



The Gambia: halt further executions and establish an official moratorium. The Maldives: address impunity for human rights violations by the police. Oral intervention at the 21st session of the UN Human Rights Council (10-28 September)

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Item 2¹: Update by the High Commissioner followed by General Debate
Oral statement

Madam President, Madam High Commissioner,

Amnesty International joins the High Commissioner in her call for an official moratorium on the death penalty pending abolition. Last week, Amnesty International joined 66 West African human rights organizations in a statement condemning the execution in secret of nine persons in The Gambia in late August.²

Neither the families of the persons executed nor the prisoners themselves were informed of the planned executions. The bodies of the executed have not been returned to their families and the burial site has not been disclosed. The burial sites must be disclosed and the bodies returned to those families that request them.

The Gambia's President Yahya Jammeh had publicly stated that "all death sentences would be carried out to the letter by mid-September."³ The remaining prisoners on death row - at least 38 people, many who were sentenced to death after unfair or politically-motivated trials - are at imminent risk of execution. This despite an international outcry by the UN, the African Union, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, neighbouring states and others.

We reiterate our call on the government of The Gambia, to halt any further executions, and to, immediately and publicly, commit to an official moratorium on the use of the death penalty. We urge this Council and additional members of the international community to speak out about this situation in The Gambia.

¹ Item 2 on the agenda of the Human Rights Council: *Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General.*

² See Amnesty International public statement, *Gambia: The Gambian government must not carry out any further executions of death row prisoners* (Index: AFR 27/009/2012), available at <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AFR27/009/2012/en>

³ AI Index: AFR 27/009/2012.

Madam High Commissioner,

Amnesty International shares your concern about institutional weaknesses in the Maldives. Our own research has revealed disturbing weaknesses related to policing and security.⁴ The Government of the Maldives has not addressed serious allegations of unnecessary use of force against peaceful demonstrators and excessive use of force against violent demonstrators. Police have severely beaten demonstrators and detainees and directed pepper spray into their eyes and mouths. Some detainees have been tortured during their detention. These and other violations have been documented by Amnesty International and other independent bodies. They are public knowledge known to the Maldivian authorities. Yet not one prosecution has been brought to court in connection with human rights violations by the police.

Even when the Human Rights Commission of Maldives has acknowledged violations, government action has been selective. Mohammed Nasheed is before the courts based on the findings of the HRCM, but no action has been taken against police or military for human rights violations which the Commission has also acknowledged.

Amnesty International joins you, Madam High Commissioner, in urging the Government of the Maldives to address without delay institutional weakness, including the persistent failure to deal with impunity for human rights violations. We encourage the international community to assist the Maldives in doing that.

Thank you Madam President.

⁴ See Amnesty International written statement to the 21st session of the Human Rights Council, *The Maldives: A real danger that recent progress in respect for human rights will be lost and an old pattern of repression and injustice re-established* (Index: ASA 29/006/2012), available at <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA29/006/2012/en>; and Amnesty International, *Maldives: The other side of paradise: A human rights crisis in the Maldives* (Index: ASA 29/005/2012), available at: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA29/005/2012/en>