

## MALDIVES

### ARBITRARY ARRESTS FOLLOWING STATE OF EMERGENCY

**Five people have been arrested since the Government of Maldives declared a State of Emergency on 5 February 2018, following a recent Supreme Court decision to release and re-trial imprisoned opposition leaders. This appears to be an act of repression by the government to silence political opposition.**



**Chief Justice Abdulla Saeed and Supreme Court Justice Ali Hameed** were arrested early on 6 February 2018 when soldiers forced their way into the Supreme Court building. The two judges were part of the four-judge bench who ordered the immediate release and re-trial of nine opposition leaders, including former President Mohamed Nasheed. Early that same morning, police also arrested Head of Department of Judicial Administration (DJA) chief **Hassan Saeed**.

Former President of Maldives **Maumoon Abdul Gayoom** was arrested around midnight on 5 February at his residence in Malé, along with his son-in-law **Mohamed Nadheem**. Maumoon Abdul Gayoom's daughter was quoted in media saying that the armed forces broke into the house and arrested him. He is currently being held in a detention centre on an island near Malé. The 80-year-old was president for 30 years until the 2008 elections.

The current political crisis was sparked by a surprise Supreme Court decision on 1 February 2018 that overturned the conviction of former President Mohamed Nasheed and ordered the release and re-trial of other members of the political opposition.

Instead of implementing the Supreme Court's order, the Government of President Abdulla Yameen began arbitrarily detaining members of the political opposition. On 5 February 2018, President Yameen declared a State of Emergency, suspending several clauses of the constitution, including protections for the right to freedom of assembly, and suspending basic safeguards around the security forces' powers to arrest, detain, seize and search property. President Yameen has justified the state of emergency by saying that the Supreme Court's order would have disrupted "the system of checks and balances".



*Protesters call on the president to obey the court's order.*

**Please write immediately in English or Dhivehi urging authorities**

\* to order the immediate release of the five people who have been arbitrarily arrested unless they are to be charged with a recognizable criminal offence, in line with international law and standards;

\* to uphold the Supreme Court decision to release and re-try members of the political opposition;

\* to ensure that activists, human rights defenders, journalists, academics and members of the political opposition are able to peacefully exercise their human rights without fear of punishment, reprisal or intimidation.

**Here is the contact information you need:**

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Salutation: Dear Major General

*Attorney General*

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Salutation: Dear Attorney General

**Please send a copy to**

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## **Additional information**

Ever since President Abdulla Yameen came to power in 2013, the Maldives has seen an unrelenting wave of repression. The most prominent victim has been former President Mohamed Nasheed, who was convicted in March 2015 to 13 years in prison on “terrorism” charges that flowed from a deeply flawed and politically-motivated trial. Nasheed is now in exile in Colombo, Sri Lanka, but other members of the political opposition are still languishing behind bars in the Indian Ocean island nation.

Political repression in the Maldives has gone little noticed in the international community. Drawing comfort from the fact that tourism has been unaffected, the government has proceeded to entrench itself by choking dissent, convicting members of the opposition in trials that are suspected to be politically-motivated and do not meet international standards.

In October 2016, stung by criticism of its human rights record, the Maldivian government said that it had decided to “leave” the Commonwealth. In March 2017, there was a crackdown on protests on one of the Maldives’ atolls ahead of a visit by Saudi Arabian King Salman bin Abdul Aziz Al-Saud. Against the backdrop of hostility towards journalists and activists, the horrific April 2017 killing of the popular blogger Yameen Rasheed was not effectively investigated and the perpetrators were not brought to justice.

Since June 2016, the Maldives has repeatedly announced plans to resume executions after more than 60 years, starting with three people convicted of murder in cases where there are serious fair trial concerns. And in September 2017, more than 50 lawyers were suspended from practicing in all courts, in what appeared to be a punitive response to a petition the lawyers were trying to submit, outlining serious concerns regarding the judiciary. At a stroke, a third of all lawyers, including half of all criminal lawyers and all human rights lawyers, were barred from practicing.