

URGENT ACTION

OPPOSITION POLITICIAN RELEASED

Opposition politician Adam Azim has been released after spending nearly a week in detention in Maldives. He was arrested and faced trumped up charges after criticizing the government in a TV interview.

Adam Azim, 46, is a well-known advocate for democracy in Maldives and a shadow minister in the opposition alliance, Maldives United Opposition (MUO). Shortly after his return to Maldives from a visit to Europe, Adam Azim was interviewed on the private TV channel *Sangu TV* on 8 June where he criticized the lack of independence of the judiciary as well as alleged corruption among government officials. Hours after his interview, police arrested him at his home in the capital, Malé. According to the arrest warrant, Adam Azim was suspected of inciting rioting and forceful overthrow of the government as well as obstructing police officers and obstructing the administration of law (under Sections 532, 533 and 610 of the Penal Code). He could have faced up to 17 years in prison if charged and convicted.

After his arrest, Adam Azim was moved to a prison on Dhoonidhoo Island near Malé where he was remanded in detention for six days. On 14 June, Adam Azim was unconditionally released after the police decided against asking the Criminal Court for an extension on his remand. Amnesty International believes that Adam Azim was targeted simply because he peacefully exercised his right to freedom of expression. His arrest occurred amid a wider crackdown on opposition politicians, media workers and activists in Maldives, which has intensified in recent months.

Adam Azim has been one of the most vocal campaigners for the release of his brother, Colonel Mohamed Nazim, who was jailed in 2015 following a trial that Amnesty International, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detentions and other organisations have called grossly unfair. In May 2017, Adam Azim was part of an MUO delegation which visited some European countries to highlight the deteriorating human rights situation in Maldives.

Amnesty International will continue to monitor the case and re-open the action if necessary.

No further action is requested from the UA network. Many thanks to all who sent appeals.

This is the first update of UA 143/17. Further information: www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa29/6497/2017/en/

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