

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## Public Statement

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### **Maldives: Arrest of peaceful demonstrators**

Amnesty International is seriously concerned about the arrest and detention of at least seven political activists in the capital, Malé, today. The detainees are members of the newly established opposition party, the Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP). They were detained during a demonstration in the capital's main public square. The gathering was reportedly peaceful.

Among the detainees is the MDP chairperson, Mohamed Nasheed. Others detained include Ahmed Abbas, Latheefa Umar, Jennifer Latheef, Ahmed Mohamed Fomy and Ali Riyaz. Several detainees, including Aminath Shareef, were reportedly beaten by the police at the time of their arrest. The detainees are believed to have been taken to the Dhoonidhoo interrogation centre which is a small island near Malé. The government has banned public meetings and there are fears that more political activists may be taken into custody and subjected to ill-treatment in the coming days.

Amnesty International demands that those detained receive a fair trial in accordance with the internationally recognized rights of all prisoners to a fair and prompt trial or that they be released. Under no circumstances should the detainees be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, and they should be provided with immediate access to a lawyer of their choice, family visits and any medical attention they require.

#### **Background**

Today's detainees were among a larger group of people sitting in Malé's main square to commemorate the anniversary of the mass arrests of opposition leaders and activists on 12 and 13 August 2004. At that time, the arrests followed large-scale demonstrations pressing for political reform. Those detained, including parliamentarians, were reportedly ill-treated in police custody and held without charge or trial for more than two months. Detailed and consistent testimonies gathered by an Amnesty International delegation visiting the Maldives in October 2004 showed detainees had been held blindfolded and handcuffed for up to 19 hours, made to sit still on a chair or in one spot for several hours at a time during this period, and subjected to physical assault, food deprivation, and in some cases, to sexual violence. No one has been brought to justice for these abuses.