

# Newsletter

*Maldivian Democratic Party*

1 - 15 January 2004

## Gayoom's Cosmetic Commissions

Abdul Sattar Moosa Didi is a pious man who once spurned the opportunity of being the Head of State of Maldives. A commission headed by him would be accorded a high degree of legitimacy. Gayoom knows this. He also knows that Sattar, a mild mannered person, would do what is asked of him, but would shy away from being overly self-assertive.

Sattar would be the perfect front to head a sham commission. Gayoom stretches the truth with his claim that the commission investigating the killing of Eevan Naseem and unarmed Maafushi prisoners is independent. A commission that reports its findings to the Commander-in-Chief of the very institution it investigates cannot, by any stretch of imagination, be termed independent. The Commission is appointed by Gayoom, works according to terms of reference dictated by him, and reports to him. He can, as with other 'independent' commissions, manipulate the work of the Commission.

The process of manipulation may have started in earnest. The Commission has reneged on earlier promises of transparency and timely updates. More ominously, Gayoom is reportedly attempting to limit the list of culpable offenders to only low-ranking officers. Orders to shoot can only come from the top. Hence expanding the investigation could be too close for comfort for Gayoom. He

has now unilaterally decided to postpone the release of the commissions findings to suit his personal agenda.

The latest in the expanding list of commissions is the Human Rights Commission of Maldives. According to Gayoom the Commission would be run on the Paris Principles, thereby entailing that the composition, constitution and scope of work would be based on internationally accepted normative principles. Gayoom cannot manipulate the Commission to suit his purposes and still claim it is run on the Paris Principles.

Gayoom created the Commission. Its independence is not guaranteed by law, thereby undermining its autonomy as well as its investigative powers. Independence from the government is a basic criterion of the Paris Principles.

Transparency, through open, frequent and timely dissemination of information, is an essential feature of the Paris Principles. The Commission, giving due deference to our political culture, seems to prefer to work in silence. The Government-controlled media may not be of much help.

Gayoom's control of the Commission is a serious concern. A commission of mostly government servants working part-time behind closed doors and dependent on Gayoom's handouts cannot be taken as a sincere attempt at addressing the

serious human rights situation in the country. Working independently right from the beginning is imperative in maintaining the integrity of the Commission and ensuring it does not degenerate into yet another cosmetic, Gayoom-sponsored institution geared to legitimize and cover-up human rights abuse.

Gayoom could help ease the work of the Commission. To do so, he has to accept that we, the people, are citizens with inalienable rights. We are not mere subjects to be disposed of with impunity. Gayoom is bound by constitutional and moral limitations on his power. He needs to come to terms with the concept that governance should be based on rule of law and not on rule of men.

Gayoom must also accept that the wealth of the Nation belongs to all citizens. He, his family, in-laws, cronies or assorted sycophants do not have exclusive rights to our national assets. The way Gayoom perceives and addresses such issues will impact directly on the fundamental civil, political, social and economic rights of the citizens of Maldivians.

Gayoom must learn to feel comfortable with the reality that he is neither the State nor the Law of the country. Unless he genuinely accepts such simple truths, no amount of commissions can help mitigate the human rights abuse in the Maldives.

### ***Torture in tropical paradise***

*by Ahmed S.I. Moosa (Sappe')*

People all over the world think of the Maldives as being the perfect holiday paradise. Well, it is truly a remarkable piece of work by nature. Sun, sand and sea in abundance! All that a tropical holiday maker or a scuba diver can hope for!

But the oppressive regime of Gayoom has been ruling Maldives by fear and intimidation, with no regard or respect for human rights and in violation of the constitution. The livelihood of the average Maldivian is simply sacrificed for the well being and stylish lifestyle of Gayoom, his family and his associates.

Gayoom is a brutal dictator, who has authorized and personally directed the police to use extreme force and torture. He allows his family and associates to use public funds for their pleasure at the expense of basic services for the people. Gayoom has presided over several incidents of violence by the state over the last 25 years that have never

been reported. He systematically abuses human rights and uses his police force to crush any critic or perceived opposition to his power. He has his family and friends in the cabinet and in other powerful government posts to ensure that his rule and his methods are preserved.

In order to exploit people's religious sensibilities, he regularly reminds them of the happiness in paradise and the afterlife. This he does while he lives in a multimillion dollar palace, the servicing of which costs the country more than the higher education budget.

Gayoom influences and rigs the voting process in parliamentary elections as well as the presidential nomination and referendum.

Maldives is also a member of the new world order in which we are all interdependent. Maldives is crying out for help! Please do whatever you can to pressure Maumoon Abdul Gayoom to respect basic human rights and to allow freedom of expression and association in Maldives. Then and only then, can it be called a holiday paradise!

# MDP with MTV

The following are extracts from an interview given by MDP Spokesperson Mr. M. Latheef to Maharaja Television of Sri-Lanka

**FREDERICA JANSZ:** .. you have a personal agenda Mr.Latheef, in the sense that .. you .. tried to initiate and register an opposition party in the Maldives. The Maldivian Democratic Party and that was refused registration, so are you speaking out of that kind of frustration because you also wanted to have power..

**Latheef:** No. The people who were involved in the Maldivian Democratic Party are very high quality people. ... And none of us really were .. trying to contest him as an alternative government at this stage. What we were looking for was fundamental political freedom. That's it....

**FREDERICA JANSZ:** So why was it denied to you?

**Latheef:** It was denied in complete violation of the fundamental law, the constitution of the country. .. Gayoom, .. ... doesn't keep limits on his own political power, he just blatantly disregarded the constitution...

**FREDERICA JANSZ:** But now Mr.Latheef, MTV went to the Maldives and we have done a one on one interview with Madam Nasreena Gayoom, and she said when we asked her about this issue ... She said the matter came up before the parliament and parliament voted against having as opposition party, so in that context that was why, she said it was not that her husband the President arbitrarily or forced opposition party to be not registered. The fact is she said Parliament voted against it, so what do you have to say to that?

**Latheef:** That's a very weak spin on the fact...The fact of the matter is this has nothing to do with the legislature. .. you know as much as any laymen would, even the parliament can't violate the constitution. And it is not the duty of the parliament to look into administrative matters like this. You're talking about freedom of association. ..Gayoom denied us our constitutional right and did not stop there. He got his rubber stamp parliament to endorse that. That itself is another illegal act. And that's not law.. It's an opinion that has been endorsed by the parliament. That does not constitute law in any part of

the world! And you can't have parliament voting over the constitution...

**FREDERICA JANSZ:** But Mr. Latheef, if not President Gayoom, then who else is capable of running your country?

**Latheef:** To begin with there are so many people, who are absolutely capable of running the country.

**FREDERICA JANSZ:** Like who? Can you name a few?

**Latheef:** I really would not like to be drawn into this. What I do know is I have no interest in being a political person...

**FREDERICA JANSZ:** Now Mr. Latheef, how do you plan on taking your message out to the world. Because ..out there many people globally, .. have a perception and view that the Maldives is fabulously beautiful country of sun, sea and sand and also extremely well run. Now how do you plan on changing that perception?

**Latheef:** I wouldn't change the perception of that. It is an extremely beautiful place for a holiday. Absolutely the best you could go to...

**FREDERICA JANSZ:** How can you make a change Mr. Latheef?

**Latheef:** I don't know whether I could make a change. But I will try. And not only me. There are a lot of people who like to muster up the courage to do this. In my case I have gone to an extent where I can't go back. .... what we can do is sensitize the rest of the world to the facts that are there. Now for e.g.: the western world talks about democracy. They talk about rule of law. They talk about these things but when a small geopolitically unimportant country like Maldives comes to the picture, I believe they are setting a double standard. Why don't they ask Mr. Gayoom to be a little bit more democratic. At least not to beat the brains out of his citizens. At the very least, they could do that. They are not doing that either. It's just they don't know what's going on there. And we intend to make them understand.

## Letters

Dear Madam/Sir

Gayoom is giving his Bangladeshi son in law about USD two million to ostensibly help white wash his regime's appalling human rights record. A cheaper, more effective strategy, to give the regime a less gruesome image, would be for Gayoom Security Service (GSS) to stop their recreational activities - such as rape, torture and custodial killings. Toning down on First Family corruption ( including indirect corruption like son in law's two million) too would help. The 42% Maldivians living in poverty could do much with son in law's millions. The First Family's insensitivity never fails to amaze. ■

The Investigating council of Maafushi shootings said the investigation is almost finished and they will be releasing the report on Evan Naseem's death before the end of November and the report on Maafushi shooting before the end of 2003. Now it's almost end of 2003 no reports were released and now it's almost one month since they gave their last news conference. At the start of investigation they said until their job is

done they will be giving at least one news conference in each week. ■

You speak of a 'we' but I do not know who constitutes the 'we'. If you could post information on your website about the constituent elements in your organization and security measures in place, particularly that regarding the confidentiality of communication, etc, it would be easier for potential members to assess the strengths of your organization. I think, in the abstract, the concept of a party founded on democratic values appeal to many people but actually affiliating themselves with such a party, especially one that is banned domestically is a serious decision and relevant information is needed to make an informed decision. ■

Before I submit my membership to join MDP I would like to, with reference to the article which was published on Maldivesculture, under Maldivian Democratic Party manifesto, ask my honorable friend the definition of a secular state, which you have rightly said that you will work to build. ■

I been following the development of MDP from the inception, in fact have read your party manifesto, and it is also what I would like to stand too. However, one major area which I do not agree is secularism you intend to promote. What is your strategy on secularism? I would like to hear MDPs stand on the religion? Other than this I am with you. ■

The MDP manifesto is a draft submitted by a member to Maldives Culture. Any adaptation of a manifesto would depend on members. For this we have to proceed according to the rules of procedures of the party which will adhere to the laws of the country and the basic principles of Islam. The essence of a party system is that members collectively decide upon the policies of the party. It is up to individual members to promote their ideals and beliefs as party policy. The party secretariat will facilitate any debate in accordance with the rules of procedures of the party.

MDP Secretariat.

Please mail feedback to:  
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