

URGENT ACTION

MALDIVES TO RESUME EXECUTIONS BY SEPTEMBER

According to statements by the Maldives President, the death penalty would be implemented 'by the end of September'. If carried out, these would be the first executions in the country in over 60 years. The Maldives Supreme Court upheld the convictions and death sentences of three men in mid-2016, who could be at imminent risk of execution.

Three prisoners facing the death sentence, Hussain Humaam Ahmed, Ahmed Murrath and Mohamed Nabeel are believed to be at imminent risk of execution. According to media reports, President Abdulla Yameen reiterated on 6 August his commitment to carry out the executions "by the end of September". The names of the prisoners involved in the scheduled executions have not been disclosed, however this announcement followed information received by Amnesty International on 19 July 2017, indicating that the authorities were preparing for imminent executions.

Should the government go ahead with the executions, it would not only be a tragic setback for the country, which has not carried out any executions for over 60 years, but it would also violate Maldives' obligations under international law, including to protect the three men's right to life. The Maldives Supreme Court has to date upheld the convictions and death sentences of three men who have now exhausted their domestic legal appeals. Amnesty International has serious concerns about the fairness of the proceedings that lead to the imposition of the death penalty in the country, including the use of an apparently coerced "confession" that was later retracted by one of the death row prisoners, Hussain Humaam Ahmed.

In July 2016, the UN Human Rights Committee requested the government of Maldives to stay the execution of Hussain Humaam Ahmed, pending the consideration of an appeal filed on the prisoner's behalf. The same requests were issued by the UN body in July 2017 in the cases of the two other men, Ahmed Murrath and Mohamed Nabeel. The Maldives has undertaken a binding commitment to cooperate with the UN Human Rights Committee.

Please write immediately in English or your own language urging the authorities to:

- Halt any plans to resume executions and establish an official moratorium on all executions, with a view to abolishing the death penalty;
- Immediately commute the death sentence against all prisoners under sentence of death, including those imposed for crimes committed when the prisoners were below 18 years of age;
- Amend national legislation to remove provisions that are not in line with international law and standards and abolish the death penalty for all crimes.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 11 OCTOBER 2017 TO:

President of Maldives
Abdulla Yameen Gayoom
The President's Office,
Boduthakurufaanu Magu, Male' 20113,
Republic of Maldives
Fax: (960) 332 5500
Twitter: @presidencymv
Salutation: His Excellency

Minister of Home Affairs
Mr. Azleen Ahmed
Ministry of Home Affairs,
10th floor, H. Velaanaage Malé,
Ameeru Ahmed Magu, Male' 20096,
Republic of Maldives
Fax: (960) 332 4739
Email: info@homeaffairs.gov.mv
Twitter: @AzleenAhmed,
@homeministrymv
Salutation: Honourable Minister

And copies to:
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Dr. Mohamed Asim
Ministry of Foreign Affairs,
Boduthakurufaanu Magu, Male' 20077,
Republic of Maldives
Email: admin@foreign.gov.mv
Twitter: @MDVForeign, @asim_mdv

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. HIS EXCELLENCY MR AHMED SHIAAN *High Commissioner*, High Commission of the Republic of Maldives, 22 Nottingham Place W1U 5NJ, 020 7224 2135, Fax 020 7224 2157, www.maldiveshighcommission.org

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 179/17. Further information: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa29/6764/2017/en/>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

In 2014, the Maldives government, under President Abdulla Yameen, announced that the Maldives would resume executions, which had not been carried out for over 60 years. Since then, authorities have taken steps to resume executions, including amending national legislation. Regulations have removed the power from the executive to grant pardons or commutations in murder cases, depriving those facing the death penalty of the right to apply for these as guaranteed under international law.

In 2016, the method of execution was changed from lethal injection to hanging, and government officials pledged that executions would happen within 30 days of confirmation of guilty verdicts by the Supreme Court. In late January 2017, Amnesty International received credible reports from contacts that executions could be imminent, and could resume even before local council elections which, at the time, were tentatively scheduled for early April 2017. In early February 2017, Minister of Home Affairs Azleen Ahmed told national media that preparations for the implementation of the death penalty, including the building of two execution chambers, were underway. On 23 April 2017, President Abdulla Yameen said in a speech that the government intended to resume executions within a few months.

According to figures from the Maldives Correction Services and media reports, there are at least 20 prisoners currently under sentence of death in the country. Of these, at least five were convicted and sentenced to death for crimes committed when they were below 18 years of age.

Three men have now exhausted their domestic legal appeals, after the Supreme Court upheld their convictions and death sentences in mid-2016:

Hussain Humaam Ahmed (Humaam) was convicted of and sentenced to death for murder in 2012, and the Supreme Court upheld his conviction and death sentence on 24 June 2016. Amnesty International and other human rights organisations have raised serious concerns about the fairness of Humaam's trial. The UN Human Rights Committee in July 2016 issued an order to stay his execution pending its consideration of the case.

Ahmed Murrath was convicted of and sentenced to death for murder in 2012. The Supreme Court upheld his conviction and death sentence on 9 July 2016.

Mohamed Nabeel was convicted of and sentenced to death for murder in 2009. The Supreme Court upheld his death sentence on 27 July 2016.

The Maldives has undertaken a binding commitment to cooperate with the Human Rights Committee, which the three men petitioned to consider their claims that their rights guaranteed under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights have been violated.

Amnesty International believes that the death penalty is the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment, and a violation of the right to life as proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Amnesty International supports calls, included in five resolutions adopted by the UN General Assembly since 2007, for the establishment of a moratorium on executions with a view to abolishing the death penalty. As of today, 141 countries have abolished the death penalty in law or practice; in the Asia-Pacific region, 20 countries have abolished the death penalty for all crimes and a further seven are abolitionist in practice.

Further information on UA 179/17 Index: ASA 29/7007/2017 Issue Date: 31 August 2017