



President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom,
The President's Palace
Maafannu Theemuge
Male 2002
The Republic of the Maldives

17 August 2005

Dear President Gayoom,

ARTICLE 19, an international NGO promoting freedom of expression globally, is gravely concerned about the arrest and detention of Mohamed Nasheed, Chairperson of the MDP, along with pro-democracy supporters on 12 August 2005, following a peaceful vigil in the Republican Square in Male.

Freedom of expression and assembly are fundamental rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and are considered part of customary international law. Furthermore, these rights are guaranteed under the Constitution of the Maldives. Therefore, the Maldivian Government is under an obligation to respect these rights.

Whilst restrictions to freedom of expression and assembly are permitted under international law, any limitations must be provided by law, serve a legitimate aim and be necessary in a democratic society. From information it has received, ARTICLE 19 believes that the protest that Mohamed Nasheed, and other members of the MDP took part in, was peaceful. In accordance with international standards, no-one should be mistreated for the peaceful expression of his/her beliefs or opinions.

ARTICLE 19, is also alarmed by reports that those arrested and detained as a result of the peaceful protest on 12 August, were subjected to torture or ill-treatment whilst in detention, contrary to international law.

Accordingly, ARTICLE 19 calls on you to ensure respect for freedom of expression and freedom of assembly. We urge you to ensure that detainees are not subjected to torture or ill-treatment under any circumstances, and if they are subsequently charged, that they receive a fair trial in accordance with international standards.

Yours sincerely

Dr Agnès Callamard
Executive Director

Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights:
'Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers'

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