525

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 of The Maldives accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 6 January 1998.