



Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative

New Delhi, India. London, UK. Accra, Ghana

Press Statement

Halt first executions in 60 years: CHRI to the Maldives

Commonwealth NGO calls on the island nation to maintain death penalty moratorium.

New Delhi, July 21 – The Maldives government has been urged to halt the execution of three death row prisoners in the island nation, which, if carried out, would overturn the country's 60 year-long moratorium on the death penalty.

Reports have emerged warning of an imminent execution of Hussein Humaam Ahmed, Ahmed Murrath and Mohamed Nabeel, who were convicted for murder in three separate cases in 2012, 2012 and 2009 respectively.

CHRI urges the Maldives government to stop the process and adhere to its commitments to maintain the moratorium, last reaffirmed during the country's 2010 Universal Periodic Review at the United Nations.

The Maldives re-introduced the death penalty in April 2014 by a way of a government regulation. Capital punishment is an important constitutional issue and any attempt to re-introduce it warrants a nationwide debate and a referendum.

Devyani Srivastava, senior Project Officer in the Police Reforms Programme of CHRI, says that *“death penalty is a punishment that does not belong in the 21st century. It is cruel, inhumane and prejudicial to the interests of justice. Death penalty does not deter crime, as study after study have shown. Furthermore, implementation of a death sentence renders impossible the reversal of death sentence on procedural and/or factual grounds.”*

It is the procedural irregularities that define the cases of Hussein Humaam Ahmed, Ahmed Murrath and Mohamed Nabeel. Domestic and international observers noted that the three men's cases were marred by the allegations of coerced confessions, lack of due process, and issues with legal representation. The death row prisoners' rights are further inhibited by the legislative prohibition to pardon or commute death sentences.

In February 2016, CHRI published a fact-finding report on the state of the Maldives' democracy, pointing out serious problems in criminal justice system.

Asad Jamal, a Pakistani criminal lawyer and a member of the fact-finding team, says that *“it is disturbing to see that Maldives is resuming executions after six decades of moratorium at a time when the ever growing group of abolitionist states is about to adopt an expanded set of principles on article 6 of ICCPR which introduced the ‘inherent right to life’ and the prohibition on arbitrary deprivation of life. Evidence from around the world suggests that there's some degree of arbitrariness even in the fairest of trials. Can the Maldivian authorities convince the world that there would be no arbitrary deprivation of life when the country is passing through the most turbulent period of its political history, the political opponents are being targeted and the democratic process has been derailed?”*

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