

**Human rights breaches by Uganda and Maldives demand
immediate reference to CMAG, Forum says;
“And let’s not forget Zimbabwe’s people”**

Breaches of human rights principles by two member states warrant immediate reference to the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG), according to a communiqué by the Commonwealth Human Rights Forum. The forum’s report also urged an examination of breaches of the Harare Commonwealth Principles in Uganda and the Maldives. It also asked that the people and opposition in Zimbabwe not to be forsaken.

The forum concluded its two-day session just days before CHOGM. It also hosted an address by the Commonwealth Secretary General Donald McKinnon, who assured his audience that the Maldives and Uganda were subjects of the Secretariat activity and interest.

The theme of the Forum was linked to the CHOGM theme of “Networking the Commonwealth for Development”, with participants representing 15 countries for all Commonwealth regions focusing on “Networking for Human Rights.” Participants examined the reality of space available to civil society for human rights within member countries and the Commonwealth as an association. Participants, shared experiences and discussed how to raise the profile of human rights within the Commonwealth family.

Other issues raised included the need for a formal report-back to the next CHOGM on the implementation of Heads’ commitments for human rights made during the 2005 CHOGM in Malta. It was stressed that governments must ensure that human rights norms are not compromised using security as an excuse. A need was seen, too, for a Commonwealth Expert Group on Policing and for all Commonwealth member states to offer a standing invitation to UN rapporteurs and other UN investigators as a commitment to transparency.

The Commonwealth Human Rights Forum was held at the St. James Cavalier and was organised by the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative and Amnesty International Malta Group with funding by the Commonwealth Foundation and the British Council.

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