

PUBLIC

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Prisoners of conscience / Fear of torture
or ill-treatment

8 July 1998

THE MALDIVES

There are fears for the safety of at least ten people recently arrested on account of the peaceful exercise of their religious beliefs. Detainees have reportedly been ill-treated and tortured, including by being beaten --several reportedly as punishment for refusing to renounce their beliefs.

According to reports, those arrested, including Maldivian students, were taken into custody at the end of June 1998 for proselytizing or being suspected of publicly professing Christian beliefs. They are believed to be either held under house arrest or detained in Dhoonidhoo Island Prison. In addition, 17 nationals from other countries have recently been deported from the Maldives in connection with proselytizing Christian beliefs.

Amnesty International believes that those detained are prisoners of conscience and is calling for their immediate and unconditional release.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Methods of torture reportedly used in the Maldives include making detainees sit for long periods with their hands handcuffed to their feet, and forcing them to stand on a chair for hours with arms outstretched and a coconut in each palm. Conditions in most detention centres in the Republic of the Maldives amount to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment of detainees.

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

- expressing concern at reports that a number of persons have recently been arrested for the peaceful exercise of their right to freedom of religion;
- calling for the immediate and unconditional release of these detainees if they are being held for the peaceful exercise of their religious beliefs;
- expressing grave concern at reports that those arrested have been beaten in custody;
- urging the authorities to investigate reports that prisoners are being beaten, and that perpetrators are brought to justice;
- urging authorities to take all measures to ensure that these prisoners are treated humanely in accordance with international standards;
- urging authorities to ensure that these prisoners are given full access to lawyers, relatives and medical care.

APPEALS TO:

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

Republic of Maldives

Telegrams: President Gayoom, Male', Maldives

Faxes: + 960 32 55 00

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

Telegrams: Lt Colonel Zahir, Police Headquarters, Male', Maldives

Faxes: + 960 32 5525

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 Republic of the Maldives accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 19 August 1998.