

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## PUBLIC STATEMENT

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### **Maldives: Release of Maldives opposition leader is chance for political resolution**

Amnesty International welcomes the release of Abdullah Yameen, and urges the government and opposition to take this opportunity to work with international mediators to resolve the political deadlock, to clear the way for judicial reform and investigation of allegations of misuse of power, corruption and human rights violations.

Opposition MP Abdullah Yameen confirmed his release to Amnesty International this morning. “My arrest shows how easy it is for people to be detained arbitrarily. I hope the authorities would refrain from detaining people in this way and without charge,” he said.

Abdullah Yameen was one of at least four Maldivian MPs detained and released in recent weeks, after President Mohamed Nasheed's cabinet resigned on 29 June in protest against the opposition-dominated Parliament blocking government development packages and judicial reform.

Amnesty International is urging the Maldives government to seek international help to reform its justice system following the release today of an opposition leader being detained without charge.

The Maldives Government's proposed reforms do have the potential to improve human rights protection, but this does not give them the right to arbitrarily detain opponents of those reforms. Instead, the government should seek international assistance to resolve this impasse, according to Amnesty International.

The widening divide between the two sides developed into a serious crisis and street violence in the past few weeks, threatening to derail the country's two-year old democracy.

Abdullah Yameen was detained by the Maldives National Defence Force on 15 July. The authorities failed to respect a court order to produce him before a judge, or charge him with a recognisable criminal offence, saying he was in custody to protect him against threats from political mobs. Mr Yameen said that a crowd of people who attacked his house on 14 July were government activists.

Amnesty International is encouraged by the Maldives receptive response to international offers of assistance in resolving the deadlock, and is urging the Government to seek further international assistance to promote reform. Talks facilitated by the United States Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs, Robert Blake have been underway between the two sides since yesterday.

There are fundamental flaws in the Maldives criminal justice system, leading to unfair trials. There is no unified definition of a criminal offence in the Maldivian law, which consists of acts of parliament, Shari'a edicts, and regulations passed by the ministries.

The government claims its attempts to bring the law into conformity with international human rights standards and to address corruption have been blocked by the opposition-dominated Parliament, which has refused to enact a penal code bill and blocked other proposed reforms and development projects.

The opposition has said the government must act within the safeguards set in the Constitution which gives the Parliament the power to veto government decisions.

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